

The Lord's Prayer: Exegesis of Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4

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Editors' Preface

It is perhaps difficult to call a group of articles a “series” when they come out gradually over a number of years. It has been a plan in the background of our minds for some time to present at intervals in the *WLQ* articles on the texts of the Catechism. The article on the Ten Commandments appeared in Summer of 2005. This article is another contribution to the study of texts that form the basis of the Catechism. An article on the Words of Institution would be another step. Articles on the Creed would be more of a historical nature, rather than exegetical.

The role of the Lord's Prayer in our Christian lives extends far beyond catechism class, so we hope this article helps pastors in their reflection on the impact of the Lord's Prayer in all areas of our Christian lives.

Introduction

It is good to begin with prayer: *Dear Father, we thank you for the privilege of praying to you in the confidence that we will be heard for Jesus' sake. Send your Spirit into our hearts to sanctify our thoughts and words as we study the prayer Jesus taught us. Amen.*

Before we look at the text of the Lord's Prayer, let us give some consideration to a few introductory questions: 1) How Christian is the Lord's Prayer? 2) What is the relationship between the versions recorded by Matthew and Luke? and 3) How do we do an exegesis of the Lord's Prayer when we are committed to the Lutheran Confessions?

1) How Christian is the Lord's Prayer?

Jesus Christ taught the Lord's Prayer, and Christians use it frequently. But when you look at the words, you may wonder: Is it a specifically Christian prayer? On the surface it hardly seems so. It includes no mention of praying in Jesus' name. In the Second Petition we ask for the Father's kingdom to come without saying anything about Jesus' kingdom or about his identity as the Messiah, the anointed King. In fact, the prayer does not mention the Son or the Holy Spirit at all. The petition for forgiveness finds room to talk about the forgiveness we extend to others, but it says nothing about a promised Savior or his cross and empty tomb. We also look in vain for any explicit reference to Baptism and the Lord's Supper or to grace and justification through faith.

The claim has been made that the Lord's Prayer is more closely related to the prayers of Judaism than to the distinctively Christian prayers of the church. Much of the content of the Lord's Prayer has parallels in ancient Jewish prayers such as the Eighteen Benedictions (a.k.a.

Eighteen Petitions). Theodore Zahn went so far as to say that the Lord's Prayer was and is able to be prayed by any Jew.¹ Joseph Fitzmyer, a more recent commentator and Aramaic expert, makes a similar judgment: "In many respects the 'Our Father' is a thoroughly Jewish prayer, for almost every word of it could be uttered by a devout Jew."²

Some might entertain an even more startling view. For all the similarities one can find between the content of the Lord's Prayer and the content of ancient Jewish prayers, it is striking that Jesus' model prayer is shorter and simpler in expression than the prayers of Judaism, and it contains no mention of the patriarchs, or the nation of Israel, or the law of Moses, or the Hebrew Scriptures.³ Some might wonder: Is Jesus teaching us that the essence of prayer is found not in the distinctive doctrines of Christianity or Judaism but in a more basic relationship with God? When it comes to doctrine, is Jesus a minimalist? Does he fashion a prayer out of a few flexible phrases and invite us to make of them whatever we will, just so long as we pray?

That notion of Jesus as a doctrinal minimalist finds no support in the life of Jesus. He did not speak of God as Father to make room for pagan conceptions of Zeus, "the father of gods and men," as Homer often calls him. He did not tell people, "These few words that I put in my prayer are all it takes to have a valid religion, and everything else I say and do is unimportant." On the contrary, his life and teaching were a seamless garment, an ever deepening revelation of God.

And that can serve also as a reply to those who see nothing more than basic Judaism in the Lord's Prayer. Jesus did not say, "If you pray to God as your Father, it does not matter what you make of me." He told the Jews who rejected him, "If God were your Father, you would love me. . . . You belong to your father, the devil" (Jn 8:42, 44).⁴ He did not encourage people to imagine whatever they wanted to imagine about God's kingdom, his will, and his forgiveness. He taught people in detail about those great matters and dedicated his life to fulfilling them. His goal was to give us the fullness of Christian truth and all the blessedness it brings.

