

# PRAYER

*Samuel M. Zwemer*



AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY  
NEW YORK

• **Color by Eva Luoma**

**Second Printing 1959**

**Copyright 1952 by American Tract Society**

**AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY  
513 WEST 166TH STREET, NEW YORK 32, N. Y.**

**Printed in U.S.A.**



## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

To all who knew him, either personally or through his many literary achievements, Dr. Samuel M. Zwemer was greatly beloved. For forty years he was a missionary of Christ in the Middle East, working chiefly among the Moslems. Even after his retirement, his passion for the souls of men and devotion to the cause of God's Kingdom were as alive as the day when he was called of the Almighty to found the Arabian Mission.

Dr. Zwemer was one of the outstanding authors on theological and Biblical subjects of this generation, "Sons of Adam" being his fiftieth book. The manuscript for "Prayer" was prepared by him shortly before his death at the age of 85 years. So far as we know, it is his last writing before the Lord called him Home.

He was a Director of the American Tract Society for 21 years, and First Vice-President at the time of his death.

We wish to extend to the Zondervan Publishing House our appreciation for giving us permission to use the excerpts Dr. Zwemer quoted from his book, now out of print, "Taking Hold of God."



# I

## WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is the most ancient, the most universal and the most intense expression of the religious instinct. And yet of all the acts and states of the soul it is the most difficult to define—it escapes definition and is broader, higher, deeper than all human language. “Prayer,” says a mystic of the sixteenth century, “is to ask not what we wish of God, but what God wishes of us.” Two years before his death, Coleridge said to his son-in-law:

“To pray, to pray as God would have us—this is what at times makes me turn cold to my soul. Believe me, to pray with all your heart and strength, with the reason and the will, to believe vividly that God will listen to your voice through Christ, and verily do the thing He pleaseth thereupon—this is the last, the greatest achievement of the Christian’s warfare upon earth.”<sup>1</sup>

According to the deep thinker and earnest disciple, the act of prayer enlists all the powers of the soul and requires the whole panoply of God. Did not Paul teach the same truth when he made prayer the climax of the great passage on the weapons of our spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18).

What is the essential nature of prayer, what various elements must be included in it and what takes place in the soul when

---

<sup>1</sup> Jane T. Stoddard, “The New Testament in Life and Literature,” p. 158.

man prays to God? Undoubtedly, prayer includes more than petition; yet petition is at the heart of prayer. *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"*<sup>2</sup> was one of Christ's first lessons in the school of prayer.

There are many definitions of prayer. James Montgomery crowds fourteen into a single hymn of six stanzas. Prayer is sincere desire; prayer is often inaudible; prayer is hidden fire; prayer is a sigh, a tear; prayer is the upward glance to God; prayer is simple as the lisp of a child; prayer is sublime as God's majesty; it is the cry of the prodigal, the breath of the soul, the mountain air that invigorates, the watchword at death, the key to heaven and the pathway of our Saviour. To meditate on these definitions alone would lead us into all the wealth of the Scriptures on prayer.

George Herbert, the saintly poet, who died in 1633, has some quaint lines that indicate other and unusual aspects of prayer; he writes in epigrammatic phrases fit to stir our sluggish imagination, if we take time to fathom their depth:

*"Prayer—the Churche's banquet, Angel's age,  
God's breath in man returning to his birth,  
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,  
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth;*

*"Engine against th' Almightye, sinner's towre,  
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,  
The six-daies-world transposing in an houre,  
A kind of tune which all things heare and fear;*

*"Softnesse, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,  
Exalted manna, gladnesse of the best,  
Heaven in ordinarie, man well drest,  
The milkie way, the bird of Paradise,*

---

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 7:7.



*“Church-bells beyond the starres heard, the soul’s bloud,  
The land of spices, something understood.”*

That last statement is significant. We must pray not only with the spirit but with the understanding.

In the sixty-fourth chapter of Isaiah (one of the five great chapters on prayer in the Bible) we have a definition of prayer that surpasses all others in its boldness, simplicity and psychological accuracy.

