

abusing it; because they were turning the Lord's Supper into a drunken carouse, and were evidently forgetting the very purpose for which the Eucharist was founded—to recall to mind the Lord and His death. Were they not, then, men who needed to be recalled to a sense of their true position? Was there not an urgent need in their case for the holy ordinance itself to proclaim to them its real message? There is nothing therefore, I think, improbable in interpreting St. Paul's use of the word *καταγγέλλειν* here, as in other places, of a proclaiming to men and not to God.

J. A. HARRISS.

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ART. IV.—THE LORD'S PRAYER: ITS LITURGICAL USE AND MEANING IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

IT would be very helpful, if it were at all possible in a sketch of this nature, to give the sayings of the early Fathers on this prayer. The work of selection is here our chief difficulty, for every comment seems almost of equal importance. However, I shall give a few of those which are best known, and which have reference to the liturgical use of the Lord's Prayer in olden times.

St. Chrysostom, in Homily 42, said: "Every good Christian uses this prayer daily, and by these holy words 'Thy Kingdom come' expresses his belief in the Resurrection." Cyprian, in his commentary on the Lord's Prayer, said: "This bread we *daily* ask to be given to us lest we who are in Christ, and *daily* receive the Eucharist for the food of Salvation, should be separated from the body of Christ." These words show that not only was the Lord's Prayer in daily use, but that the Eucharist was daily received. In the Apostolic Constitutions it was ordered that this prayer should be repeated three times a day (some, like Theodoret, thought this was in respect to the Trinity). It was a canon of the fourth Council of Toledo that no clergyman should omit the Lord's Prayer in public or private offices, and "Whoever then of the priests or the inferior clergy shall omit to say this Lord's Prayer in public or private office shall be judged for his contempt and deprived of his office."

The same Council of Toledo, in its ninth canon, also declared, "St. Hilary said, 'Give us to-day our daily (*quotidianum*) bread. For what does the Lord desire more than that Christ, who is the Bread of Life and the Bread from Heaven, should daily dwell in us? And because the prayer is in daily use (*quotidiana*), the prayer is also that it (the bread) may be given daily (*quotidie*).'"

We thus see the reason why St. Cyprian and others called

the prayer *Oratio Quotidiana*, or the Daily Prayer. Of course, this prayer was repeated more than once or even three times a day by many.

St. Ambrose, in his address to the Virgins, said: "I would have you, even in your beds, repeat the Psalms, frequently inserting the Lord's Prayer." But, be it remembered, this was no formula to be glibly gabbled in those days.

It was regarded as essentially a spiritual prayer, because of the dignity of its Author. "What prayer," said Cyprian, "can be more spiritual than that which was given us by Christ, by whom the Holy Spirit is sent to us? Where can be a truer prayer to the Father than that which came from the mouth of His Son, who is Truth itself? It is a friendly and familiar style of praying to beseech God in His own words to let the prayers of the Son reach His ears."

St. Chrysostom said that praying by the Lord's Prayer is praying by the Spirit. "If there was no Holy Ghost," he writes, "we, that are believers, could not pray to God, for we say 'Our Father, which art in heaven.' As we could not say that Jesus was the Lord, so neither could we call God our Father without the Holy Ghost." How does that appear? From the same Apostle who says "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts."

And in another homily he expressed its spiritual efficacy by saying: "Although you be guilty of a thousand crimes, if you sincerely offer up that prayer which promises that if you forgive your enemies, the Father will also forgive your trespasses." And in another sermon (forty-second) he spoke of it as a form of spiritual prayer which the Lord gave to His disciples.

The prayer was thus looked upon as a spiritual prayer, and a prayer for spiritual men; for it was thought to be the peculiar privilege of Christians who had been regenerated, and were being sanctified by the Spirit, to use the prayer. When commenting on the 150th Psalm, the same Bishop said that the prayer was peculiar to the sons of God who could call God their Father by virtue of their regeneration and adoption, for he that calls God his Father confesses the adoption of sons, owns and acknowledges both justification and sanctification, redemption, remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. For all these must precede, that we may be thought worthy to call God our Father. Accordingly, the reason why the prayer was in very early times called the "prayer of the faithful" was because it was regarded as their special prayer, and was therefore not to be repeated aloud in the presence of those who were not communicants.

There was also a peculiar significance attached to every

clause of the prayer. We learn this if we turn over the pages of the sermons of the same divine, where we find practical applications of the different petitions of this prayer. When rebuking Christians for reviling their brethren, he said: "If he is not thy brother, how sayest thou 'Our Father,' for the word 'Our' signifies many persons? When you utter these words, 'Our Father, which art in heaven,' the word raises you up and gives wings to your soul, and shows that you have a Father in heaven. Therefore, say nothing, do nothing of these things that are on earth. You stand in heaven, and do you revile? You hold converse with angels, and do you revile? You are honoured with the kiss of God, and do you still revile?"