The only way of adequately describing the overall character of the Lord's Prayer is to take seriously all its features. It is very Jewish in many ways because Jesus was a Jew speaking to Jews, and he honored the Old Testament roots of his people. It is a short, simple, and direct prayer, because an ideal prayer comes from the heart and invites even simple believers. And since the Lord's Prayer has a context in the life of Jesus, the earnest teacher and dedicated Savior, we can see what a depth of Christian meaning he attaches to these few words by studying everything else he said and did, as recorded in the Bible.

¹ *Das Evangelium des Matthaeus*, 4th ed. (Erlangen: Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), p. 270.

² *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 28A in the Anchor Bible (Garden City & New York: Doubleday, 1985), p. 900. The exceptions Fitzmyer mentions are that 1) the debated adjective ἐπιούσιος would be problematical for a Jew if it could be shown that it conveys a distinctively Christian sense, and 2) the address in Luke's version ("Father") would be less customary for Jews than the phrase in Matthew's version ("Our Father...").

³ Rudolf Bultmann (*Theology* 1.23-24) noted the contrast of "the ornate, emotional, often liturgically beautiful, but often overloaded forms of address in Jewish prayers with the stark simplicity of 'Father'! The 'Prayer of the Eighteen Petitions,' for instance, which the devout Jew is expected to say three times daily, begins, 'Lord God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob! God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth! Our Shield and the Shield of our fathers!' The 'Lord's Prayer' stands out above Jewish prayers not only in its simple address but in its direct simplicity throughout. . . God is near; He hears and understands the requests which come thronging to Him, as a father understands the requests of his own child. . ." This quotation is cited from Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, p. 903.

⁴ Normally in this paper quotations from the Bible in English are taken from the New International Version, except where I provide my own divergent translation or identify some other version.

In short, the Lord's Prayer is a profoundly Christian prayer that is simple enough for beginners to pray and deep enough for them to grow into all their lives. As we study the individual words and phrases of the prayer, we will look for the deeper meaning Jesus attached to them in his life and ministry.

2) What is the relationship between the versions recorded by Matthew and Luke?

Matthew's version is longer and more familiar from liturgical usage. It has an address, three "You" petitions, and four "We" petitions (or three, if the Sixth and Seventh Petitions are counted together as one). Luke by contrast has a one-word address ("Father"), and he does not include the words "Your will be done" and "Deliver us from evil." Some of the petitions in Luke are identical in wording to their counterparts in Matthew, and some show variation in wording.

Just as striking is the difference in setting. Matthew includes the Lord's Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus speaks on his own initiative. But Luke's version of the prayer comes as Jesus' response to a disciple's request. The unnamed disciple saw Jesus praying, waited for him to finish, and then asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples" (Lk 11:1). Matthew records the Lord's Prayer several chapters before his account of the feeding of the five thousand (Mt 14:13-21), whereas Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer comes a couple of chapters after he reports that miracle (Lk 9:10-17).

What shall we make of this? We will spare ourselves any discussion of elaborate theories about how Matthew and Luke composed their Gospels, especially theories that assume the evangelists or their sources created fictional settings for real and imaginary statements by Jesus. Let us rather assume that Matthew is reporting a genuine, historical Sermon on the Mount in a manner that faithfully portrays Jesus' teaching even though Matthew makes no attempt to give a verbatim transcript. Likewise let us assume that Luke 11:1ff faithfully reports an exchange that actually took place between a disciple and Jesus, even though Luke is not trying to give us a verbatim transcript any more than Matthew is. There is no pressing reason to try to harmonize Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4 as complementary versions of the same incident. The two accounts create the strong impression that they refer to different incidents, and it is completely plausible that Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer on more than one occasion. So which incident took place first—the Sermon on the Mount, or the exchange between Jesus and the disciple in Luke 11?

Since the evangelists sometimes prefer a topical arrangement of their stories to a rigid chronological order, we can, if we like, adopt Johannes Ylvisaker's view that the incident in Luke 11:1-4 took place sometime before Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount. Ylvisaker notes that Luke 11:1-13 is chronologically vague and unconnected to the surrounding material. It could come from an early point in Jesus' ministry. Since Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer is shorter than Matthew's, Ylvisaker supposes that Jesus taught the prayer in its short form in answer to the request from a disciple but later expanded it somewhat and taught it in that fuller version when he preached the Sermon on the Mount.⁵

⁵ Johannes Ylvisaker, *The Gospels: A Synoptic Presentation of the Text in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John with Explanatory Notes*, English translation (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1932), pp. 182-83. (Published originally in Norwegian, 1905 and 1907.)