After saying that *“men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen . . . what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him,”* the Prophet confesses his own sins and those of his people. *“Our righteousnesses,”* he says, *“are as filthy rags.”* Then follows Isaiah’s definition of prayer in the seventh verse: *“There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.”* It is a bold definition. Literally (in the Hebrew text) he says that prayer means to rouse oneself out of sleep and seize hold of Jehovah. Of course, it is not a carnal touch like that of the heathen who embrace their idols or beat them to obtain their answers. Yet we have here the pathos of a suppliant who is in deadly earnest; the arms, the hands, the very fingers of the soul reaching out to lay hold of God; man’s personal, spiritual appropriation of deity!

No wonder Paul calls Isaiah very bold! The human soul is poor and needy, yet can take hold of the infinite and eternal Spirit.

*“Speak to Him thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit may meet.*

*Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.”*

This is the psychology of prayer—the outreach, the communion and union of the whole soul with God as revealed in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the ladder of Jacob by which we climb to God. Anything less than this is not real

Christian prayer. Prayer is not only "the highest exercise of the human intellect"; but it is also the highest exercise of the affections, the will, the memory, the imagination and the conscience. All the powers of the human soul find an adequate ethical field of action only in prayer. The person who never prays is literally godless. He who does pray is godly in proportion to his inner prayer-life. This is true in all theistic religions, but supremely true in the Christian faith.

First of all, we must take hold of God with our thoughts. The things which the angels desire to look into we may contemplate on our knees. "*Wherefore,*" as Peter tells us, we must "*gird up the loins of your mind,*"<sup>3</sup> and on our knees study to know God with all our mind; not nature, which is His garment; nor man only, although made in His image; nor the saints who are only His servants; but God Himself. By the exercise of our intellects, illuminated by His Spirit, we must strive to understand His being and attributes; to adore Him for our creation and preservation and daily providence. This is what David said, for example, in the one hundred fourth Psalm: "*O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty . . . as with a garment.*" Many chapters in the Book of Job and many of the nature Psalms consist almost entirely of this intellectual adoration of God.

Our mind also takes hold of God when we remember His goodness. Thanksgiving is the exercise of our memory in the presence of the source of all blessings. Our imaginations are kindled when we contemplate the marvels of creation, the ocean of the fulness of His love, the firmament of His glory, and the exceeding greatness of His power. When we think of these things we shall regain the lost art of meditation. "*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon*

---

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 1:13.

*my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.*"<sup>4</sup> Lean souls may be restored to health and vigor by the exercise of this lost art. How little time we really give to this element in prayer!

The psychology of prayer also includes taking hold of God with our emotions, our passions and our deepest feelings. We find them all in the prayers of David—awe, fear, sorrow, joy, love, hatred, jealousy, passion. All these emotions exercised in the right way find their place in secret prayer. Here they need not be stifled. The only cure for hypocrisy is to lay hold of the source of all sincerity—secret prayers. This is what David meant when he said, "*Pour out your heart before him*"<sup>5</sup> The scum, and the dregs! Paul makes reference in his Epistles once and again to his tears. It is worth while to look up the references. In his Private Devotions, Bishop Lancelot Andrewes has a remarkable prayer for tears:

"Give tears, O God, give a fountain of waters to my head. Give me the grace of tears. Bedew the dryness of my desert heart. Give me tears such as Thou didst give David of old, or Jeremiah, or Peter, or Magdalene. . . . Give me tears which Thou mayest put into Thy bottle and write into Thy book. . . ."

But prayer is even more than this. It is indeed the highest exercise of the intellect and the noblest use of the emotions, but it is also the largest arena for the use of the will. This power of contrary choice God has given us. It is not merely subjective and submissive, but objective and active. The will of God is not only a pillow on which we may rest our weary souls, but a power-house to give us strength for service. The will of a Christian in prayer is far-reaching because it is heavenly in its origin and earthly in its potentiality. When Daniel prayed, archangels

---

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 63:5, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 62:8.

were set in motion. True prayer sets in motion divine forces (and restrains evil forces) in a way we shall never understand until we stand in the Kingdom of Light.