A very apposite and telling use did that great orator-prelate make of this prayer when the wretched Euthropius sought the protection of the Church, the sanctity of which, as a place of refuge, he himself had violated, from the fury of his imperial master and the rage of the populace determined to have the blood of their oppressor. Pointing out to his congregation the shrinking figure of their enemy, as he clung to a pillar of the Holy Table and pleaded for mercy, he demanded his life, saying: "For how will you otherwise take the Holy Sacrament into your hands, and use the words of that prayer wherein we are commanded to say 'Forgive us our trespasses,' if you exact the full penalty from your debtors?" The duty of forgiveness was thus strikingly brought home to the minds of his hearers.

Indeed, that "old man eloquent" was never tired of commenting on this petition. "We are commanded to say," he wrote, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' that by the continual use of that prayer we may be put in mind that we are liable to punishment."

In his homily on Repentance he said: "When we enter the church we must approach God in a becoming manner. For if we have designs of revenge in our hearts when we pray, we pray against ourselves, saying: 'Forgive us, as we forgive them that trespass against us.' Terrible words these are, for they mean the same as if anyone said to God, 'Lord, I have forgiven my enemy, forgive Thou me'; 'I have loosed him, loose Thou me'; 'I have pardoned him, pardon Thou me'; 'If I have retained his sins, retain Thou mine'; 'If I have not loosed my neighbour, do not Thou loose my offences'; 'The measure I have meted out to him, measure to me again.'"

The great father of the African Church, St. Augustine, regarded the use of the Lord's Prayer as a sort of daily baptism. "Remission of sins," he wrote, "is not in the washing of sacred baptism only, but is also in the Lord's Prayer repeated every day. For in that prayer you will find as it were a daily baptism." In his *Enchiridion*, or *Manual*,

he said: "The daily prayer of the faithful, whose privilege it is to say, 'Our Father, which art in heaven,' makes satisfaction for the small and trivial daily faults without which this life cannot be lived."

Possidius tells us that both Augustine and Ambrose were keenly sensitive to the privilege and importance of using the Lord's Prayer every day. Of the former he writes that he said "he relied more upon the goodness of God than upon his own merits." For to Him daily in the Lord's Prayer he prayed, "Forgive us our sins."

Augustine's indignation was fairly roused when his beloved prayer was assailed by Pelagius and his followers, who did not relish the clause "Forgive us our sins," which brought so much comfort and cleansing power to Augustine that it seemed to confer a daily baptism upon his soul. In a letter to Innocent of Rome he wrote of Pelagius: "They even attempt by their impious arguments to take away from us the Lord's Prayer, for they say that a man, if he knows the commands of God, can in this life attain to such a degree of perfection, without the assistance of the grace of the Saviour, of his own freewill alone that it is no longer necessary for him to say 'Forgive us our sins.'" What seemed to outrage the piety of Augustine even more than this pride of self-sufficiency was the spirit of Pharisaism in which the Pelagians professed to use this petition for the sins of others, boldly asserting that "the Apostles who were already holy and perfect and were quite free from sin did not pray 'Forgive us' for themselves, but for sinners still imperfect."

St. Chrysostom also mentions another class of people who used to drop the clause "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us," not liking the condition. These he severely rated and admonished by saying that this petition would daily turn their thoughts from revenge and compel them to forgive.

In a letter to Hilary, Augustine said: "Everyone must use the Lord's Prayer, which the Lord gave to the very rams of the flock—that is, His Apostles—so that each one should say to God 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors' ('Dimitte nobis debita sicut nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris'). For," he argues, "if Christ had foreseen that anyone would have been so much better than His disciples, He would have taught them another prayer in which they should not have asked for remission of sins for themselves."

He was here alluding to the Pelagians, who used this prayer, but in a very general way, which they defended by saying that they were not taught to say "Forgive *me my* sins," but "Forgive *us our* sins," and for which they were duly anathematized by a council of the Church.

We shall now briefly consider the place of the Lord's Prayer in the public offices of the Church. In the first place we have abundant evidence to show that the repeating of this prayer was considered a principal feature in the Communion Service and in the office of Baptism. Chrysostom, in his twenty-seventh Homily, when impressing on his hearers the duty of forgiving their enemies, used these words: "If we do this we may then with a pure conscience come to this holy and awful table, and boldly say the words that are contained in that prayer." In his forty-second sermon he said: "Daily that Lord's Prayer is said at the altar in the Church, and the faithful hear it."

Augustine also bears witness to the use of the Lord's Prayer in the Communion Office, writing: "After the sanctification of the sacrifice we say the Lord's Prayer." And in another passage, "which petition" (*i.e.*, service of consecration) "almost the whole Church concludes with the Lord's Prayer." Cyril, in his Mystagogical Catechism, says: "After the oblation prayer we use that prayer which our Saviour delivered to His disciples, calling God our Father with a pure conscience, and saying, 'Our Father, which art in heaven.'"

St. Augustine says the reason why this prayer is said so often is that men might remember it better from hearing it daily repeated; whereas the Creed, on the contrary, was not so publicly used, but only in the occasional offices of Baptism.