On the other hand, there is less need for chronological rearrangement if we adopt the view of R. C. H. Lenski and William Arndt.⁶ Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. Some months later, a disciple who was not present for the Sermon on the Mount asked Jesus for instruction on how to pray. The disciple is not named, and that may be because he was not one of the Twelve. Perhaps he was one of the Seventy. Whoever he was, Jesus gave him the version of the prayer recorded by Luke. That will be the working assumption in this study.

In any case, the existence of two versions of the prayer should warn us not to draw false conclusions. Jesus did not bind us to a particular wording. The version in Matthew is introduced by the direction, "Therefore pray *in this manner* (οὕτως). It is a model to be imitated and adapted with the freedom of genuine understanding. On the other hand, it is not as though Jesus forbids us to adopt and use his wording. The unnamed disciple in Luke 11:1 may well have wanted a pattern of words he could commit to memory, and Jesus accommodates his request. The version Jesus gave him is introduced with the words, "When you pray, say, 'Father...'" (ὅταν προσεύχησθε λέγετε· Πάτερ...), which we could even translate as "*Whenever* you pray, say, 'Father...'" On a superficial view of Luke 11:1-4 it sounds as if Jesus is saying we are to use this prayer as our only prayer every time we pray. But a few verses later it becomes clear that Jesus expects us to use other prayers as well, such as a prayer for the Holy Spirit (Lk 11:13).

The upshot is that both practices are good: We can pray prayers inspired by or adapted from Jesus' model prayer, and we can pray using the pattern of words he taught on either occasion. What is not good is the empty chattering that can result from thoughtless recitation of a memorized prayer. Unfortunately, it seems likely that the Lord's Prayer is, of all the prayers of Christendom, the greatest martyr to thoughtless recitation. How can we combat that?

The antidote to thoughtlessness is thought, and that includes careful study of the Lord's Prayer to understand it better. And what is the test of understanding? The ability to paraphrase. If I do not understand a point of doctrine, I am likely to repeat a tried-and-true formula for fear of saying something wrong. But when I understand, I can put it in my own words. It is a good idea to try your hand at paraphrasing the Lord's Prayer. We will probably lose something of the wonderful brevity of Jesus' words, but our paraphrasing may help us out of a rut and suggest some good thoughts to think along with Jesus' words or some words to use as an occasional substitute for his words. We can also learn from the paraphrases of others. My own favorite is Luther's hymn, *Vater unser im Himmelreich*. We also have something like a prose paraphrase in the Small Catechism's treatment of the Lord's Prayer. That brings us to the last introductory issue.

3) How do we do an exegesis of the Lord's Prayer when we are committed to the Lutheran Confessions?

Should we simply take our exegesis straight out of the Catechisms? Our confessional subscription expresses our conviction that the doctrinal content in the Book of Concord is sound biblical teaching, but it does not say that we agree with every detail of biblical exegesis in the

⁶ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), pp. 620-21; William F. Arndt, *Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to St. Luke* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1956), p. 294.

Lutheran Confessions, much less that we subscribe to the incidental historical and scientific assertions included in them.⁷

The exegetical study you have asked me to do has renewed my conviction that the Small and Large Catechisms contain doctrinally sound expositions of the Lord's Prayer. But I would add that they do not exhaust the meaning of the biblical texts.

That, by the way, is not meant to suggest that the Catechisms fail to achieve their purpose. They were not intended to be exhaustive. For example, the Small Catechism's discussion of the Lord's Prayer makes some points that are not found in the Large Catechism, and vice versa.

Neither do I mean to suggest that this essay will be a definitive, exhaustive study of the Lord's Prayer (to say nothing of the vast literature written about it). The point rather is that there is good reason to take a fresh exegetical look at the Lord's Prayer to confirm and enrich our confessional Lutheran convictions about it.

With that understanding of the task, I submit this essay to correction by wiser and more learned students of the Lord's Prayer.

The Address

For each portion of the Lord's Prayer, I will print the Nestle Greek text, which in these verses has the same text preferred by the editors of the fourth edition of the United Bible Society Greek New Testament. There are variant readings for some of the phrases, but none that seem to me likely to be original.

