

Cabalistic Keys to the Lord's Prayer



Manly P. Hall

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by Manly P. Hall

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ISBN-10 | 0-89314-308-1

ISBN-13 | 978-0-89314-308-4

(2009 Edition)

Cover Illustration: Group of World Religions by J. Augustus Knapp (from Manly P. Hall's, THE SECRET TEACHINGS OF ALL AGES)

Published by

THE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

3910 Los Feliz Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90027 USA

Telephone 323.663.2167

Fax 323.663.9443

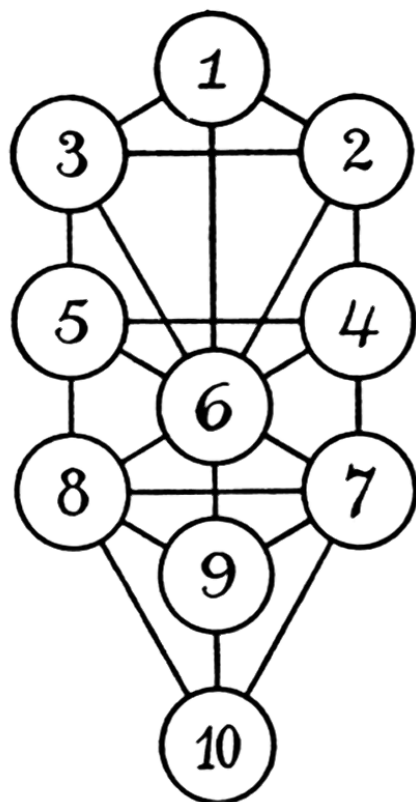
Website www.prs.org

E-mail info@prs.org



Printed in the United States of America

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It might be well to introduce this subject with a brief summary of the concept of prayer, as this practice is to be found in the principal religions of mankind. A prayer is a formula of supplication, adoration, confession, or thanksgiving addressed to God, either directly or through intermediary powers, by an individual or a congregation. The words used may be fixed by traditional usage or may be completely informal, according to the mood or need of the supplicant. In either case, the words themselves must be spoken with the deepest sincerity and the fullest realization of the sacredness of the action.

Prayers of ancient nations are recorded upon surviving monuments, especially those pertaining to mortuary rites or public offerings in honor of remarkable events. Such prayers are similar to those in use today, and there has been very little change in the structure of prayer-formulas since the earliest recorded examples. Most of the temples dedicated to the superior deities preserved formulas for addressing the gods through petition or as an act of homage. Usually, the older prayers were less personal and more devotional and were part of an elaborate ritualism. The private citizen seldom addressed personal petitions to the divinities except in an extreme emergency.

Those mortals who felt that they had received some special evidence of divine intercession often brought to the temples gifts of real or sentimental value, and these presents were inscribed with appropriate words of appreciation. Inscriptions of this kind frequently took the form of testimonials. They

were simple statements of the facts involved, the divine assistance rendered, and the gratitude of the recipient. In the larger shrines, these testimonials formed an impressive collection evidencing the benevolences of the deity.

Nearly all primitive religious worship included means for attracting the attention of superhuman beings or even the spirits or ghosts of illustrious mortals. Songs, dances, sacrifices of all kinds, rites, and ceremonies were performed so that the needs of the people might be more immediately known to the heavenly powers, or to acquaint evil or malicious entities with the sincerity and faithfulness of the people. The various demons would be unable to work their evil spells upon the tribe if the members thereof called upon good and all-powerful spiritual guardians. While the public mind has changed considerably in recent centuries, the prayer-formulas still in use retain most of the elements of the old spiritism in word if not in concept.

Since the Protestant Reformation, the practice of private prayer has increased among Christian nations. The ritualistic forms of the old church have been modified, and prayer has become an experience of intimate communion. Although some churches have maintained the form of congregational petition, the individual members of the church are invited to seek spiritual security, especially in time of stress, through the act of private prayer. Form and word are less important than the genuine statement of faith made either audibly or silently, and it is assumed that Deity, ever-mindful of the needs of his children, will be attentive to all honorable and honest petitions.

It is well known that philosophers and scholars not given to the acceptance of theological forms have practiced the act of prayer and recommended it to their followers and disciples. The transition between prayer as a ritual and prayer as a mystical experience has been accomplished gradually as the result

of the increasing emphasis upon religion as a personal search for truth. Mysticism teaches that by a simple act of devotion, human consciousness may be elevated to momentary union with divine consciousness, and that this union bestows an inner strength which surpasseth understanding. This strength, which can be experienced but not explained, is the presence of God known in a mystery.

As the result of the mingling of tradition and instinct in the human soul, the impulse to seek solace in prayer is widespread even among those who are not nominally religious. This is clearly revealed in times of public disaster, war, and other general catastrophes. The human being is most aware of his own limitations when his character is subjected to special strain. When insufficient to his own needs, he is impelled to seek a larger source of security. It requires but slight consideration for him to realize that faith has brought courage and fortitude to other persons whom he has known, admired, and loved. Early religious indoctrination and association intensify the resolution, and the mind easily accepts the persuasions bestowed by impulse. There are very few who choose to walk dark and dangerous paths alone, and as the way becomes more hazardous, the benefits of spiritual communion become more evident.

Few modern institutions have escaped materialistic pressures, and the churches are confronted with decisions that require genuine dedication to truth. The act of prayer is too often involved in the gratification of personal and physical ambitions. The modern believer prays more for prosperity in this world than for security in the world to come. He is more concerned with the increase of his goods than with the increase of the good within himself. Several denominations have hit upon the idea that prayer is a magical force by which selfish members can advance their various fortunes by enlisting divine aid. God is

called upon to intercede in real estate transactions, the fluctuations of the stock exchange, and in an assortment of personal trivia. Instead of approaching Divinity with songs of praise and thanksgiving, the prevailing tendency is to bombard heaven with requirements and demands. In many cases, we ask for that which we have neither the resolution nor the patience to earn by legitimate means. To the degree that prayer becomes a substitute for common intelligence and natural industry, the act of prayerfulness is mutilated and profaned.

