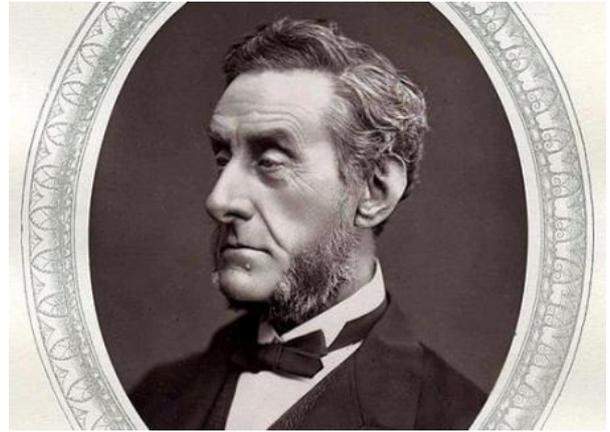


Prayer of the Month • October 2012

O God, the father of the forsaken, the help of the weak, the supplier of the needy; you teach us that love towards the race of man is the bond of perfectness, and the imitation of your blessed self. Open and touch our hearts that we may see and do, both for this world and that which is to come, the things that belong to our peace. Strengthen us in the work which we have undertaken; give us wisdom, perseverance, faith, and zeal, in your own time, and according to your pleasure prosper the issue; for the love of your Son Jesus Christ.



Anthony Ashley Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, 1801-85

This prayer by a great philanthropist asks for enlightenment as well as motivation. In this prayer the Earl of Shaftesbury shows that he has a passion to help the vulnerable and the needy, but realises that greater understanding will ensure a better result for his efforts. There is humility in this. He also acknowledges the need for a high regard for other human beings, as made in the image of God. And he recognises that our work for God is relevant not only for this life but also that of the life to come. If we do not seek peace and the well-being of others here, we must ask ourselves, where do we think we are going on this one?

Anthony Ashley Cooper was born into an upper class family on 28 April 1801 and educated at Harrow and Christ Church, Oxford. As a child he rarely saw his parents, but was appreciative of the affection he received from his sisters and from the housekeeper, Maria Millis. He became a Member of Parliament in 1826. His concern for the poor and vulnerable was shown, for example, in his sponsorship of two bills in 1828 improving care in lunatic asylums, in the Ten Hours Act of 1847, the Factory Act of 1874, and the Chimney Sweepers Act of 1875. In 1844 he became president of the Ragged School Union, for poor children, and in 1872 laid the foundation stone of the Shaftesbury Park Estate in Battersea. He was an Evangelical Christian who hated both Ritualism and Rationalism. He was the first president of the Church Pastoral Aid Society, and was president of the British and Foreign Bible Society from 1851 until his death. He died on 1 October 1885, and is commemorated on this day in the Church of England calendar.

Colin Lunt