<u>Matthew 6:9</u>	<u>Luke 11:2</u>
<i>Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς·</i>	<i>Πάτερ,</i>
Our Father in the heavens,	Father,

Both texts appropriately have a vocative form, Πάτερ (the nominative of this word is πατήρ). In Matthew, the vocative quickly gives way to the nominative article ὁ. This is not surprising since there is no vocative article and the nominative case is sometimes used for direct address instead of the vocative. That combination of cases can be found also in classical Greek.⁸ The article merely establishes that "in the heavens" is an attributive adjectival phrase modifying "Father." Since the article is cumbersome and unnecessary in English, we omit it in translation.

The key issue here is what is meant by "Father." The interpretation of "Father" is affected by the interpretation of Matthew's "our." Who are "we"?

⁷ Cf. C. F. W. Walther's essay on "Confessional Subscription," delivered at the Fourth Western District Convention, Trinity Church, St. Louis, Missouri, beginning April 15, 1858. The essay appears in English in Walther's *Essays for the Church*, vol. I (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), pp. 19-29; cf. especially p. 21.

⁸ Cf. section 147 of *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* by F. Blass and A. Debrunner, as translated and revised by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), hereafter referred to as BDF.

Hans Dieter Betz wants us to understand "our Father" as implying that God, who created and provides for all human beings, is viewed here as the Father of all human beings: "Everyone who says 'Our Father' acts as a spokesperson and representative of all humanity."⁹ But that view is not consistent with Matthew's Fifth Petition, "Forgive us our debts *as we also have forgiven our debtors.*" There "we" are Christ's followers, who put into practice Christ's urgent command that we are to forgive (Mt 6:14-15). The Christian consciousness of the Fifth Petition should color our understanding of the rest of the prayer. Davies and Allison put it in summary fashion: In the mouth of Jesus, "'Your Father' and 'Our Father' include the disciples but not the populace at large. This is because sonship depends on Jesus, the Son of God."¹⁰

Thus we bring to the Lord's Prayer an understanding of the Fatherhood of God rooted in the Old Testament but brought to full flower by Jesus. The Old Testament occasionally uses the word "Father" to portray God as the creator (e.g., Dt 32:6; Mal 2:10) or to indicate the special relationship of God to his chosen nation (e.g., Ps 103:13; Isa 63:16; Jer 31:9) and his very special relationship to David and his line, culminating in the Messiah (e.g., Ps 89:26; 2 Sa 7:14). But it is striking how seldom the Old Testament saints address God as Father when they pray. Eventually Jews became comfortable with calling God "our Father" in prayer,¹¹ but there was still, it seems, a sense of distance. For them, "our Father" meant "Father of our nation, Israel."

But what a difference there was in Jesus' use of the term. Already as a boy he speaks of God as "my Father" (Lk 2:49) and loves his Father's house. In his ministry he constantly speaks of God as Father. The four Gospels have about 170 examples, and most of them come from the two apostles, Matthew and especially John. They took special note of the word Father as a favorite expression on the lips of Jesus. Sometimes he uses reverential language, "Your Father in heaven," and sometimes the simplest and most direct word, the Aramaic *Abba* (Mk 14:36). *Abba* is not, strictly speaking, "Daddy,"¹² but it does suggest the family circle and was not normally used for God.¹³ That in itself may have surprised Jews who heard Jesus call God *Abba*. But they certainly were taken aback when Jesus spoke of God as "my Father" in a way that implied he had a different relationship with God than other Israelites (Jn 5:17-18). Jesus used the word "Father" to unfold a trinitarian understanding of God and his own identity as the eternal Son of the Father: "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Mt 11:27). Baptism is to be administered "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). In his High Priestly Prayer, Jesus says, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.... And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began" (Jn 17:1,5). And astonishingly, Jesus goes on to pray that we may enter into that unity of love with which the Father and the Son embrace each other from eternity: "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (Jn 17:20-21).

⁹ Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp. 388-89.

¹⁰ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. I (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2004), p. 601.

¹¹ Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), pp. 15-29 (= "God as 'Father' in Ancient Palestinian Judaism," the second part of Jeremias' essay "*Abba*").