Supplication is most commonly a petition for something lacking and needed, or a request that something present and harmful be removed. Where the difficulty could be corrected by the individual himself, it is his ethical responsibility to apply all remedies within his knowledge before asking for divine help. After all, religion is not actually prayer, and religion in character and conduct, when properly and faithfully applied, would reduce the emergencies which impel man to ask for higher assistance.

When one of his disciples questioned Pythagoras concerning the advisability of supplicating the gods, the great sage recommended that only the wisest of men should petition the deities. He explained that only the wise are without personal ambitions and prejudices and therefore would be likely to pray for the good of others. Most men, Pythagoras explained, will pray for what they want, but only the gods know what they need. If an unwise prayer be granted, disasters are only multiplied. The early religions of the Near East and North Africa emphasized prayer, especially in their initiatory rites. They asked the deities to attend the rituals and bestow their blessings upon the ceremonies. In some instances it is reported that the deities themselves were present, either in their proper forms or as light or as an invisible but tangible power. It was also believed that

images of the deities were overshadowed, and that divine creatures made their wishes known through oracles and omens.

The old Jewish faith included prayers for numerous occasions, and after the rise of Cabalism, these mystical supplications were analyzed for magical content, and it was taught that the very words and sounds were capable of producing strange and wonderful phenomena. It may be worthy of note that persons of good faith, regardless of the religion to which they belong, testify to the benevolent and beneficent consequences of earnest prayer. No faith has ever been able to prove that its petitions were more likely to be answered than those of another religion. Integrity is always the determining factor, and some day man may learn that this is one of the deepest secrets of religion.

The prayer generally known as the Lord's Prayer is used throughout Christendom, and is held in common by most, if not all, of the Christian sects. Although it is generally supposed to have been invented by Jesus for the use of his disciples and followers, it was actually derived from older Jewish prayers, and contains nothing that is inconsistent with the Rabbinical tradition. Basnage (see *His. des Jaifs*, t. VI. p. 374) has said that the Jews had an ancient prayer called the Kadish, exactly like the Lord's Prayer, and Webster may well remark that it is a curious fact that the Lord's Prayer may be constructed almost verbatim out of the Talmud.

The anonymous author of that most learned work, *On Mankind, Their Origin and Destiny* (London, 1872), reprints from Reverend John Gregorie (London, 1685) the following Jewish prayer: "Our Father which art in heaven, be gracious to us, O Lord our God; hallowed be thy name, and let the remembrance of thee be glorified in heaven above, and upon earth here below. Let thy kingdom reign over us, now and forever. Thy holy men of old said, Remit and forgive unto all men whatsoever

they have done against me. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil thing. For thine is the kingdom, and thou shalt reign in glory, forever and for evermore." Those parts not in italics are omitted in the Christian version.

In the Sinaitic Codex and the Vatican Codex there are also certain deletions from the present form of the prayer. For "we forgive our debtors," the earliest manuscripts read "as we have forgiven our debtors." Neither of the codices mentioned above contains the lines "for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

It is not necessary here to examine parallel references in Hebrew writings to the various elements of the Lord's Prayer. "Our Father which art in heaven" occurs repeatedly in Jewish compositions prior to the Christian Era. The expression "give us this day our daily bread" is in the Talmud, attributed to Hillel. We may say, therefore, that a number of early convictions and expressions of veneration and worship have been combined into a simple and devout prayer. The very arrangement suggests that the form may have been influenced by the mystical sect of the Essenes.

The medieval speculations of the Cabalists included an analysis of Scriptural texts as a means of sustaining and demonstrating the Cabalistic concept of the universe, with its hierarchies of spiritual beings. The Lord's Prayer divided itself by its very construction into a series of separate statements, each of which was believed to be a veiled reference to the secret cosmic sciences. As more Christian scholars became intrigued with the Cabalistic speculations, a number of writings appeared attempting to explain and interpret the sections of the prayer and to resolve certain spiritual inconsistencies that appeared to be present. It is quite possible that the changes already noted may have been the result of early commentators wishing to perfect a series of analogies.

The Cabalistic doctrine was developed from a fundamental pattern called the Sephirothic Tree. This Tree consists of ten *sephiroth*, or blossoms, which are suspended from three vertical stems and united by twenty-two paths. This treelike design belongs to that system of philosophy which is called *emanationism*. Each *sephira* is emanated from the preceding one, and each, in turn, emanates the *sephira* immediately succeeding it. Each emanation is enclosed within the one from which it proceeds, so that the entire arrangement can be represented by a series of concentric circles, of which the outer includes all the others. It is further to be understood that the Sephirothic Tree is a universal design, a kind of master key to all the creating and creative processes of nature.

The accompanying table will clarify the arrangement better than words. We are confronted with the necessity for adjusting the Cabalistic theory with what has been called the Ptolemaic astronomical concept. This means that certain parts of the Sephirothic Tree must be associated with the three major parts of the Ptolemaic system: the sphere of the fixed stars, the orbits of the seven planets, and the zones of the four elements. This can be done most simply by means of a table.