True prayer will achieve just as much as it costs us. It is the little further that costs; it is the little further that counts. "*He went a little farther . . . and prayed.*"<sup>6</sup> Gethsemane. Gabbatha. Golgotha. The Resurrection morning.

The ministry of intercession is a great battlefield. We need the whole armour of God, for we wrestle in the trenches against all the powers of darkness. On our knees we are kings and priests in God's universe. Napoleon or Alexander never had such an empire. George Müller and Hudson Taylor were ambassadors plenipotentiary of their King.

---

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 26:39.

## II

### WHERE AND HOW TO PRAY

Why are certain places more suitable, more inspiring, more helpful, more holy than others when we pray? For at least three reasons—solitude, symbolism and memory. Private prayer to be real seeks solitude. The suppliant desires to be alone with God. *“Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.”*<sup>7</sup> The saints of all the ages have sought and found God in solitude: Abraham when the horror of great darkness fell upon him and he kept lonely vigil over his sacrifice; Moses at the burning bush in the desert waste; Elijah on the top of Carmel and at the mouth of the cave; Isaiah in the temple court; Daniel on his knees alone, facing Jerusalem; Peter on the housetop at Joppa; Saul after the vision on the road to Damascus; John in the Spirit on the Lord’s day on lonely Patmos; David Livingstone on his knees in the hut at Chitambo’s village praying until God called him home. But most of all, Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours, praying alone in the desert place, alone on the mountain top, alone in Gethsemane, alone when they all forsook Him and fled, praying for the soldiers who nailed him to the Cross. The secret place of prayer is alone with God. Jesus loved solitude for prayer. He sought to be alone.

Next to solitude the best place for prayer is where we have the special promise of God’s presence and where His name is

---

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 6:6.

recorded. *"Where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."*<sup>8</sup> How amiable are His Tabernacles and the courts of Jehovah! A day in His courts is better than a thousand. Where the sparrow finds a house and the swallow builds a nest the Jewish worshipper would fain pour out his soul before God. The Tabernacle in the wilderness and afterwards at Shiloh, the temple of Solomon with all its glory, the later temple of Ezra and that built by Herod the Great—all of them were the centers of worship for believing Israel, the holy place where God manifested His presence, and therefore preeminently the place of prayer. *"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?"*<sup>9</sup> *"Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer,"*<sup>10</sup> and like their Master undoubtedly prayed every sabbath day in the synagogue. The upper room (wherever that may have been in Jerusalem) was the accustomed place of prayer where the disciples gathered with one accord before Pentecost. Down the centuries and in all lands, catacombs, conventicles, chapels, churches, cathedrals, a wayside cross or a Quaker meeting-house, all have witnessed the truth of the great promise: *"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit."*<sup>11</sup> God's house is the place of prayer for God's people. Why, therefore, should its doors be closed during the long week, and open only on Sunday?

A third factor that enters into the sacredness of the place of prayer is reminiscence. Memory clings to scenes and places as well as to persons and events. We read in the Gospel, *"And [Jesus] went again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode . . . and many believed on*

---

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 20:24.

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 24:3.

<sup>10</sup> Acts 3:1.

<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 57:15.

*him there.*"<sup>12</sup> It was the place where John preached repentance, where Jesus, although sinless, was numbered with the transgressors, where the heavens opened, where the symbol of the Dove and the Voice proclaimed the eternal sonship. No wonder that Jesus sought the place again and that many believed on Him there. The association of ideas is of great help in prayer. Sometimes it is well-nigh irresistible. The story is told of an earnest, humble Christian man who lingered at the close of the memorial service held in the church where William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was converted. He kneeled alone at the altar-rail praying repeatedly: "O Lord, do it again! Do it again!"

The place where we first confessed our Lord; the place where we were baptized as adults or in infancy; where we took our first Communion; where we made some great decision or obtained some great forgiveness—all these places of prayer are holy ground because of holy memories.

---

<sup>12</sup> John 10:40, 42.

