

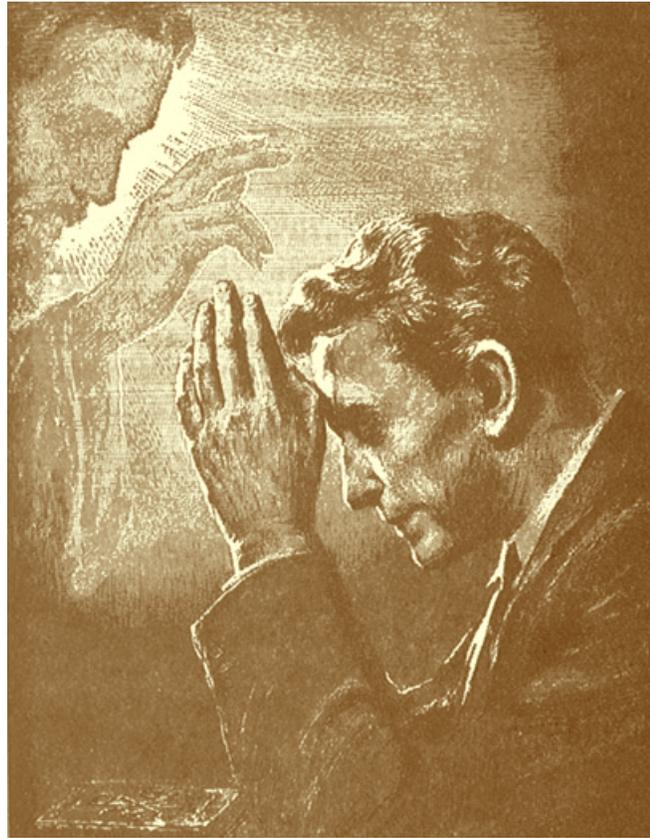
The Lord's Prayer

THE SCRIPTURES present the various sections of the various sections of the Lord's Prayer in the order suitable to man operating at his highest level, that is in contact with God. In the discussion that follows, which is from the point of view of man focussed at his lowest level, the physical, the order of the sections has been changed to emphasize their graded levels of application.

The Lord's Prayer can be interpreted from several different points of view, all of which are valid. At the lowest level, it is purely and simply petition prayer containing a set of requests to God. A clear indication that this prayer applies to other levels as well is the fact that, as petitions, certain parts of the prayer sound incongruous or are misleading.

Probably the most jarring and incongruous sentence is the petition to God to "lead us not into temptation," as surely God should know what He is doing. Petitioning God for our daily bread is misleading as it does not make manna fall from heaven. There is a complicated social process of food production and distribution. Those who are directly engaged in producing food make a surplus for the community to distribute to those who help in other ways. In other words, daily bread has to be earned by service to the community.

All these difficulties are cleared up when the prayer is interpreted from progressively higher levels. From a slightly higher viewpoint, which is an inward-directed one, the prayer becomes an instruction manual for the care and maintenance of the various vehicles with which man as spirit is endowed. When thus regarded, the prayer reveals the complexity of man's vehicles. First of all, he has been given a physical body by God and the instruction manual reads "Give it food, daily."



Created by Ariel Agemian exclusively for the Confraternity of the Precious Blood

"Forgiveness" is the balm for the next vehicle, the vitality or vital force which permeates the body and produces health or sickness. Physical matter, for example calcium, is never sick; it is the organizing vital force that malfunctions producing, for example, bone diseases. This is due to "sin" or transgressions of the laws of harmony. On an obvious level, anger and irritability are well-known sources of illness. On a more subtle level, all diseases are psychosomatic, that is, caused by emotions in disharmony. When mental and spiritual harmony is restored, the vital force also functions in harmony and the person is "at ease" and not in "dis-ease."

"Temptation" is the problem of our desires and emotions and shows the need to control them. It is we who must control our desires and not lead them into temptation. "Deliver us from evil" is a guideline for the mind, for reason can be used objectively and unemotionally to plan either good or bad acts. It is only at the petition level that the

prayer is passive. At any higher level it is dynamic in that it requires definite action by man. As an instruction manual, the prayer not only shows the complexity of man's vehicles (the body, vitality, emotion, and mind), but also the God-given responsibility he has to look after them and use them wisely.

At the next higher level, an outward-directed one, the Lord's Prayer is an environmental manual defining man's relationships with a complex environment which includes his fellow beings. On the physical level, the earth must be maintained as a continuous source of food (daily bread) and man has to look after and care for his physical environment to keep it as a renewable source of life and energy, which is the basis of the science of ecology. Just as we can pollute the physical earth and make it a desert, so we can pollute the vital, emotional, and mental atmospheres around us. Certain areas can become salubrious or enervating; certain atmospheres can breed anger and violence or promote tranquillity; and certain groups can foster evil, selfish thinking, or altruistic planning. Thus the prayer indicates that our environment is also left in our care and custody and we have to actively work to maintain it properly because we are as responsible for conditions around us as we are for conditions within us.

Another step upwards raises the prayer to spiritual levels where it clearly defines man's spiritual qualities and his relationship to God. The prayer is addressed to "our Father" in "heaven." Our Father is known only through His Will, an abstract principle—which was why Christ could not "show" the Father to his disciples as requested by them. What could be seen was Christ doing the Will of the Father (John 14: 8-11). Similarly, the abstract principle of justice cannot be shown except through persons practicing the laws. The opening sentence reminds us that it is in furtherance of the Will of God that we are here on earth, and the task to be accomplished is given in the command to us to see that "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven." "Heaven" is where God rules and where His Will is done, and Christ indicated that "heaven" is within us (Luke 17:21). This phase of the prayer teaches that God's Will, or the spiritual principle of Love within us, must be made manifest on earth.

The energizing power which makes the manifestation of God's Will possible is the "name" of God used in a similar sense to the "name of the law" which motivates the conduct of law officers, or the "name of charity, mercy, pity, etc.," appealed to as motivating forces. When Adam "named" the animals (Gen. 2:19), he gave force to form; that is, he energized models of clay (earth). The Buddhist concept of worlds of "name and form" (*nama rupa*) indicate levels of energizing matter. Energizing forces can be used for good or evil, in altruistic or selfish ways; therefore the prayer insists that the "name" of God which is a creative force be "hallowed," that is, used reverently and responsibly to create good alone at all levels (physical, vital, emotional, and mental).

"Thy kingdom come" relates directly to the mission of Christ to arouse the God or Good in man when man will rule the earth, not as divided kingdom (the works of God and the devil corresponding to conflicting directions from his separated higher and lower selves) but as an unflawed, unified, Christ-inspired kingdom under the direction of the "Christ Within" (Col.1:27), the combined higher and lower selves in man.

Finally, the closing sentence ("thine...forever") dedicates the entire project after it is accomplished as a love offering to our Father God.

As man develops spiritually, he becomes more and more aware of the complex and wonderful forces assisting him and the prayer becomes one of praise and thanksgiving. We realize we are triune spirits made in the image of a Triune God and we are in the process of developing the three spiritual aspects in us by using their vehicular counterparts. The various parts of the prayer show the linkages and dependencies of our vehicles to our triune spirit, and ultimately to our Triune Father. Each vehicle is an expression of and under the continuous care and guidance of an aspect of Spirit. The body, vitality, and emotions each represent one of the aspects and the mind is the bridge or link to all three aspects. The prayer at this level raises man into that poised and tranquil state where he becomes a silent radiator of praise and thanksgiving which, in turn, exerts an uplifting effect on himself and his environment. □

—C.E.S. Gunasekera