THE SEPHIROTH

- 1 Kether—*the Crown*
- 2 Chochmah—*Wisdom*
- 3 Binah—*Understanding*
- 4 Chesed—*Mercy*
- 5 Geburah—*Severity*
- 6 Tiphereth—*Beauty*
- 7 Netsah—*Victory*
- 8 Hod—*Glory*
- 9 Jesod—*the Foundation*
- 10 Malchuth—*the Kingdom*

THE UNIVERSE

- Primum Mobile
The Zodiac
Saturn
Jupiter
Mars
Sun
Venus
Mercury
Moon
Elements

The *sephiroth* are qualities of the Divine Nature, the conditions of consciousness that arose in God during the processes of forming the universe. The *Sepher Yetzirah* (THE BOOK OF THE FORMATIONS) describes the sequence of emanations by which the eternal and abiding Divinity fashions the world by descending the Ladder of Sapphires (*sephiroth*). As Deity enters each of the ten conditions, or possibly more correctly nine conditions from itself (*kether*), it justifies these conditions and establishes itself in them, and them in itself.

Kether, or the crown, is the first statement of God in space. It is the All in terms of the One. It is unity imposed upon the substance of the eternal. Eternity itself, usually referred to as *Ain Soph*, the Boundless, is symbolized by a closed eye. When this eye opens, eternity becomes time, Being becomes a being, and the All-pervading Absolute emerges as the Godhead. Thus, *kether*, the open eye, corresponds to the “unmoved Mover” of Platonism. It is unmoved because it partakes of the nature of eternity. It is the mover because it has entered into the state of time. The universal correspondent to *kether* is therefore the *primum mobile*, or the first motion. This is the motion of the universe itself, and this motion, in turn, contributes mobility to all that exists within itself. Here is an analogy to Taoism, in which Tao itself is motion without direction, or internal motion, which is the source of all motion with direction.

From the *primum mobile* is emanated the zodiac, or the sphere of the fixed stars, which to the ancients was the greatest of all motion with direction, for it moves the entire solar system and supplies the energy to the wanderers, or planets. The *sephiroth* three to nine correspond to the second division of the Ptolemaic system, and are symbolized by the seven planets in their orbits. The last of the *sephiroth*, which is called *Malchuth*, or the kingdom, is usually shown as a circle quartered by a cross. This is the sphere of the four elements which compose the body of the earth in the old systems of astronomy.

The Sephirothic Tree is also represented in the human body and its superphysical vehicles. *Sephiroth* one and two correspond with the spirit. *Sephiroth* three to nine correspond to the soul, with its auric vehicles; and *sephira* ten, with the physical body and its etheric double. Much of this symbolism can still be traced in the Major Trumps of the Tarot, and, of course, the ten jewels, or sapphires, are the key to the Ten Commandments of Moses. In the formation processes, *sephiroth* three to nine are the Elohim, or creating gods, which occur in the opening chapters of Genesis.

The Cabalists, in turn, applied this universal concept to the divisions of the Lord's Prayer. They believed that each division was addressed to one of the divine hierarchies, which together constituted the witnesses of the Divine Nature. The system is intricate, but for practical purposes, we can reduce it to a simple statement, which, however, must necessarily be incomplete in the more abstract of its scientific elements.

| | | |
|----|---------------|--|
| 1 | Primum Mobile | <i>Our Father</i> |
| 2 | The Zodiac | <i>Which art in heaven</i> |
| 3 | Saturn | <i>Hallowed be thy name</i> |
| 4 | Jupiter | <i>Thy kingdom come</i> |
| 5 | Mars | <i>Thy will be done</i> |
| 6 | Sun | <i>On earth as it is in heaven</i> |
| 7 | Venus | <i>Give us this day our daily bread</i> |
| 8 | Mercury | <i>Forgive us our debts</i> |
| 9 | Moon | <i>Lead us not into temptation</i> |
| 10 | Elements | <i>For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.</i> |

The more we examine this comparison, the more obvious the astrological consistencies become. The seven planets of the

ancient system were always associated with the qualities suggested by the lines of the prayer. Saturn, or Kronos, was the son of Ouranos—the heavenly sphere. He was associated with the tyranny of time, and was the devourer of his own progeny, or the emanations which came from him and which were destined to return to him in the end. By a strategy, Jupiter took from him his *kingdom*, and became the *demiurgos*, or ruler, of the lower diffusion. Mars was always associated with the power of the will as the agent of action. The sun, halfway between the extremities of the planetary system, was the equilibrium point between heaven and earth.

Venus was the ancient nourisher and the governess of wheat (*daily bread*). Mercury was the deity presiding over crime and punishment and law. Among the Greeks and Latins, he was the patron god of thieves. The moon, as ruler of imagination and fantasy, or illusion, was frequently regarded as presiding over inconstancies of the mind and emotions. The elements, of course, were the sphere in which the *kingdom* was established in this world, and through which the *power and the glory* manifested as the laws and operations of nature.

In such ancient writings as *The Divine Pyramander* of Hermes and the account of Ishtar's descent through the seven gates, each of the planets bestowed a faculty or power upon the human soul as it descended into incarnation from the sphere of the fixed stars of the zodiac. These seven gifts were successive degrees of limitations. They were called bodies, vestments, or adornments, but by each of them the soul was more closely united with the principle of matter. This investiture constituted the symbolic "fall," and ended when the elements bestowed the physical body.

Regeneration, the motion by which the soul returns to God, is therefore the conquest of these bodies, which are transformed from burdens to vehicles of conscious manifestation. Man must

overcome the seven planets and transmute them into soul powers. Their negative forces are the seven deadly sins, which are overcome by a symbolic struggle with demons and dragons and, in turn, are transmuted into the seven cardinal virtues. This is the key to alchemy, for from the seven base metals, first spiritualized and then brought together as a secret compound, is produced the Philosophers' Stone—the purified soul.