# III

## THE POWER OF PRAYER

There can be no doubt that in some way or other prayer has power. The most spiritual men, the greatest heroes of the faith, the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles have found power in prayer. Our Lord Himself could not dispense with it. Intercourse with God and with the unseen world is not only a reality for those who pray, but power comes to them in the very act. "*They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.*"<sup>13</sup>

From the very nature of prayer we would expect dynamic results. When the negative and the positive poles of a battery are both charged, a spark of fire leaps out when they come in contact. When man's utter need and helplessness are brought face to face with God's might and mercy in believing prayer, something notable happens. Prayer is a lifting up of mind, heart and will to God. And God hears and answers the cry of the soul-of-man made in His image.

When man lays hold of God, God lays hold of man. Deep calleth unto deep. The depth of our misery to the depth of His mercy. Where the roaring sea and the lowering sky meet there is a waterspout. "*All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*"<sup>14</sup> "*This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.*"<sup>15</sup>

We know there is potency in prayer from its very nature,

---

<sup>13</sup> Isaiah 40:31.

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 42:7.

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 34:6.



from our own experience, and from the abundant testimony of God's Word in precept, promise and example.

All so-called scientific or philosophic objections to prayer as being futile rest on the false premise that there is nothing supernatural. The same materialistic arguments apply against belief in the Virgin birth, against belief in the Trinity, against faith in the bodily resurrection and the ascension of our Lord. But "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of" in human philosophy.

*"If radio's slim fingers can pluck a melody  
From night—and toss it o'er a continent or sea;  
If the petalled white notes of a violin  
Are blown across the mountains or the city's din;  
If songs, like crimson roses, are called from thin blue air—  
Why should mortals wonder, if God hears prayer?"*

The two chief objections to prayer made by science falsely so-called are, that prayer interrupts the natural order, and that prayer to the Omnipotent and All-merciful is impertinence. Why should we expect the through traffic on the highways of the laws of nature to be side-tracked for a local train that carries our puny petitions? Why should we bother to ask, when "*Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things?*"<sup>16</sup>

But both objections fall to the ground when we have faith in the testimony of God's Word and in the experience of His people since the world began. Those who make these objections are not always experts in the realm of prayer. Who would listen to a lecture on chemistry by any man who had never performed a laboratory experiment? Who would bow to an opinion on harmony by one who was deaf and dumb? We believe what Jesus Christ tells us about prayer because He speaks with au-

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 6:32.

thority. No man ever prayed as He did. No man ever taught the power of prayer more explicitly and repeatedly than our Master. So we answer the scientific objector in the words of one who knew the power of prayer, Dora Greenwell:

“Can the humble request of believing lips restrain, accelerate, change the settled order of events? Can prayer make things that are not to be as though they were? Are events, in short, brought about through prayer that would not otherwise take place? Yes, a thousand times yes! To believe anything short of this is to take the soul out of every text that refers to prayer, is to do away with the force of every scriptural illustration that bears upon it—to believe anything short of this is to believe that God has placed a mighty engine in the hands of His creature, but one that will not work, useful only as a scientific toy might be that helps to bring out a child’s faculties, valuable only as a means of training the soul to commune with God. Yet what so easy for the unbeliever as to cavil at prayer; what so easy even for the Christian as to fail and falter in this region, and to stop short of the fulness of this, God’s own Land of Promise, through unbelief? The commonplace objection to prayer, founded upon the supposed immutability of the laws by which God governs the world, is easily met and answered by the fact that prayer is itself one of these laws, upon whose working God has determined that a certain result shall follow.”

This is the two-fold power of prayer. We must not limit its efficacy to the subjective, but it begins there. The subjective power is on the mind and heart and will of him who prays. Its objective power is on others for whom we pray or in the realm of the material world.

First of all, prayer is mountain air for the soul. We open our windows towards Jerusalem and breathe the air of heaven.

“Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath, the Christian’s native air.” Prayer is self-discipline. The effort to realize the presence and power of God stretches the sinews of the soul and hardens its muscles. To pray is to grow in grace. To tarry in the presence of the King leads to new loyalty and devotion on the part of faithful subjects. Christian character grows in the secret place of prayer. There is no more congenial soil in which to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit than near the throne of grace. There the cluster ripens to perfection—“*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*”<sup>17</sup> Prayer strengthens the mind, purifies the emotions and invigorates the will. Habitual prayer, as James Hastings reminds us, confers decision on the wavering, energy on the listless, calmness to the distraught, and altruism to the selfish. Prayer changes us. It always produces a sense of sin; if we are near to God in Christ, He pours contempt on all our pride. It produces submission of the wayward will; for prayer is essentially a surrender to God: “*Not my will, but thine, be done.*”<sup>18</sup> Someone has expressed it in a beautiful simile: “The pull of our prayer may not move the everlasting throne, but, like the pull on a line from the bow of a boat, it may draw us into closer fellowship with God and into fuller harmony with His holy will in the harbor of rest.”

Another result of prayer is inward peace. Those who “*in every thing by prayer and supplication*”<sup>19</sup> make their needs known to God experience a peace that passeth all understanding, in mind and heart. And the peace within reveals itself to others. Moses wist not that his countenance shone, but Israel knew. In *The Choir Invisible*, James Lane Allen tells of the beautiful face of an aged Christian:

“Prayer will in time,” he says, “make the human coun-

---

<sup>17</sup> Galatians 5:22.

<sup>18</sup> Luke 22:42.

<sup>19</sup> Philippians 4:6.

tenance its own divinest altar; years upon years of fine thought, like music shut up within, will vibrate along the nerves of expression until the lines of the living instrument are drawn into correspondence and the harmony of visible form matches the unheard harmony of the mind."

The mystery of intercessory prayer is doubtless great but its history is ample evidence of its power; and that history extends from Abraham's prayer for Sodom to the unceasing intercession of the saints of the Church universal in our own day by which

*"The whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."*

Prayer has power in the realm of nature. "*Elijah . . . prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*"<sup>20</sup> In the *Life of Lord Lawrence* (vol. 2, p. 375) we are told that when someone deprecated prayer for rain as useless to change the order of nature, the great Indian statesman and Christian said, "We are told to pray and that our prayers will be answered; that is sufficient for me."

Prayer has power in the realm of grace. When we are commanded to pray for one another, it is not idle mockery but a divine prerogative and privilege. Christ prayed for Peter. Paul prayed for his converts and fellow-workers by name. Every revival of religion has been the result of prayer. One has but to read the lives of John Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, Dwight L. Moody and other great evangelists to realize that the secret of their power with men was their daily communion with God.

Prayer has power to produce "special providences." The life of George Müller is an extraordinary illustration of the constant intervention by Providence to supply the needs for his

---

<sup>20</sup> James 5:17, 18.

orphanages which he laid before God in Prayer. The story is either utterly incredible or it is convincing evidence of the miraculous power of intercession. God was his business partner. He supplied all his needs in Bristol and often did so in the nick of time and in many circumstances that could not be mere coincidences.

The story of Hudson Taylor's life and that of the China Inland Mission is one long record of answered prayer. In seventy years this Faith Mission received the enormous sum of 5,103,701 pounds sterling, in unsolicited gifts. "*The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail,*"<sup>21</sup> according to the word of the Lord. In 1854 Hudson Taylor landed in Shanghai alone. That one mission grew to four thousand preaching places where Chinese Christians gathered in worship and accounted for over a thousand missionaries in every part of China.

---

<sup>21</sup> 1 Kings 17:14.

## IV

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

(Matthew 6:9-13)

Nineteen centuries ago on the mountain-side Jesus taught His disciples for the first time the *Pater Noster*, the most perfect and beautiful of all prayers which we commonly call the Lord's Prayer. It *is* the Lord's Prayer because He gave it to the Church, because it enshrines His teaching and is the expression of His spirit. But in a deeper sense it is *not* the prayer of our Lord but the prayer intended for those who are His disciples. He had no sin and needed no petition of forgiveness. There is no record that our Lord ever prayed thus; except one brief portion of the prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. The apostles asked Jesus for a prayer of their own and He gave it to them. When John Knox lay dying in 1572 he repeated the Lord's Prayer with a paraphrase or comment added to each petition: "Our Father Who art in heaven . . . who can pronounce such holy words?"