¹² James Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy'", *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 39/1 (April, 1988), pp. 28-47

¹³ W. Bauer, F. Danker, W. Arndt, and F. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago, 2000), p. 1, s.v. ἀββᾶ, Hereafter referred to as BDAG.

That is why he teaches us to pray to God as Father and sends his Spirit into our hearts to make us cry out with full conviction, *Abba, Father*. That is the profound Christian meaning he attaches to the word "Father" and invites us to embrace. And when we pray in that manner and with that understanding—when we know God as the Father of Jesus and through Jesus know God as our own dear Father—the Lord's Prayer is a profoundly Christian prayer and a sign that the Spirit of Jesus dwells in us (Gal 4:6; Ro 8:15-16).

Thus we have every reason to pray with the boldness and confidence of dear children talking to their dear Father, as the Small Catechism emphasizes.

Let us return to the word "our" in Matthew's version. We have already noted that it puts us in mind of our fellow Christians. We are not saved in isolation. We are part of God's community of salvation, the church. Yes, Jesus is happy to see us go into our private room to pray there instead of praying ostentatiously on the street corner (6:5-6), but even when we are alone in a private room, he thinks it good for us to remember our fellow Christians (6:9). We have the privilege and duty of praying for them, and so we carry them on our hearts as we come before God and say "*our* Father."

Luther's hymn brings that out more clearly than his Catechisms:

*Vater unser im Himmelreich,
der du uns alle heissest gleich
Brueder sein und dich rufen an
und willt das Beten von uns han
gieb, dass nicht bet allein der Mund,
hilf, dass es geh von Herzensgrund.*

Our Father, who from heav'n above
Bids all of us to live in love
As members of one family
And pray to you in unity,
Teach us no thoughtless words to say,
But from our inmost hearts to pray.
(*Christian Worship*, 410.1)

We can also return to the description of God as "in the heavens." The word for "heaven" occurs here in the plural (*οὐρανοῖς*). That is not always the case in Matthew's Gospel. His usage varies between the singular and the plural, and it is not always easy to see why. Still, the plural may be significant here. Perhaps it suggests that there are heavens in addition to the blue sky—not just the starry regions of space but planes of existence altogether more wonderful. However many heavens there are, our Father occupies and governs them all. The expression is not meant to put distance between us and our Father, but it does express reverence for his majesty and an awareness of his power as we turn to him for help.

If we turn now to Luke, we see no "our" and no "in the heavens," just the bare vocative form, "Father." It has an appealing simplicity, and it more readily suggests Jesus' own use of the simple word *Abba*. Thus the two versions offer encouragement for utter simplicity (Luke) or for thoughtful, reverential additions (Matthew) when we call upon God as Father. (We observe that there is no encouragement for tortured or extravagant language on the one hand or slang and flippant expressions on the other.)

An expanded paraphrase of Matthew's version of the Address:

With the confidence Jesus gives me I come to you, Father. He shows me what a wonderful Father you are, and he has made me your child. I bring my needs and the needs of my fellow Christians to you, for you are able and eager to help us.

The First Petition

The text for this petition is the same in Matthew and Luke.

Matthew 6:9 and Luke 11:2

ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου·

May your name be recognized as holy.

May your name be shown to be holy.

(More freely, with a change to the active voice: Show the holiness of your name.)

This petition is difficult to translate. The verb ἁγιασθήτω is a third person singular aorist passive imperative. English does not have a really good way of handling third person imperatives consistently. I have turned the expression into a wish here for want of a better rendering. "Hallowed be your name" is far from idiomatic in current English. (Imagine asking a supervisor what he wants done with an unfinished project and getting the answer, "Finished be the project.") The verb "hallow" is not very transparent, either. But it is not easy to find a perfect translation to replace it.

This is the first of many aorist imperatives in the prayer. A present imperative would ask God for an ongoing or repeated action. Although that could be understood in a wholesome way, it would leave the final outcome uncertain. Things keep happening to defile God's name: heretics preach, Christians sin, and enemies blaspheme. But God holds before us an ultimate, complete solution to those problems, and so Jesus teaches us to ask God for such a solution. An aorist imperative serves well for that purpose, especially since there is nothing in this petition to focus our attention only on the here and now. Jesus encourages our minds to reach ahead to the end of time, when God will decisively terminate and eliminate everything that defiles his name so that its holiness will be apparent to all. Thus there is an eschatological thrust to this and some of the other aorist imperatives in the Lord's Prayer.