Actually, the tenth division of the great system is not one of the seven parts of the soul. The body is not an active agent in itself, but is the container of the seven soul powers, which manifest through it as the seven senses, which, in turn, cause the works of man to be perfected through seven liberal arts and sciences. This may explain why the closing lines of the Lord's Prayer are not to be found in the *Sinaitic* or *Vatican Codex*. There is no doubt that the Biblical manuscripts were subjected to early editing by the Cabalists, Gnostics, and other heretical groups.

It should not be assumed that the teachings set forth in the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer originated in the old Jewish faith. Actually, the same basic principles are to be found in all the religious systems of the ancient world. Confucius said that the doctrine which he brought to the Chinese consisted solely in possessing rectitude of heart and in loving one's neighbor as oneself. There is a beautiful statement of the same concept in the writings of the early Aryans, where the good man not only forgives his enemy, but even desires to benefit his destroyer, "as the sandal tree at the moment of its overthrow sheds perfume on the axe which fells it."

As long as imperfect mortals must dwell together and seek their common salvation in social patterns, each must forgive the failings of others and consider the concord of all above such personal satisfaction as might result from the perpetuation of

private discord. This is a solid philosophical and political conviction, and we advance most by forgiving most. Even though kindness of spirit may be regarded as weakness of character by the profane, it is still the most powerful of benevolent magical agencies. The teachings of Christ are completely clear on this subject, but, unfortunately, there is not one of his precepts more often violated.

From the table of analogies between the parts of the universe and the sections of the Lord's Prayer, it is evident that the prayer is intimately related to the divisions of the human soul. The soul itself is divided into seven parts, to each of which is assigned the symbolic influence and dominion of one of the planets. There is a further arrangement by which the soul is conceived to be composed of three parts, a division also recognized astrologically. The ancients referred to Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars as the superior planets, because in their arrangement these were located above the orbit of the sun. Venus, Mercury, and the moon were called inferior planets, because they were below the solar orbit. The sun itself stood alone, constituting a middle zone. The soul was likewise said to consist of a superior part (the divine soul) an inferior part (the animal soul), and a middle part (the human soul).

In classical philosophy, the divine soul naturally verged toward God, the animal soul verged toward the earth, or nature, and the human soul rested in equilibrium between the extremes. This concept is summarized in the Platonic statement that the human being in whom the animal attributes predominated was a beast in a world of men; one in whom the human attributes predominated was a man in a world of beasts; and one in whom the divine attributes predominated was a god in a world of men. It should be remembered that many ancient systems did not clearly differentiate between mind and emotion,

and the soul was considered as including the mental propensities distributed in the same threefold way.

An eighth, or sublunary, attribute of the soul was referred to in some of the older writings, and this was usually regarded as the generative, or procreative, function of soul power. This would correspond to the earth, which served as a vehicle for the incarnation and manifestation of the soul potencies. The soul was the immortal mortal, for the seven planetary orbits occupied a middle distance between spirit above (the zodiac) and matter below (the earth, or elements). The superior part of the human soul bestowed the dimension of universality, the middle part bestowed the dimension of individuality, and the inferior part bestowed the dimension of personality. Thus, the "fall" of man was a descent from the universal to the personal, and the redemption was the ascent from the personal to the universal.

It was taught that the central zone of the sun was also the abode of the ego, which by its very nature was associated with individuality. There is an analogy between these divisions and the conclusions of some psychologists. The division of the mind, for example, into the superconscious, the conscious, and the subconscious is reminiscent of older thinking. The sun was held as peculiarly sacred, because its zone formed the bridge, or link, between inferiors and superiors. When the individuality unites itself with the personality, we have the materialist, and when it unites itself with the universality, we have the idealist.

In theology, the three-fold division of the soul is restated in the concept of heaven, earth, and hell. This explains why consciousness, posited in the ego, was rewarded by a superior existence for its virtues, and punished by an inferior existence for its vices. The Pythagorean doctrine that evil men would be reborn in an animal state should be understood as referring to the divisions of the soul and not to actual incarnations in the bodies of brutes.

A prayer is much more than a verbal statement. Those who pray are required to be mindful of the meaning of this mystical statement of divine realities. Prayer, then, is a sequence of realizations in which the one who prays experiences and re-affirms the cosmic pattern. First, the whole concept must be internally known and revitalized as an inner experience. Each of the statements contained in the Lord's Prayer is a statement of recognition, acceptance, and resolution. If man visualizes intensely the purpose for himself and the means by which he can attain to the high destiny for which he was created, he restates a complete pattern which is his ever-present help. This visualization is the mood of prayer, and without it the formula is merely words.

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name substantiates the reality of the Divine Power and its availability through mystical identification. In the human experience, *Father* is universal consciousness, both eminent and imminent; it is all-pervading reality immediately available through a spiritual experience of acceptance. *Heaven*, of course, is the highest abstraction of place, or space itself. The Creator is everywhere present as the one source of the beautiful and the good. *Heaven* is the furthestmost and the innermost, that which transcends all place in terms of quality, and all space in terms of quantity. It is to be experienced, however, not as the all-powerful, but as the all-benevolent. God is to be experienced as paternity rather than as despotism. He is to be loved rather than feared, to be known rather than adored, and to be experienced rather than to be accepted. The transmutation of authority (Saturn) into the realization of intimate participation is the secret substance of this section.