And who can add anything new to what has been said and written on this universal prayer of the ages? Dante expounded its mystic significance in the eleventh canto of his *Purgatorio*. Bengel imagined the whole of Peter's first epistle was a commentary on this prayer! Carlyle said it was "the voice of the human soul, the inmost aspiration of all that is high and holy." St. Francis of Assisi when he stripped himself of his raiment and handed his father his last possessions said:

"Listen all of you and understand well! Until this time I have called Pietro Bernardone *my father*; but now I de-

sire to serve God. This is why I return my money as well as my clothing and all that I have had from him—for from henceforth I desire to say nothing else than, 'Our Father Who art in heaven' . . ."<sup>22</sup>

This prayer embodies every possible desire of the praying heart; it contains a whole world of spiritual requirements, and combines in simple language every Divine promise, every human sorrow and want and every Christian aspiration for the good of others. It is the shortest, deepest, richest of all prayers ever offered by man and could only proceed from the lips of Him Who knew what was in man because He is the Son of God.

Some have compared it to a precious diamond with many facets reflecting at once the teaching of the gospel, the life and character of our Lord, the discipline of the Spirit, the power of the redeemed life and the very history and final triumph of the Kingdom of God. It is simple yet always novel; infinitely easy to repeat, yet infinitely hard to understand; humble in its phrases, exalted in its high significance; natural yet supernatural; the commencement and the climax of all true prayer. When we read it slowly and try to fathom its short sentences, we are reminded of Dimitri Merjkowski's words regarding the gospel:

"It is a strange book. You cannot read it exhaustively. No matter how often you read it, it always seems that you have not quite read it to the end, or that you have forgotten, or have failed to understand something; you re-read—and the same thing happens again and again, times without number. It is like the midnight sky; the longer you gaze at it, the greater the multitude of the stars."<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Sabatier, "Life of St. Francis," p. 61.

<sup>23</sup> "The Unknown Gospel," p. 17.

In this brief chapter we would therefore consider two stars only in the vast galaxy of interpretation and ask to *Whom* this prayer should be addressed and in *what spirit* we should pray.

Contrary to the opinion and usage of liberals and humanists, we believe that the Lord's Prayer is wholly Christian and can only be rightly used by those who are such. To whom do we pray and in what spirit must we pray? The very form and language of the prayer gives answer to these two questions.

The Lord's Prayer is generally arranged into three parts: the preface, the petitions, and the conclusion. The prayer has six petitions in two parts: three that look to God and His Kingdom, three that refer to man and his need. In the first trinity of petitions we have the unfolding of God's infinite riches; in the second, the poverty of man which only God can supply with His grace.

Tholuck remarks that "the attentive reader who has otherwise learned the doctrine of the Trinity will find a distinct reference to it in the arrangement of this prayer. The first petition in each of the first and second portions of the prayer refers to God as Creator and Preserver; the second to God the Redeemer; the third to God the Holy Spirit." This may not appear at first sight but the longer we study the prayer and analyze it, the more it becomes evident. It is as when you hold a piece of bond paper to the light and the watermark of the manufacturer appears in every sheet; so the doctrine of the blessed Trinity appears where we do not expect to see it in many a passage of Scripture both of the Old and New Testaments.

Surely the prayer that Jesus taught us may reflect the glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit by implication if not by direct expression. And such is perhaps evident from its very form:



PROLOGUE	PETITION		CONCLUSION
Father	Hallowed be Thy Name	Give us this day, etc.	Thine is the Kingdom
Our	Thy Kingdom Come	And forgive us, etc.	Thine is the power
in the heavens	Thy will be done, etc.	And lead us not, etc.	Thine is the glory, etc.

*"After this manner therefore pray ye"*<sup>24</sup> Jesus said, conscious of our personal relationship to God our Father, God our Redeemer, and God our Sanctifier. In the prologue itself the doctrine of the Trinity is implied. God is eternal and unchangeable in His being and attributes. For as He is Father now, He always was, and ever will be. The Son of His love was in the bosom of the Father before the creation of the world. His Spirit brooded over chaos and that Spirit alone makes it possible for a sinner to say our Father—Abba, Father.