But the focus is not *exclusively* eschatological. Neither Jesus nor any Christian could possibly mean, "I do not care if God's name is defiled by me and others during the remaining history of this world so long as God's name is shown to be holy on the Last Day." We also want God's name to be recognized and treated as holy in the time leading up to the end. The aorist tense is consistent with that view. It can be used to cover a whole range of activity that at some point reaches an end (in some cases, a temporary end). In John 2:20, the Jews tell Jesus, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple." Literally the statement reads, "This temple was built (aorist) in forty-six years." This kind of aorist that covers a whole span of activity leading up to an identifiable point is called the *complexive* aorist. According to the BDF grammar, that is exactly what we have here in the Lord's Prayer.¹⁴

¹⁴ BDF, section 337.4: "The regular use of the aorist imperative in prayers and greetings is also complexive." Another term for the same usage is the *constative aorist* (BDF sect. 332). A. T. Robertson finds examples of the constative aorist in the Lord's Prayer in *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1923), p. 855 (on the terms, cf. p. 831).

Thus in the First Petition, we seek a hallowing of God's name that includes our own time but extends beyond it and culminates on the Last Day. What the Small Catechism says—"we ask in this prayer that it may also become holy in and among us"—is included in the petition, but it does not exhaust the meaning of the petition.

Another grammatical question is, What is implied by the passive voice of the imperative? In other words, by whom is God's name to be hallowed—by God or by us? Here it seems best to say that God is the primary sanctifier of his own name. We ask him to sanctify it "in and among us," as we just heard from the Small Catechism. Of course it is also true that God sanctifies it *through* us when he leads us to honor it as holy, and therefore the Bible can also say that *we* sanctify God's name.

A Bible passage that helps us see what the petition means is Ezekiel 36:22-23. God's people had profaned God's name by grievous sins. God had punished them with exile and dispersion. But that resulted in further profanation of God's name when the nations scoffed at the weakness of Israel's God to save his own people. So God promised to bring them back and renew them spiritually. And what was his reason?

This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will *show the holiness of my great name*, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when *I show myself holy* through you before their eyes.

The italicized phrases "show the holiness of" and "I show myself holy" translate forms of the Hebrew verb *qadash*, and in both places the Septuagint uses a form of ἀγιάζω, the verb that occurs in the First Petition. We see here that the hallowing of God's name is something God undertakes to do, and he does it by demonstrating and vindicating the holiness of his inherently holy name.

One of the things we see in Ezekiel 36 is that God was intent on vindicating his name in view of the scoffing remarks of the heathen. That concern remains important to him in our day. When Christians experience a lifetime of suffering, and when they willingly bear the cross of persecution and even martyrdom, unbelievers may think, "A lot of good it did them to believe their stupid gospel! They had a miserable life, they died, and that's it." To vindicate his holy name as the truthful and mighty Savior, God will most certainly raise his people from the dead to eternal life with him in glory. That will be his ultimate answer to our petition.

What we have been saying underscores the difficulty of finding a perfect translation. "Hallow" or "sanctify" may too easily suggest that something originally lacking holiness is being made holy (the Small Catechism recognizes the need to ward off that misunderstanding: "God's name is holy in itself..."¹⁵). Other translations, such as "may your name be held in reverence" or "treated as holy," seem to look only at human attitudes in history and not at God's actions that manifest and vindicate the holiness of his name, including his actions on the Last Day. When I suggest "may your name be recognized as holy" as one possible translation, I am trying to make room for the recognition of the holiness of God's name both when people use or encounter that name in history and when they see God vindicate it in the end. But a translation using the word "show" has the advantage of more readily suggesting that God is the primary sanctifier of his

¹⁵ *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), p. 356.

name. (Its disadvantage is that "show to be holy" is not a common meaning of *ἀγιάζω*, nor is it found as a definition in the standard lexicons.)

Let us give further attention to the range of concerns included when we ask God to defend his name from defilement and manifest its holiness. Many of the commentaries I consulted emphasize the sinful life of God's people as the source of defilement and dishonor for God's name and say little or nothing about false doctrine. That is why I appreciate all the more Luther's insight that both false doctrine and sinful living defile God's name among us. He emphasizes both doctrine and life in the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and his hymn.