Thy kingdom come substantiates the resolution to release the infinite love of God through the highest of human capacities—the capacity for wisdom. In the descent from the superior state,

the power of Saturn (truth) is entrusted to the keeping of Jupiter, the deity personifying wisdom. This is not to be confused with learning, for the supreme wisdom is that which recognizes and accepts the Divine Will and the divine purpose. Wisdom is "knowing toward truth." In the mood of prayer, wisdom is also the decision of the mind to seek the real and to behold the reality in all things. Through wisdom we come to know the presence of God in creation. It is more than the knowledge of things; it is the realization of the source of things and the resolution that all knowledge shall be dedicated to the discovery of causes. The wording is such that we have a simple statement which grants voluntary permission for truth in our lives to have its perfect works. We accept the sovereignty of the Eternal Being as immediate in consciousness, and affirm ourselves to be completely receptive to its purposes.

Thy will be done. By this statement we substantiate internal obedience to the universal purpose, manifesting inwardly through illumination, and outwardly through the workings of divine law in the material world. We renounce self-will (Mars), and place ourselves without reservation in the keeping of the Sovereign Good. We further substantiate ourselves as instruments of the Divine Will and accept the responsibility of such ministry or service as shall be entrusted to us. By self-will fell the angels, and by self-will was set up the kingdom of darkness against the kingdom of light. The great power of the human will is spiritually consummated in the will to renounce the will; that is, the courage to sacrifice mortal purpose so that we may share in the divine purpose.

On earth as it is in heaven substantiates the equilibrium represented by the sun. It has been written that the sun shines upon both the just and the unjust, for it represents an energy or power that may be used or abused, having no substance of its own except the substance of life-giving. The human individuality, or

ego, for which the sun stands as symbol, is without recognizable activity, unless it be associated with one of the superior or inferior potencies. While it is in equilibrium, life is held in suspension, but when it verges upward or downward it causes or supports subjective or objective processes. If we recognize *earth* as objective living or existence, and *heaven* as subjective, we know that it is our responsibility to dominate mortal action by immortal conviction. The spiritual internal must emerge and become sovereign over the material external. Through the ego, or conscious mind, the way of heaven flows downward and confirms the way of earth. The ego bestows upon man the power of spiritual decision. He of all visible creatures has the conscious ability to choose the right and to serve it with the fullness of his heart.

Give us this day our daily bread substantiates our recognition of the true source of our nutrition. This section of the prayer is a statement of the *bread* of life, or the *bread* that is not of this world. The nature of Venus reveals that love and beauty are the nourishers of the soul. When we pray to God for bread, it would be unreasonable to assume that physical food was implied. Bodily nutrition we have been told to earn by the sweat of our brow, but the *bread* of grace is a food that those know not of who have not dwelt in righteousness. We are most nourished by those extensions of consciousness which bestow internal certainties and the courage to seek first the *kingdom of heaven*. The Greeks knew this also, for the banquets of the sages were assemblies of those devoted to truth, who shared together their spiritual resources and experiences. This is the true meaning of the consecrated wafer used in the Christian sacrament.

Forgive us our debts. In the older form of this, the statement continued, not by saying as we forgive our debtors, but as we have forgiven our debtors. There is no substantiation unless

forgiveness precedes prayer. The human being must have already made his peace with men before he may enter the sanctuary and abide in the peace of God. The planet Mercury has authority over the lower, or human, mind or the unenlightened intellect. It is mortal mind that clings to the past and devotes its resources to negative processes of intellection. The presence of truth overcomes the error of ignorance. Those who dwell in darkness dwell in fears and doubts and antagonisms, but those who dwell in light have already renounced such fallacies. Man does not overcome darkness by struggling against shadows. The mere presence of light dispels all doubts and uncertainties. If we abide in the light, we abide in friendliness, one with the other. Forgiveness implies more than a gracious gesture; it is a fuller understanding by which this gesture is no longer necessary. When we understand all, we abide in the love of God, and give of this generously to all our fellow creatures.

Lead as not into temptation. This is the most difficult phrase in the prayer, for it is inconceivable that Deity should lead any of his creatures away from righteousness. It is clarified instantly, however, when we know that the statement is directed to the seventh and lowest division of the soul, which is under the power of the moon. The phrase then becomes the substantiation of man's resolution to resist the realm of fantasy, imagination, and inconsistent moods which partake of the lunar nature. So closely is man enveloped by the phantoms of the lower imagination that he is resolved to transmute them, and he requires that the lunar power shall deliver him from the evil things. Thus, the moon is revealed as potentially creative imagination. Imagination supplies the overtone that binds each sphere to the one directly superior to it. In order to ascend to a higher state, the human being must first image within himself the qualities of that state, and this imaging is the positive pole of imagination. By imaging we are able to extend above ourselves and to

experience as a mood a state of consciousness which we are seeking to attain.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory is the substantiation in the objective, or physical, life of the person of all that which he has already experienced and accepted. It may be interpreted as a final statement of faith, the complete dedication of himself to the truths that he has already visualized and the substance of which he has known within himself. More than this, it is a statement of orientation as regards physical and objective living. The prayer ends with the word *amen*, which is adapted from the name of one of the superior deities of the Egyptians. In present usage, *amen* implies *let it be so*, or *it is so*.

In Colossians 1:16, Paul, the apostle, writes of God: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him..." In the Cabala, the *thrones*, *dominions*, etc., are the names of the orders of spiritual beings or hierarchies associated with the zones or spheres of the stars and planets. We must assume, therefore, that St. Paul was aware of the universal concept that we have described. Throughout the Bible, especially in the prophetic books and in The Revelation, are numerous references to the seven planes of the soul.

In the Mystery systems, initiation always included the symbolical journey from the material to the spiritual state through an ascending order of trials and tests. The Cretan labyrinth was likewise a figure of the solar system. Personified as the Virgin of the World, the soul becomes, in The Revelation, the "Bride of the Lamb." This is also the golden wedding garments and the garments of glory of the high priest of Israel. It was believed by early Christian sects that the perfected human soul would ultimately take the place of the human physical body as a vehicle

for the manifestation of the spirit. Here is also an analogy to the transcendent being of Taoist metaphysics.

