THE LORD'S PRAYER

BY T. W. MANSON, M.A., D.Litt., D.D., F.B.A.
RYLANDS PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM AND EXEGESIS IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

ANYONE who is familiar (but not so familiar as to have his
powers of observation blunted) with "the Order for Morning
Prayer, daily throughout the year", or its evening counterpart,
in the Book of Common Prayer, will have noticed that the Lord's
Prayer occurs twice in the services: first after the Absolution,
and again between the Lesser Litany and the Versicles. If he is
particularly observant he will have seen that at its second appear­
ance the Prayer is without the closing doxology and ends with the
petition, "Deliver us from evil". If he seeks an explanation
of this and consults one or other of the standard works on the
subject,² he will find that the duplication of the Prayer is one
among many indications that the Prayer Book has a very long
and complex history; and that in the story of the growth and
development of Christian worship, the Lord's Prayer, as might
be expected, has played a distinctive and important part. In
order to appreciate this to the full we must turn from the Daily
Offices to the Order of Holy Communion. Here we find the
Lord's Prayer following immediately upon the communion of
the people, a position given to it in the Prayer Book of 1552.³
Before that date in the West it had preceded the communion.⁴

¹ A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on Wednesday, the 10th
of November, 1954.
² E.g. Proctor and Frere, A New History of the Book of Common Prayer
(1901) Chap. IX; Lowther Clarke and Harris, Liturgy and Worship, particu­
larly the chapter on "The Choir Offices" (pp. 257-95), by Professor E. C.
Ratcliff.
³ Proctor and Frere, pp. 49 f. Cf. Liturgy and Worship, pp. 355 f. (J. H.
Srawley); G. Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy, p. 665.
⁴ Proctor and Frere, pp. 436 f., 446 f., 469 f. The use of the Prayer in the
Eucharistic service goes back to an early date, though it cannot be traced to primit­
of the Liturgy² (1947), p. 207.
This means that the place of the Lord’s Prayer in the Eucharistic Liturgy from the fourth century onwards is within the section known as the Mass of the Faithful. In other words, the knowledge and use of it go with full membership of the Church. This accords with the early practice of the Church in using the period of preparation of candidates for baptism to teach them, among other things, the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. The practice varied in different parts of the Church but always included the teaching of the Lord’s Prayer and the explaining of it to candidates for baptism. Duchesne in his work on the early history of the Liturgy (Origines du Culte Chrétien) speaks about this and tells us that the instructor began by a general exhortation. Then he repeated phrase by phrase the text of the prayer with a commentary on each petition. After the last petition a short address terminated the ceremony. There are sermons of St. Augustine which give specimens of this kind of instruction. In Africa the transmission of the Lord’s Prayer to candidates took place eight days after they had been taught the Creed; and it is quite possible that the earliest exposition of the Lord’s Prayer which we possess—that of Tertullian—may have been based on such exposition of the Prayer given to candidates for baptism. The most recent view is that Tertullian’s work was intended for a congregation containing both candidates.


2 On the possibility that Tertullian’s tract de Oratione may be based, wholly or in part, on such an exposition of the Prayer to candidates for baptism see P. Monceaux, Histoire Littéraire de l’Afrique Chrétienne, i (1901), 369 ff., and the full discussion by G. F. Diercks in his edition of the de Oratione (1947), Prolegomena, pp. xcix-civ. His conclusion is that the work was intended for a congregation containing both catechumens and baptized members: the first expository part being intended for the former, the second more liturgical part for the latter (p. civ).
for baptism and fully baptized members: the exposition of the text of the Prayer being intended for the candidates, and the rest of the discourse for those who were already members. In Cyril of Jerusalem’s instructions to candidates for baptism and newly baptized members the exposition of the Lord’s Prayer was given after baptism to the new members as part of the commentary on the Eucharistic Liturgy to which they were now admitted. It seems that in the early Church the Lord’s Prayer was intimately bound up with the reception of candidates into church membership. Indeed, in one Church Order it is laid down that the candidate after being baptized and anointed must stand up, face eastwards, and repeat “the prayer which the Lord taught us”. ¹ The point of all this is that, whereas nowadays the Lord’s Prayer is, so to speak, common property and freely available for general use, in the early centuries the employment, and even the knowledge of it may have been a good deal more restricted. When it appears in the liturgical books it is closely connected with the most sacred and intimate of Christian experiences and those who repeat it “make bold to say” it. ²