This connection between the Lord's Prayer and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was so universally felt that Cyprian thought that the petition "Give us this day our daily bread" had special reference to the spiritual food of the Eucharist.

Confession of sins, presumably in the Lord's Prayer and other suitable forms, we know preceded the oblation prayer, for Chrysostom says: "In the oblation prayer we offer or bear and confess our sins, whether voluntary or involuntary—that is, we first remember them and then ask pardon." And as we have already seen that the Lord's Prayer followed the sanctification of the service, we find that we have very ancient authority indeed for beginning and concluding the Holy Communion with the Lord's Prayer.

Of course, the general idea in beginning the Communion Office with the Lord's Prayer, which was here said aloud by the priest, was to accentuate the fact that this was the central service of the faithful, to which only communicants were admitted. But may we not also see the idea—a very favourite one with Chrysostom and Augustine—that this prayer of the community as it was about to present itself to its Father would help to lead them to a greater unanimity and charity between themselves, and make them remember their common nature

and their common needs. As Chrysostom says in his commentary of the 112th Psalm, "Christ enjoins us to make common prayer, and obliges the whole Church, as if it were but one person, to say 'Our Father,' etc., always using a word of the plural number, and commanding everyone whether he pray alone by himself or in common with others still to make prayers for his brethren."

To come now to the sacred office of Baptism, we find that in early days the newly-baptized, as soon as he rose from the water, said, "Our Father, which art in heaven" (so John Chrysostom, on the Epistle to the Colossians). In the Apostolic Constitution (7 to 44) the newly-baptized is bidden after this to stand and pray the prayer which the Lord hath taught us. Of course, this was only possible in the case of adults. Adult baptism being as necessary then as it is now in recruiting from the ranks of heathendom, we may reasonably presume that in the case of babes the prayer was said, as at present, in their behalf by the priest and the congregation.

We thus see from the writing of the Fathers how the Lord's Prayer was the principal foundation of every office, and inwoven in the very fabric of the liturgy from the earliest days. A study of the ancient liturgies of St. Mark, St. James, and St. Chrysostom brings us to the same conclusion.

This leads us to consider the light in which this prayer was regarded in the early Church. A few quotations will help us to form some idea of its pre-eminence. Our first will be taken from Tertullian, which runs thus: "Our Lord determined on a new form of prayer for the new disciples of the New Testament. John also had taught his disciples to pray. For in all things John was making preparations for Christ until He should increase (as John himself said), when the whole work of the forerunner with the Spirit Himself should pass over to the Master. Accordingly, the words in which John taught his disciples to pray are not extant, because the earthly yielded to the spiritual." Our second will likewise be from the same Father's work on the Lord's Prayer: "But since our Lord foresaw the necessities of men, at another time, after He had given this traditional form of prayer ('*Traditam orandi disciplinam*') He said, 'Seek, and ye shall find.' There are things which may be sought in accordance with the circumstances of each individual, when one has first sent forth the legitimate and ordinary prayer as a foundation on which other prayers may be raised."

The following is from Cyprian: "Among the salutary precepts and Divine counsels which He made for the salvation of His people, He gave them also a *form of prayer*

instructing us in the very subjects of prayer." Chrysostom observes that "Christ prescribed the bounds and rules of praying for temporal things when He enjoined us to say, 'Give us this day our daily bread.'"

"The prayer of the faithful is, as it were, the conclusion and uniting tie of one's prayers for all men."

"Christ prayed in order to teach His disciples how to pray; but they were to learn not only to pray, but also after what manner to pray, and therefore He delivered them a prayer in these words."

"When Christ commanded His disciples not to pray after the manner of the heathen, He taught them the measure of prayer."

"Christ taught us what we are to say in prayer, and in a few words instructed us in all manners of virtue."

From the quotations, fugitive as they are, we gather that the Lord's Prayer was esteemed by the early Christians as a form given by Christ to be used by His disciples, not merely as a rule and pattern to which their prayers should conform, but as a special "formula of prayer to be literally used." As Chrysostom well said in his sermon on 2 Corinthians, it was "the established prayer" of the Church which it was the privilege of the faithful to use, and which Augustine, with a prophetic touch, declared "the whole Church will say to the end of the world."

It was not, therefore, thought to supersede or to be superseded by other forms of prayer, but was intended to hold the unique position of being the corner-stone in the liturgical edifice.

The Lord's Prayer was thus regarded in every branch of the ancient Catholic Church, Roman, Greek, Gallican, and the rest, as the very nucleus of the service. There was, however, a certain difference in its early use, which has been retained even until the present day—namely this, that in the Greek and Gallican Churches the prayer was said by the priest and the people together, but in the Roman Church by the priest alone, as Gregory the Great tells us (in Lib. VII., Ep. 64): "But the Lord's Prayer among the Greeks is said by the whole congregation, but among us by the priest alone."

The Gallican use, and not the Roman, is followed on all occasions but one—*i.e.*, in the pre-Communion Office in the Church of England services.

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