If we can understand prayer as a mystical communion, and not as a physical ritual, we will be less inclined to consider it as a means of directly advancing our physical fortunes. After all, physical security is actually impossible without internal consecration. We must live from within, and not try to force upon the higher parts of consciousness the limited perspective of outward existence. If we seek first the kingdom of heaven, which is the state of true knowing, all other things necessary will come to us. For the average person, prayer is the most intimate spiritual experience of which he is capable. It should not be used in an emergency, but to create a state of being which is beyond emergency.

In daily living, the light of the human soul shines forth through the works of the individual. To be gracious means to share the works of grace, and to reveal the grace of God is the proof that we abide in the light. Some have asked how it is possible for a universal Deity to be aware of the prayers of individuals, and how it is possible for these prayers to be considered and answered in so vast and complex a system of creative processes as surrounds us in the universe. Such an interpretation accepts only the eminence of God as a being and not the immanence of God as cosmic consciousness itself. A personal Deity, no matter how powerful, is not the explanation for the mystery of prayer. We must know by the power of faith the eternal availability of the Divine Spirit, which abides in us and with us. It is not necessary that a Deity answer prayer by inclining itself to the needs of its children. Prayer, as a spiritual experience, is the child inclining itself toward the Eternal. Through internal faith, man approaches God and is strengthened in his own statement of his own convictions. It is man, not God, who stands in need of prayer.

How can we believe in a universal wisdom and at the same time find it necessary to petition that wisdom to be mindful unto us? By what strange conflict in the mortal composition is man impelled to beg for that which is eternally present and eternally available? Ignorance is not a limitation of God, but a limitation of man's ability to experience God. In the processes of creation, Divinity has experienced man and continues to experience him throughout all time. It is man who has not yet perfected the instrument by which he may experience God. The internal realization of which prayer is the symbol, is a direct motion on the part of the isolated creature, separate only because of the belief in separateness. Man does not have to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is only necessary for him to pierce through the illusion of his own lower instincts and appetites. True prayer is therefore effective everywhere and always, because it is an intimate and personal statement of release. Without the realization of this, the spirit of religious service, with its ritual and sacraments, passes unknown and unrecognized.

The prayers of other nations and of other peoples, addressed to the same God under many names, are effective according to their sincerity. Reality is in itself nameless, and its substance cannot be altered by the forms through which it is approached. The universe recognizes only degrees of enlightenment and integrity, and aspiration is the magic key that opens rituals and symbols. Reality is no farther from any mortal creature than the very substance of himself. There is, however, a qualitative interval between the consciousness of man as it is now and the full consciousness of cosmic truth. This qualitative interval cannot be crossed by the intellect, nor can it be annihilated by the conquest of the secrets of physical nature. Union with the eternal Father is possible only by a conscious action of faith, and this action has been called "the works of the spirit." Words

without such works are dead, but the works themselves may even be accomplished without words.

The great prayers of the religions are therefore very simple, for they merely incline the mind and consciousness toward the realization and contemplation of that One which alone is good. In the Christian dispensation, Christ as the only begotten of the Father, is the personification of the world soul. Meditation upon this spiritual fact is the essence of mysticism. Christ in man is the human soul, which, if it be lifted up, will draw all other things unto it. The resurrection of the Christ in man, which is the hope of glory, is the redemption of the soul powers. These, purified of their negative attributes and redeemed by the resolution of consciousness, bring about resurrection in the spirit.

Faith is the comforter, for by the strength of faith we experience the reality of things unseen. Through the act of faith, we enlarge our capacity to experience the presence of spirit. Thus, the comforter, or faith, is the ecclesia, the assembly, or community of the true believers. By increasing inner strength, faith fulfills the works of faith. As the spiritual content in man increases, he becomes ever more aware of this spiritual content and receives ever more of the strength which it bestows.

The human being, disturbed by the pressures of the world and confused by the conflicts everywhere present among man-made institutions, is impelled by the requirements of his own survival to seek communion with some superior power. The more immediate the necessity, the more earnestly he petitions this power for strength and guidance. Realizing the peculiar intimacy of this communion, he retires to some quiet or secluded place and there pours out his heart to the unseen life which fills all space. Brave and strong men, courageous and gentle women have not been ashamed to turn for guidance and peace to their all-pervading Parent. Washington prayed kneeling in the snow

at Valley Forge, and Lincoln turned to prayer through the long, dark years of the Civil War. Strengthened in resolution by simple and abiding faith, the leaders and guides of temporal nations have made possible the progress of our world. Very little has been accomplished by those who trusted only their own strength and refused or denied the strength of Heaven.

It is not important what the words of a prayer may be; it is the conviction which moves the prayer that bridges the interval between the worlds. It is not even necessary that prayers be said at certain times or in certain places. The perfect prayer is the constant growing conviction of the divine plan and the Divine Planner. The simplest service that is performed in the name of truth and in the spirit of truth, is prayer. As Zoroaster has said, the good life, the good work, the good hope, these are magical invocations smiting the human being with the overdestiny that has been prepared for him from the beginning of the world.

Western nations could learn much about the spirit of prayer from Eastern mysticism. The East has always known that true prayer was an experience, a statement of abiding confidence in the wisdom of the Infinite. Thus, prayer is a deep and gentle mood in which man feels the ever-present universal love enveloping and containing him, and bringing rest and consolation to his spirit. It is not an escape from burdens or responsibilities; it is the receiving into oneself of vast resources, enabling one to carry a heavier burden and a greater responsibility. The good seek not rest from labor, but the inner strength to labor more earnestly and the inner wisdom to labor more usefully.