What seems to be at first glance a somewhat different picture is presented by the oldest of all the books of order, the Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, dating from the first half of the second century. Here the Lord’s Prayer is set out with a short introduction evidently condensed from the directions on

¹ Const. Apost. vii. 45.
² In the western liturgies “Praeceptis salutaribus moniti et divina institutione formati audemus dicere” (C. E. Hammond, Antient Liturgies (1878), p. 342).

In the eastern liturgies: St. James (F. E. Brightman, Liturgies Eastern and Western, i. 59) καὶ κατακείσων ἡμᾶς δεότατα φιλανθρωπε μετά παρρησίας ἀκατακρίτως ἐν καθαρᾷ καρδίᾳ, ψυχῇ συντετριμμένη, ἀνεπαναγόντω προσώπῳ, ὑγιασμένος χέλευ τολμῶν ἐπικαλείσθαι σε τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ἄγιον Θεόν Πατέρα καὶ λέγει ... Other examples in Brightman, op. cit. pp. 100, 136, 182, 339, 391, 410, 469, n. 14. What Christians “make bold” to do is to call the Almighty “Father”, as is clear from the comment of Cyril of Jerusalem (Cat. Myst., v. 11) εἶτα μετά ταῦτα τὴν εὐχὴν λέγομεν ἑκεῖνην, ἢν ὁ σωτὴρ παρέδωκε τοῖς οἰκείοις αὐτοῦ μαθηταῖς, μετὰ καθαρᾷς συνειδήσεως πατέρα ἐπιγραφόμενοι τὸν Θεὸν καὶ λέγοντες: πατέρα ἡμῶν ὃ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. “Ω τῆς μεγίστης τοῦ Θεοῦ φιλανθρωπίας· τοις ἀποπηδήσασιν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν ἐσχάτοις γενομένοις κακοῖς τοσαύτην δεδώρηται κακῶν ἀμνηστίαν καὶ χάριτος μετουσίαν, ὡς καὶ πατέρα ἐπικαλείσθαι.
prayer given in the Sermon on the Mount. The passage runs as follows:

And do not pray as the hypocrites do, but as the Lord commanded in his gospel: "Pray thus, 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done as in heaven so on earth; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil; for thine is the power and the glory for ever'." Pray thus three times a day.\(^1\)

Evidently what is here dealt with is not the administration of the sacraments, but the daily private devotions of the individual Christian. It is, however, significant that this instruction does not appear until after the rules concerning baptism have been set out. The first part of the Didache (i-vi) has all the appearance of being a course of instruction for catechumens. Chapter vii regulates the administration of baptism; and then we come to the rules to be followed by Church members: fasting, prayer (including the Lord's Prayer), communion, church organization and discipline (viii-xv). Finally, there is an exhortation to watchfulness in view of the end of the world. The important point is that the Prayer seems to be provided for the use of those who are already full members of the Church; and it also seems that it cannot be taken for granted that those who are not yet members will be familiar with it. The author of the Didache cannot, or at any rate does not, say simply, "Repeat the Lord's Prayer three times a day". He has to tell them what they are to say.