The first petition is primarily concerned with the ineffable name of Jehovah Who is holy in all His attributes. The second speaks of the kingdom of the Messiah, the Son of God—a kingdom of grace in human hearts, of power in the world and of glory in the world to come. This three-fold kingdom belongs to Christ. It is an everlasting kingdom and a kingdom without frontiers. The third petition is in the realm of the will, the deepest mystery of personality: *"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"* (verse 10).

*"Our wills are ours we know not how;  
Our wills are ours to make them Thine"—*

and that transformation of the rebellious will of man into conformity to the will of God is throughout the Scriptures the work of the Holy Spirit. He kindles the spark of faith, He

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 6:9.

makes the unwilling heart willing, He overcomes our reluctance and makes us eager to do the will of God.

The same natural sequence occurs in the second division of the prayer. The first petition is to God the Father of mankind. The eyes of all wait upon Him and He giveth meat in season. He openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. He gives us our daily bread. The second petition is to the Son of Man who hath power on earth to forgive sins; to Him who prayed for sinners, wept for sinners, died for sinners and made atonement for the sins of the whole world. *"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive"* (verse 12). *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."*<sup>25</sup>

The third and closing petition is undoubtedly concerned with the work of the Holy Spirit. *"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"* (verse 13). *"Then was Jesus led of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil,"* we read in Matthew 4:1. The Holy Spirit and the spirit of evil find their arena of conflict in the world and in the heart of man. One may, of course, believe in neither God nor devil; but if one believes in a personal God, there is no reason for not believing in a personal devil. If we accept the Scriptures there is every reason to believe in his existence. To quote once more from the book by Merjkowski:

"Who could believe in our days as Jesus believed? He believed in demons, but we no longer do,' says a very naive Protestant cleric, expressing what almost all *quondam* Christians of today feel. But if a little schoolboy of today could set Jesus right concerning the essence of evil, the devil, what guarantee have we that Jesus was not also mistaken concerning the essence of good, God? And that by itself would suffice to destroy all Christianity.

"Throughout His whole life Jesus does nothing but

---

<sup>25</sup> Luke 23:34.

battle, not with impersonal, abstract evil, but with His enemy, the devil, who is as personal and living as Himself. The clause of the Lord's prayer, 'deliver us from evil' refers to the devil."

We agree with this interpretation.

And so the sixth petition is addressed to the Holy Spirit, Who alone is able to give us victory over temptation and to guide us into all truth.

And then we note that the triumphant doxology of the prayer is again addressed to the Trinity. For Thine is the Kingdom, O Christ; Thine is the power, O Holy Spirit; and Thine, O Father, is the glory, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever more shall be. "*When all things shall be subdued unto him,*" writes Paul, "*then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*"<sup>26</sup>

Whether we accept Tholuck's interpretation or no, in any case the Lord's Prayer surely teaches us that we may address our prayers to each Person of the Divine Trinity separately. All men should honor the Son and the Spirit as they honor the Father. That the early Christians directed worship to each of the three Persons of the Godhead is well known.

Stephen's dying prayer was directed to Jesus Christ. Paul besought the Lord Jesus thrice to be delivered from his thorn in the flesh. The Holy Spirit is addressed in intercession: "*The Lord [i.e. the Spirit] direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*"<sup>27</sup> In the ancient *Te Deum* we have the worship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit blended into one great harmony, even as in the Lord's Prayer. So Christian prayer must be to God through Christ and in the Spirit. Those who accustom themselves to the

<sup>26</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:28.