His emphasis on doctrine is well-founded. The only way we have of adequately knowing God and his name is by learning his Word. God's name is his self-revelation, so much so that in many passages God and the name of God are treated as virtually interchangeable expressions. And where do we find his self-revelation? In his Word. "The entire Scriptures are in reality nothing else than an elaboration of God's name (*ein ausgebreiteter Name Gottes*)," as Francis Pieper says.¹⁶

The Bible itself makes a connection for us between God's name and his doctrine or "instruction." Isaiah 29:22-24 says,

No longer will Jacob be ashamed; no longer will their faces grow pale. When they see among them their children, the work of my hands, they will keep my name holy; they will acknowledge the holiness of the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel. Those who are wayward in spirit will gain understanding; those who complain will accept instruction.

By gaining understanding and accepting instruction they will be enabled to keep God's name holy. It had been defiled by wayward people who lacked understanding and complainers who rejected instruction.

Another text of interest here is Numbers 20:1-13, the account of the sin of Moses at Kadesh, where God for a second time provided water from a rock. Afterwards God said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy (LXX: *ἀγιάσαι με*) in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them" (verse 12). And what was Moses' sin? It was not that he claimed credit for the miracle when he said, "Must we bring you water out of this rock?" (verse 10), for God himself had said, "*You* will bring water out of the rock..." (verse 8). And it was not the mere act of striking the rock with his staff without being told to do so. Psalm 106:33 tells us that "rash words came from Moses' lips" and says nothing about striking the rock. But what were Moses' rash words? "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" God wanted to deal gently with the new generation toward the end of the wilderness years and win their trust with his kindness, but Moses was fed up. God wanted Moses to preach the gospel, but Moses turned it into an occasion for a stinging application of the law. Striking the rock was relevant only in so far as it underscored the vehement, angry tone of Moses' rash words. The sin of Moses was a failure to distinguish law and gospel properly.¹⁷

The holiest part of God's holy name is that he is the God of forgiving, saving grace. One of the things we pray for in the First Petition is that God would guard us against horribly defiling

¹⁶ *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. I (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), p. 433.

¹⁷ I owe this interpretation to the sainted seminary president and professor, Carl Lawrenz, who taught it in an Old Testament Isagogics class.

his holy name by obscuring his gospel or wrongly withholding it, and that he would lead us to preach it richly, purely, and in a timely way to those who need it.

Upholding God's pure teaching is not easy. Critics confront us with arguments we cannot answer to the satisfaction of reason, and our own people sometimes raise questions that are hard to shrug off. Even without any suggestions from others we may discover doubts in our own hearts. Of the many examples we could cite, let us go straight to what Luther regarded as a severe test: "This is the highest degree of faith, to believe [God] merciful when he saves so few and damns so many..."¹⁸ Some of what we see in God's Word looks *unholy* to us, and so we ask God to keep us faithful to his Word until the Day when he vindicates the holiness of his name and banishes all doubts from our minds forever as we see him face to face.

I have dwelt on the doctrinal side of keeping God's name holy because it is so often neglected. But I do not wish to downplay the danger of defiling God's name through sinful living. It is obvious that Christians give God a bad reputation when they act piously on Sunday but have no compunctions about engaging in coarse sins on other days. It is obvious, but no less horrible for all that. It is severely damaging to the cause of the gospel when Christians get drunk or have affairs or treat their families abusively or stab co-workers in the back. We have too many ways of defiling God's name to enumerate them all.

Since we can do nothing by ourselves to stem the tide of wickedness in and around us, we ask God to demonstrate the holiness of his name in our words and deeds, and we thank him for everything he does to make the church a proper display case for his holy name.

An expanded paraphrase of the First Petition:

Lead us to honor your holy name with godly lives and faithful testimony to your Word. Restrain the scoffers and false teachers who find fault with your name. Overcome our doubts, and finally vindicate your holiness at the end of time by revealing yourself fully.

The Second Petition

Once again Matthew and Luke have the same text (the Lucan variants are unconvincing).

Matthew 6:10 and Luke 11:2

ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου·

May your royal reign come.