It may be only coincidence, but it is, nevertheless, a curious fact that, apart from the passage in the Didache, there is only one single probable allusion to the Lord's Prayer in the earliest Christian literature. This is in the letter of the Bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp, to the Philippians\(^2\) and even here there is no actual quotation of the words of the Prayer. What the Bishop says is

---

\(^1\) Didache, viii. 2 f. The rendering given above treats the words ὀργὴ προσεύχωσθε as part of the commandment of the Lord, as in Matt. vi. 9. There may be an echo of this in the Liturgy of the Coptic Jacobites (Brightman, p. 182) and in that of the Nestorians (Brightman, p. 295).

On the injunction to say the Prayer thrice daily see C. W. Dugmore, The Influence of the Synagogue upon the Divine Office (1944), pp. 59-70; E. C. Ratcliff, op. cit.

\(^2\) vi. 2.
If we pray the Lord to forgive us, we also ought to forgive, for we stand before the eyes of the Lord and of God, and 'we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, and each must give an account of himself'.” ¹ It is perhaps significant that the reasons advanced from scripture for showing a forgiving spirit are drawn from the letters of St. Paul, and that no appeal is made to the Lord’s Prayer specifically.

The Prayer is not used by name by the early Apologists in their propaganda for Christianity. They have many things to say by way of criticism of pagan religion and commendation of their own faith; but the beauty, purity, and simplicity of the Lord’s Prayer is not one of their arguments. It can hardly be that they were ignorant of it: and it may well be that they felt some reserve about communicating it to non-Christians. That would certainly fit in with the little we know about its early liturgical use.

The upshot of all this is that in the earliest period of Church history we find that the Prayer, so far as the evidence goes, is something that was known to and used by Church members and, it would seem, by Church members only. It was used particularly in connection with the two sacraments of the Church and also by individual Church members in their private devotions. That means that we should expect that the Lord’s Prayer will have had a textual history somewhat different from that of other parts of the New Testament, in that it will have been exposed to the influence of liturgical use and catechetical exposition as well as to the inevitable risks of scribal copying and editorial correction—or mis-correction. And the available evidence bears out this expectation. With regard to the influence of liturgical use, I ought to say at this point that this influence has been at work in other places besides the Lord’s Prayer, and I give one example. At an early date the Gospels were used for regular reading in Church services; and the sections chosen for reading did not always begin in a way that put the congregation au fait with the Scriptural situation. In such cases the lectionary made for Church use provided suitable opening sentences, known as “incipits”. They are no part of the canonical text; but they doubtless sounded all right in the reading.

¹ Cf. Rom. xiv. 10, 12; 2 Cor. v. 10.
The influence of liturgical use has clearly been much greater in the case of the Lord’s Prayer. We may point first to the fact that there are two versions of the Prayer in the New Testament: one is given in the course of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. vi. 9-13); the other is found in an entirely different setting in Luke xi. 2-4. Not only are the circumstances different: there are also considerable divergences between the Matthaean wording of the prayer and that given in the true text of Luke. These facts were, of course, well known to Origen, the greatest Biblical scholar of the early Church, in the first half of the third century. In his Treatise on Prayer he discusses at considerable length whether the Lord gave the Prayer once only, from which it would follow that, in one or other of the Gospels, the true text has been modified; or whether there were two different occasions on which the Prayer was given, with the possibility that the wording varied on the two occasions. Origen concluded, not without hesitation, in favour of the latter view.