It would not be too much to say that prayer is a gradual transformation of man himself, who gains a new dignity by knowing internally that he shares in the sublime heritage of spirit. As he receives, he is impelled to give, and internal growth is immediately reflected in daily works. Thus it comes about that

when we pray unto the Father in spirit and in secret, he rewards us openly. These rewards may not be the solution of physical problems or the accumulation of material goods. The lasting reward is that we shall dwell in the light and have fellowship one with another.

A PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLANATION OF PRAYER

Most of the religions of the world have taught that prayer is a means of direct intercession through which the human being may approach God or the Spiritual Forces which abide in the world of causes. The question naturally arises as to the conflict between a doctrine of immutable law and the possibility of law being modified or even negated through the power of grace.

The conflict between law and grace is not as pronounced among the mystical theologies as in teachings essentially philosophical or deriving authority from the sciences. In Christianity, for example, intercession is a basic element in the religious pattern. The Christian Church has from the beginning been in conflict with systems of philosophy and science that reject all concepts of special dispensation and salvation through grace. In fact, Christianity has never emphasized the machinery of universal processes. Its concepts of cosmogony, anthropology, and the natural sciences, are extremely sketchy. The heavy emphasis has been placed upon faith as an internal and eternal power capable of dominating all natural processes and neutralizing the operation of natural law.

The conflict between law and grace assumes more important proportions in the Eastern religious systems, especially Buddhism, where heavy emphasis is laid upon the immutability of the laws governing both the universe and man. The cornerstone of Buddhistic philosophy is the law of cause and effect; and upon the absolute working of this law, the Buddhist builds

his conception of a world ruled by absolute and impersonal honesty. Yet among Buddhist sects the doctrine of salvation through grace has assumed such impressive proportions as to cause a sharp division between the Northern and Southern Schools. Eastern scholars as well as Western mystics have contemplated this apparent contradiction, to determine if possible whether the confusion is real or only apparent.

The external perceptions of man testify to the existence of a universal machinery everywhere operating according to fixed and immutable rules. To these rules there are only such exceptions as one might expect would naturally arise in the operation of an exceedingly complex and complicated structure in which some of the less important elements sometimes violate the rules of their kind. Four leaf clovers and two-headed calves may be regarded as examples of certain natural accidents; but the accidents arise not in the forms themselves, but in the energy patterns behind these forms. The form is always consistent with the energy.

The philosopher, contemplating the law of cause and effect in nature, and its correspondent law of karma in human conduct, gradually perceives the peculiar weakness of the popular concept of karmic action and reaction. The endless sequences of cause producing effect, and effect becoming the cause of further effect *ad infinitum*, becomes a vicious circle. Each action demands a subsequent reaction, and this in turn activates further action and reaction, world without end. This is the Buddhist Wheel, forever turning on the axis of desire. It is also the Wheel of Ixion, to which the dove is crucified forever. It was upon this same point of endless causes and effects that Aristotle broke with Plato. There was no beginning to cause; no end to effect. Even complete inaction had its own dynamic consequence.

Buddha taught that through the perfection of the internal consciousness, came release from the wheel of karma and re-birth. Thus, in some way, the internal light of the human soul must transcend the laws governing natural processes. The created universe is subject to the laws by which it was created, but consciousness itself, though creating, is not created. It ensouls bodies, but it is not identical with these bodies. It dwells on various planes and manifests through forms and organisms peculiar to these planes, but they are vehicles rather than its true self. Mystical philosophy has always recognized a divine principle superior to the conditions of matter which it inhabits.

If this superior consciousness accepts the reality of matter, it becomes subject to the laws governing matter. If it identifies its own nature with any of the bodies that it builds and inhabits, then it must accept with this identification the natural rules governing the activities of these bodies.

Let us briefly summarize the doctrines of the illumined ancients regarding the compound structure of the human being. Man is composed of three essential natures, which appear physically as one nature. The highest of the three parts is consciousness, or spirit; the second is intellect, or mind; and the third is force, or body. By force we mean the material energies that participate in the crystallization of the physical form. Consciousness is universal awareness; intellect is limited awareness focused upon self-awareness. Force is the total absence of the awareness of self.

The human being consists, therefore, of one eternal and abiding principle termed spirit. This principle is not subject to any limitation imposed by the material world, but it is not differentiated, and has no conception of personalized existence. The intellect is the summit of the observation and experimentation processes, and this summit is the natural repository of experience. The sum of experience is called the self or the ego, and

this experience is achieved through a cycle of bodies projected by the self into the material world.

The self or permanent ego is therefore composed of its own nature, differentiated into a series of not-selves which are suspended from it, depend upon it, originate in it, and ultimately return to it. These not-selves may be called incarnations. Philosophy teaches that it requires approximately seven hundred of these incarnations to complete the soul experience of the self or ego. The physical body that we now inhabit is one of these incarnations; an extension of the ego into a particular area of physical experience. The primary purpose of this experience is not to enrich the personality that is experiencing on the physical plane, but to enrich the ego or the self. The self or ego does not actually incarnate, but is present in the personality compound through an extension or emanation from itself.

Each of the incarnations that we call personalities is externally subject to the laws of the world in which it exists, whether these laws be natural or man made. But it is also subject internally to the laws of the self or ego. It may become aware of these higher laws through an experience of internalization called illumination, or a mystical experience.

The average person has little or no awareness of his own over-self. He assumes that he is completely isolated from the world of cause, and must depend entirely upon his own resources for the outworking of his destiny. He further assumes that the personality complex within him, consisting of his personal mind, his personal emotions, his personal impulses, and his personal body, are real, and that their dictates are his highest authority in matters of conduct.