<sup>27</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

Trinitarian approach will not fall into the vague use of the pronoun "it" when referring to the Holy Spirit. He is our Comforter, our Guide, our Enlightener, our Teacher and He alone can make Christ real to us. One of the most beautiful of the ancient Latin hymns is to the Holy Spirit and begins *Veni Creator Spiritus*. It was probably written by Gregory the Great (504-604 A.D.) and is a little commentary on the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer. That prayer in its approach to God is wholly Christian; its frequent use, therefore, in gatherings of non-Christians and Jews, as a sort of common denominator, is, we believe, to be deprecated. We have access through Christ to the Father, according to Paul, by one Spirit. There is the Father *to* whom we have access, the Son *through* whom, and the Spirit *in* whom; this open way to the throne of grace is ours. As Archbishop Trench expressed it:

"Prayer is a work of God, the God of the Holy Ghost, a work of His in you, and by you, and in which you must be fellow-workers with Him—but His work notwithstanding."<sup>28</sup>

This brings us to our second question; in what spirit can we truly pray this prayer of the ages? We have the answer in the words themselves. They demand a filial, reverent, loyal, submissive, dependent, penitent, humble, confident, triumphant, exultant and sincere spirit.

*A filial spirit*, for we call God "our Father." We are His sons by creation, by adoption and by the great inheritance. Through Christ our Master we are all brethren. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole human family receives its solidarity and its redemption. We must approach Him in the spirit of sonship.

*A reverent spirit*, for we begin our prayer by remembering that God's name is to be hallowed. We stand on holy ground

---

<sup>28</sup> "Sermons Preached in Westminster Abbey," p. 229.

when we pray. He that cometh to God must believe that He is holy. Therefore our hearts will kneel before Him in adoration and praise. "Hallowed be thy name."

*A loyal spirit* is the test of all sincerity. We come to our King and pray for His Kingdom. Shall He find us "whole-hearted, true-hearted, faithful and loyal," or are we using idle words? When we pray Thy Kingdom come we must break down every idol and cast out every rival from our hearts so that Jesus may occupy a solitary throne and rule alone.

This prayer also demands *a submissive spirit*; the entire surrender of our own will to the will of God. As in heaven the angels always behold the face of the Saviour and do His will gladly and eagerly, so we on earth are to yield ourselves to His obedience. Not our willfulness, but our willingness is the key to the calm and quiet of God.

We also come like suppliants in *a dependent spirit*. "Give us this day our daily bread." Apparently one of the smallest yet one of the greatest petitions. We ask for earthly bread and He gives us not only that but the heavenly manna. It is a prayer for moderation and contentment that covers all earthly wants. It is a prayer for neither poverty nor riches, but for food and shelter and home—for all of which we are daily dependent on God. As Maltbie Babcock put it, in one of his sermons:

*"Back of the loaf there is the flour,  
And back of the flour the mill,  
And back of the mill the sun and the shower  
And the Heavenly Father's will."*

And since all our daily deeds and daily duties and daily anxieties are not free from sin, we must include *a spirit of penitence*. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." This is not the ground of God's forgiveness nor the measure of His forgiveness, but the condition on which He waits. It is the most

heart-searching clause in the Lord's Prayer. He who cannot forgive man, cannot find forgiveness with God.

*"Forgive us Lord! to Thee we cry;  
 Forgive us through Thy matchless grace;  
 On Thee alone our souls rely;  
 Be Thou our strength and righteousness.*

*"Forgive us, O Thou bleeding Lamb!  
 Thou risen, Thou exalted Lord!  
 Thou great High-priest, our souls redeem,  
 And speak the pardon-sealing word."*

Then also we shall have *the humble spirit* which knows its own weakness and fears the power of temptation. "Lead us not into temptation." Pride goeth before the fall, but he who walks lowly and with constant humility is safe against the wiles of the tempter, and perfect love casts out fear.

The climax of the prayer is in a *spirit of confidence, of triumph and of exultation*. "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever." We know that the Kingdom is certain, that God's power is sufficient for all exigencies, and that if we wait until the end we shall see the glory of God. So the Lord's Prayer closes with a daily diminutive hallelujah chorus for all believers. And then there is the seal of *sincerity*, "Amen." If we would fathom the meaning of this Hebrew word, which signifies certainly and truly, we must study its use by Jesus Christ in His daily speech. "Amen, amen (that is, verily, verily) I say unto you"—how often and at what critical times these words occur. And He Himself is the Amen (Revelation 3:14), the faithful witness, to every sincere prayer. "After this manner, therefore, pray ye"—to the Triune God and in the right spirit.