Let us take a fresh look at the whole question. In Matthew we have the opening address, “Our Father who art in heaven.” There is no question that this is what Matthew wrote. In the true text of Luke the prayer begins simply, “Father.” A kind of half-way house is given by Tertullian in his version of the Prayer, which omits “our” and says “Father who art in heaven.” Which of these is the more likely to be the original form of the Prayer? I do not myself think that there is any room for serious doubt. We know from other places in the Gospels that the form of address used by our Lord in prayer was, in fact, the simple word “Father.” This appears from the most solemn and impressive of all the prayers, that in Gethsemane; and it is corroborated by the teaching of St. Paul in Romans viii. 15 and Galatians iv. 6, where he indicates to us that one of the primary results of the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians is that they are able to address God as “Father” simply. More than that, Paul uses the same word that is used by Jesus—the Aramaic Abba. That seems to me to make it very probable that the intention of our Lord was that his disciples should learn to pray to God in the same way as he did himself. Why then do we come to have in Matthew “Our Father who art in
heaven”? There need be little hesitation about the answer to that question, since "Our Father who art in heaven" is a stock phrase of Jewish Synagogue piety—one way in which a reverent and devout Jew spoke to God. I am therefore inclined to think that the replacement of the simple "Father" by the more respectful—I would almost say more formal—expression "Our Father who art in heaven" is the result of Jewish piety influencing in the first instance Jewish-Christian piety, and eventually the piety of the Church at large. In that regard it is interesting to observe the way in which the prayer is introduced in the daily liturgy established in the East. In the Western Church "we make bold to say 'Our Father'". That "making bold", I think, can be traced back fairly clearly in some of the Greek forms to the meaning "we make bold" to address God as Father. "We make bold", we go so far as to say "Our Father who art in heaven", but we are not so bold as to say simply "Father". Whether that is right or wrong I do not attempt to determine. It is possible to be too familiar with the Almighty; and beyond doubt it is right that Christians should have a proper reverence and respect in approaching Him. Sound liturgical practice inculcates and fosters reverence. On the other hand, there is something lost if Christians cannot speak to God with a simple directness and intimacy while still maintaining due reverence. It may be that in practice the simple solution would be to use the Matthaean opening for public worship and the Lukan for private devotions.

Another example of modification by liturgical use may be found in a variant reading in the Lukan version of the Prayer. Here in certain manuscripts the familiar clause, "Thy kingdom come", disappears and is replaced by an entirely different petition, "Thy Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us". This reading occurs in two manuscripts only, 162 and 700, of which 700 is by far the more important. The reading was known to the Church fathers Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus Confessor. With the help of other evidence it can be traced back to very early times. It seems that it was known to, and perhaps used by, the heretic Marcion in the early part of the second century. What the full meaning of these various bits of evidence may be
I do not feel qualified or able to say dogmatically, but I strongly suspect that they reflect the use of the Lord's Prayer in connection with the rites of initiation into membership of the Christian community. We know from the New Testament that the reception of the Holy Spirit—usually marked by "speaking with tongues"—was regarded as the normal accompaniment of baptism in the Apostolic Age. The order of events may be uncertain; and the laying on of Apostolic hands often, and nearly always, had a part to play, some might say an essential part. But whatever may be the truth about details, there is no doubt about the main fact that baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit were closely connected in the Apostolic Age.

A different picture of baptism is given if we turn to the accounts of the baptism administered by John the Baptist. John's baptism is evidently a rite of purification like the baptism of Proselytes. I am becoming inclined to think that the baptism with fire which John held over the heads of his contemporaries may have been a baptism with refiner's fire. It may have been a fire of destruction; but also it could be a fire of purification. I am inclined to the latter possibility by the fact that in the Jewish rites for the purification of vessels both water and fire were used, fire being the more powerful detergent. It may be that John offered the drastic purification by fire as an alternative to destruction. I recall that St. Paul, writing in I Corinthians vii. 12-15 on the testing of work and saving of workers, says "by fire". It seems to me not impossible that the cleansing work of water and fire has been transferred to the Holy Spirit; and that the reception of the Holy Spirit may have been thought of as the perfect cleansing of the human soul. If that was so, then this variant petition may perhaps be construed as a request for baptism with the Holy Spirit as the supreme cleansing of the spirit of man. This would suggest, in its turn, that it came into use in connection with the baptismal rite; and the distribution of the witnesses to this reading leads one to think that the change of reading took place in the Eastern Church rather than the Western. And, finally, the fact that this petition appears to have been known to Marcion and adopted into his version of the Lord's Prayer would suggest that it came into use very early. I do not think
it is at all likely that it is an original part of the Lord's Prayer as given by the Lord, but I can well imagine that it is a very early example of the way in which the Prayer was modified by liturgical use, as prayers constantly are unless you stick very rigidly to a written text.¹