As long as he remains ignorant of his own estate as a fragment or emanation from his over-self, he can never hope to attain any sense of internal security. He will drift upon the tides and currents of circumstances, guided only by faculties limited

to the experiences of a single life. The physical brain cannot record outside the boundaries of its own time span, and has no perspective with which to assist the orientation of the personality in larger cycles of time and place.

The esoteric doctrines of antiquity were created and perfected for the purpose of bridging the interval between the personality as a single life experience, and the self or ego that functions from the higher perspective of the many life-experiences. The soul power of the average ego of our present wave is approximately four hundred earth lives as a human being. This covers a physical time experience of nearly thirty million years, and the social experience of four and a half major races. In addition, the ego or self contains the summation of previous evolution in non-human or prehuman form, and to this must be further added its greater proximity in consciousness to the universal cause beyond it. In comparison, therefore, to the single incarnation with its small personality struggling for survival in the material world, this collective overself is a magnificent and radiant creature little less than divine, possessing wisdom, knowledge, and understanding infinitely beyond the capacity of the physical brain and its small mental overtones.

The search for identification with the overself is the essential element in every enlightened religious system and esoteric philosophy. Only the wisdom that resides in the overself is sufficient to release the material personality from bondage to the illusional world and its karmic wheel. Illumination does not break the laws of nature; rather, it bestows citizenship in a larger world ruled by larger and more adequate laws.

Prayer was originally a part of the meditative discipline set up in the search for the overself. First of all, it was a recognition and acceptance of the reality of a Power or Being superior to the body, which could be approached by turning the mind inward to the contemplation of the source of the personality. In the

symbolic terms of old doctrines, the ego or self was the father or parent of the incarnations or personalities that came forth from its splendor. Heaven is always a higher or more spiritual region, a plane or quality beyond the material. The Father in Heaven, therefore, is the overself abiding in a superior quality or universal vibration. Only the overself is completely aware of the purpose for which the personality or body was fashioned. The wise man resolves to live not according to the will of the person, but according to the will of the Father of the person. In this way and by this cooperation, the evolutionary processes are hastened, and the Father-Self is more rapidly enriched in those experiences which are its nutriment.

Prayer is described as an entry into the silent place; that is, into the consciousness of the heart. Here, by a mystic elevation of the mind and emotion, the personal self of the fragments seeks communion with the oversell, which is the master of the fragments and the reason for their existence.

The voice of the overself is indeed the Voice of the Silence, or the Voice heard in the Silent Place. The benediction of the will of the Father-Self descends upon the meditating personality, revealing its will and purpose and renewing the eternal covenant between the parent and the child. Man does not pray to an infinite extension of sky and space, but to his own peculiar god, the Master of his House. His prayer is not one of beseeching, requesting, and demanding; it is a simple and gentle rite of identification. Through the realization of the guiding power of the overself, the personal incarnation is reconsecrated to the reasons for which it was created, and gains the perfect inner conviction of the peculiar significance of its present estate. Doubts end in certainty, and certainty in turn releases the consciousness from all confusion, and sets the standard of living in a pattern of sufficient reasons and purposes.

With the decline of the old Mysteries, many esoteric rituals and rites lost their true meanings, becoming vague and obscure. This was especially true of the ritual of prayer. It took the form of a general supplication of infinities without regard for the spiritual pattern governing from the superior world. Gradually, prayers were formalized, and like relics, talismans, etc., were regarded as efficacious in themselves. With this loss of esoteric guidance, prayers became more and more personal and increasingly demanding. The devotee no longer emphasized the working of the higher Will, but presented the petitions framed by his personal mind and emotions. The desired end was released from the consequences of action. The supplicator emphasized his personal demands with little thought about his impersonal needs. He called upon God to become the servant of very human and very selfish impulses, ambitions, and emotions.

A great many persons entirely without esoteric knowledge still function, however, upon a level of absolute personal sincerity. In this case, the sincerity itself is the link with the oversoul. Consciousness is a quality, a dedication to principles believed, and a sincere desire to apply these principles to conduct. This sincerity itself is a virtue acceptable to the overself. A link is set up by which the wisdom from above can descend and affect the human person. If the mind of the supplicant is untrained, it cannot interpret the impulses from the oversoul, but still receives them and feels the peace and security which radiate from the Parent Being. In this way, prayer is a force even when the knowledge of its machinery is absent.

It will therefore be understood that prayer is not an exception to the law of cause and effect; rather, it enlarges consciousness and releases man from the circle or wheel of karma by transforming this wheel into a cyclic process. The laws never cease to operate, but through illumination, the human being comes into new adjustments with the laws, freeing himself from

their negative aspects and thus attaining liberation. Evolution is either an outward process through rounds and races, or an inward process through degrees of discipline toward the self. The highest form of prayer is consecration. The truly religious person binds his personality to the overself by a covenant of realization. When the fragment which man has come to regard as himself, seeks the silence of his own divine nature—that is prayer. In the quiet of those moments he renounces all his worldly ambitions, and pledges the years of his life to the service of the overself.

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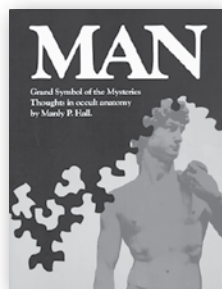
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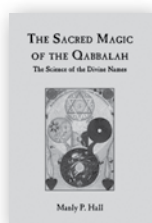
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Manly P. Hall founded the Philosophical Research Society, Inc., a non-profit organization in 1934, dedicated to the dissemination of useful knowledge in the fields of philosophy, comparative religion, and psychology. In his long career, spanning more than seventy years of dynamic public activity, Mr. Hall delivered over 8000 lectures in the United States and abroad, authored over 150 books and essays, and wrote countless magazine articles.

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