A third example of liturgical modification is the Doxology, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." Whether we follow Matthew or Luke, this is quite clearly no part of the true text of the Prayer, as given to the Disciples by Jesus. The interesting thing is that there is a remarkable lack of unanimity among the manuscripts and versions, which give the Doxology, as to the form it should take. Three things are connected—"kingdom, power, and glory". They are all present in the great mass of manuscripts of Matthew belonging to what we know as the Byzantine or Ecclesiastical tradition—the standard New Testament text of the Eastern Orthodox Church from the fifth and sixth centuries onwards. The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles and the Sahidic version have "for thine is the power and the glory". On the other hand the Curetonian manuscript of the old Syriac has "for thine is the kingdom and the glory". No authority contains "kingdom and power" but one manuscript (k), representing the text in use in Carthage in the third century, has "power" alone without either "kingdom" or "glory". The Doxology is entirely omitted by the best manuscripts of Alexandria, by the leading western manuscript D, by the old Latin version and the Vulgate. When we look at all that complicated mass of facts, we observe that the main attestation of the Doxology comes from the Eastern centres of Christianity. The Ecclesiastical Byzantine text is the text of the Eastern Orthodox Church; the manuscript Θ was closely associated with the Church at Caesarea, in Palestine; while the Didache was early connected with Syria. Important evidence against the Doxology comes from the geographical West, the Codex Bezae (D), the old Latin and the Vulgate; and here the West is supported by the main scholarly tradition of Alexandria, embodied in the Bl text.

¹We need only consider the amount of variation that has been imported, in Free Church usage, into the Apostolic Benediction (2 Cor. xiii. 14).
The Doxology is a liturgical addition; and it is significant that it should appear mainly in the East. Its absence in the early days in the West is paralleled by the fact that the Western liturgy—the Roman liturgy—is in general marked by a certain austerity which is not characteristic of the Eastern liturgies. These are more florid and decorative and seem almost to revel in the heaping up of dignified and reverent phrases; the West proceeds more quietly and soberly, and avoids extravagance in its liturgical fashion.

So much for liturgical changes in the text of the Prayer.

Another group of variants is connected with instruction and doctrine: they arise from the fact that teachers in the Church undertake to expound the Lord's Prayer. One of the most striking examples of this is to be found in Tertullian's Tract on the Prayer. Here we are probably listening to the author expounding the Lord's Prayer to candidates for baptism. The order of the second and third petitions is inverted. Where we are accustomed to pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as in heaven ", in Tertullian we find the order: "Thy will be done in the heavens and in earth" followed by "Thy kingdom come". This is no accident; for later on, when summing up, he puts the petitions in the same order. After the name of God, the will of God, and then the kingdom of God. When you read what he has to say in the actual exposition the reason for the change or order is clear. Tertullian thinks of the coming of the kingdom in terms of the end of the world and therefore the doing of God's will on earth, if it is to be done at all, must precede the coming of the kingdom. There will be no chance of doing God's will on earth when the kingdom has come because the coming of the kingdom will be the end of the present world order. Tertullian is apparently not in favour of any interpretation of the coming of the kingdom simply in terms of man's obedience to the will of God here and now. In this he is surely wrong. I think the common order is the right one and that we are on the right track when we think that the coming of the kingdom is elucidated in one of its essential characteristics by the petition "thou wilt be done on earth as it is in heaven".

1 Now readily accessible in the admirable little edition by Canon Ernest Evans.
When it is done on earth as in heaven, at that moment, in that spot, and to that extent the kingdom truly comes. This we may affirm without denying that there are other aspects of the coming of the kingdom that belong elsewhere.

I now turn to consider the differences between Luke and Matthew in regard to forgiveness of sins. In Luke we have the present tense, "Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive. . . ." In Matthew we have the perfect, "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven. . . ." And that goes with another interesting fact that in the Lukan account of the giving of the Lord's Prayer the Prayer is followed by an assurance from Jesus of the readiness of God to hear anyone who sincerely prays to him. But in Matthew it is followed by the statement of the terms on which God will or will not grant forgiveness (Matt. vi. 14 f.) "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses". That suggests to one's mind that the perfect tense, "As we also have forgiven" is a statement which in effect means, "we have satisfied the conditions for receiving forgiveness: now let God fulfil his side of the bargain. We have done what is required of us: now it is for God to do the rest." The present tense does not necessarily carry that implication, though, of course, it may. What did Jesus himself teach on this point? Was it a transaction in which "if I do this, God will be obliged to do that"? Or was it something different? I think we get some light on the question in Matthew v. 23, "If you are making your offering in the Temple and remember that your brother has something against you, stop; go and make it up with your brother then continue with your offering". Now the implication of that, I think, is that genuine communion with God is somehow blocked by disharmony with one's neighbour. Human beings out of harmony with one another are thereby prevented from being in harmony with God. Another way of putting that is to say that to have a hard and unforgiving spirit is to have in oneself the most effective obstacle to the receiving of God's forgiveness. God's forgiveness is not a matter of a bargain or contract or transaction. If you refuse to forgive, it is an indication that you
are unfit to receive forgiveness yourself—unable to accept it. If you cannot give forgiveness you cannot begin to receive it.

The last example that I should like to look at concerns the word "daily", in the petition "Give us our daily bread". This is discussed at enormous length by Origen, who comes down for what is in all probability the wrong interpretation. It touches on the question whether ἐπίουσιος should be derived from ἐμί and οὐσία, οὐσία being a term of philosophical theology, or from the verb ἐπιέναι. Origen has no hesitation about rejecting the latter alternative and choosing the metaphysical interpretation. No doubt the reason for this choice is that "as a Platonist he is convinced concerning the inferiority of the material world. It is shadowy, unsubstantial and of small account as compared with the true, substantial and abiding spiritual realities. Consequently, the things that we can see, hear and touch with the bodily senses, indeed the whole life of the body, are comparatively of little moment. And when we approach the invisible God in prayer, it is not for these bodily things that we are to pray, but for the spiritual only." ¹

Origen's conclusion then is that epiousios bread is the "living bread" which has "come down out of heaven". ² It is the bread "which is best adapted to the reasonable nature and akin to it in its very substance: it provides at once health and vigour and strength to the soul and imparts a share of its own immortality (for the word of God is immortal) to him who eats of it". ³ This epiousios bread is also to be understood where Scripture speaks of the tree of life or the wisdom of God. The matter has been well summed up in this way: "The 'bread' we pray for is not the bread that is to lie on our tables, but the meat which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give. To feed on it is to feed on the spiritual teachings of Christ. What is more nourishing to the soul than the Word, and what is more precious to the mind of him who makes room for it than the Wisdom of God? And what is more appropriate to the rational soul than truth." ⁴ (De Orat. xxvii. 2).

² John vi. 51.
³ De Orat. xxvii. 9, trans. Oulton, p. 300.
⁴ Oulton, op. cit. 119.
This metaphysical bread is received, as all truth must be, through mental processes, instruction, reflection, and the like. The only material medium that would seem to be involved is the written or spoken word. Origen does not suggest in his discussion of this petition that the reference is to the bread of the Eucharist.

It seems to me that Tertullian was on the right track when he linked the expression up, not with the supersubstantial knowledge of God, but with the enjoyment of God’s care (para. 6); and this is what the petition asks for in the first instance. In recent years there has been a renewed interest in the problem of the meaning of ἐπιούσιος and lively discussion of every scrap of evidence that might give a clue. And evidence is worse than scanty. Origen could produce no example of the word from the secular Greek literature known to him; and he was reduced to supposing that it had been coined by the Evangelists. Apart from the Gospels and Christian writings based on them, it appears as a variant reading in three late manuscripts of 2 Macc. i. 8, where it refers to the shewbread. The only other occurrence, so far as I know, was in a papyrus document published by Flinders Petrie in 1889 in the volume of the Egypt Exploration Society’s Reports dealing with Hawara, Biamu, and Arsinoe. This document was apparently a domestic account book and a comparison of its data with those furnished by a wall-inscription from Pompeii (CIL iv, Suppl. 4000 g) suggested that ἐπιούσιος could be a term to describe the daily ration of food issued to domestic slaves. Unfortunately, the Flinders-Petrie papyrus appears to have been lost and the wall-inscription to have succumbed to the weather. ¹ But from what was gathered at the time it would seem that the mysterious word simply reflects the arrangements in any contemporary household, with rations being issued to the servants on one day for use on the following day. ² The picture that is presented by this petition, if this is


² Cf. Luke xii. 42 “Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food (their rations) in due season?”
the right way to understand epiousios, is the picture of the follower of Jesus doing his daily tasks as God wills and receiving from God’s hands whatever is needed to keep him going at work for another day.

That, I think, is as much as we can attempt in the way of detailed examination of particular points and I suppose that those who have followed the discussion so far will be asking questions like this: Are we any nearer to being able to reconstruct the original form of the Lord’s Prayer as our Lord himself gave it? Can we be sure that we have anything like the exact wording? I do not think that it is possible with absolute certainty in every detail to say just what the original form of the Prayer was. We can make guesses; but we cannot know beyond doubt that our guesses are right. We must be content with approximations; and I think that we can know what the Lord’s Prayer must have been like originally well enough to be able to use it as guide, model, and standard for our own praying. And I think we can be reasonably sure of the meaning of the several petitions.

At this point I venture to state my own conclusions, for what they are worth, as a kind of summing up of the discussion so far. I think that the Prayer probably began with the simple address “Father”. That set the tone of the Prayer as a whole. It is a way of expressing at the outset a simple, direct trust and love akin to that shown by our Lord himself in his earthly life. This is followed by the petition that God’s name may be sanctified. That is, the address is intimate and familiar but it is accompanied by all the reverence and devotion that are due from man to God; and, as the early Fathers said, this petition means in the first instance “hallowed by me”. “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” I think are sufficiently near to the original and I think they belong together and the second half is explanatory of the first. “Thy kingdom come” means first and foremost “thy kingdom come in my case.” Our Lord’s prayer in Gethsemane explains perfectly what is meant both by “thy kingdom come” and by “thy will be done on earth as in heaven”. Complete obedience on the part of him who prays is the explanation—and the realization—of the kingly rule of the divine Father. The second part of the Lord’s Prayer is the
request for the things that are necessary in order to be good and faithful servants of the heavenly king: enough material provision to do one's work efficiently; a gracious and forgiving attitude to us in the mistakes and disobedience that none of us can hope to avoid, coupled with the acknowledgement that if we are to have that, we must be prepared to show a forgiving and kindly spirit to our neighbours in their mistakes and disobedience and trespasses. The request regarding temptation has peculiar difficulties of its own: would God lead us into temptation? The short answer—and there is no time for a long discussion—is that as the world is made we cannot avoid it; it is there in any case. The petition, I think, ought to be understood as a request that we should not have to face trials or temptations that might lead us into absolute disloyalty. That goes with the final petition, for deliverance from the powers that are hostile to the will of God.

This, then, I think is the substance of the prayer in what seems to me to be its original form. It is a proclamation and personal acknowledgement of the kingship of the divine Father made in confident love, deep reverence, and willing obedience; and this is joined with a request to him for all things that are needed in order that we may be in the fullest and most real sense his loyal subjects and servants as long as we live.