The word βασιλεία is commonly translated "kingdom," but often that is somewhat misleading. The BDAG lexicon notes two basic meanings of βασιλεία in the New Testament. One is "the act of ruling," and under that heading the lexicon suggests translations with varying shades of meaning such as "kingship, royal power, royal rule" and "royal reign." The other basic

¹⁸ From *The Bondage of the Will*, in the American Edition of *Luther's Works*, vol. 33 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), p. 62.

meaning is "the territory ruled by a king, *kingdom*." Of the 162 occurrences of βασιλεία in the New Testament, only fifteen are listed under the meaning "kingdom" (and some of these refer not so much to the territory ruled by a king as the people living in the territory). The vast majority of occurrences are listed under the first meaning, "the act of ruling." At one point in this entry (1b) the lexicon observes that βασιλεία is used "especially of God's rule *the royal reign* of God (usually rendered 'kingdom of God', and often understood as royal realm but with dilution of the primary component of reigning activity...)..." This is where the lexicon lists our verses, Matthew 6:10 and Luke 11:2 (1βγ). I agree, and I like the translation "royal reign" for its clarity. I will continue to say, "Your kingdom come," but I will do so with the understanding that *kingdom* = *royal reign*.

The verb "come" is another third person singular aorist imperative, this time in the active voice. There are no contextual factors suggesting any limitations such as "now" or "to us" or "in my heart." So we can take the large view and look ahead to the coming of our Father's royal reign on the Last Day. But here too the aorist tense is complexive. It covers all the actions and developments by which God's reign in its present form is established and strengthened and extended among human beings on earth, as well as its coming in its final form. In other words, we are praying for the coming of both the kingdom of grace in the present and the kingdom of glory in the future, i.e., on the Last Day.

Zahn disagrees. Though he does not use the terms "kingdom of grace" and "kingdom of glory," he seems to find here only a prayer for the future coming of the latter from heaven to earth. He says "come" does not mean "grow" or "spread out." He says those who pray for God's reign to come admit thereby that it is not here yet—it is a future hope, not a present reality on earth.¹⁹

But Zahn's interpretation seems to rest on a wooden view of language. In the New Testament, God's reign/kingdom is both a present, invisible reality taking place among people on earth (Mt 12:28; Lk 17:21) and a future scene of open celebration (Mt 8:11; Lk 22:16) in the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:1). And "come" is a flexible verb. God "comes" to people in the Bible even though he is omnipresent. We who already possess the Spirit by faith nevertheless pray, "Come, Holy Spirit." Even in secular usage, it would be meaningful for a rich man to say during a recession, "I want prosperity to come." He himself is already prosperous, but the nation as a whole is not. He wants prosperity to come to his fellow citizens and a greater measure of prosperity to come to himself. In a similar way, Christians who already have God reigning in their hearts can pray for God's reign to come. They want their fellow human beings to receive God's reign into their hearts and they want a greater measure of that blessedness for themselves. And since they have been told that there will be a final coming of God's reign in perfected form with manifest glory, they pray for that too when they say, "Your kingdom come (May your royal reign come)."

Luther's explanation of this petition in the Small Catechism says nothing about the coming of God's kingdom to others. It focuses on us: "...God's kingdom comes on its own without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come to us."²⁰ At this point, our

¹⁹ Zahn, *Matthaeus*, pp. 272-73.

²⁰ Kolb-Wengert ed., p. 356.

synod's current blue catechism adds, "and to many others."²¹ Since it is not a scholarly book for historical research but a tool for basic instruction, the addition seems justifiable.

The thought in the phrase "and to many others" is in fact covered in the Large Catechism, which has a splendid statement on the content of this petition:

"The coming of God's kingdom to us" takes place in two ways: first, it comes here, in time, through the Word and faith, and second, in eternity, it comes through the final revelation. Now, we ask for both of these things: that it may come to those who are not yet in it and that, by daily growth here and in eternal life hereafter, it may come to us who have attained it.²²

We can now add a few thoughts on the specifically Christian content of the Second Petition. Long before Jesus was born it was known to the Jews that God had promised an anointed one who would be God's king on Mt. Zion and would rule over all nations (Ps. 2:2,6,8). God's reign was to be realized in the reign of that anointed king. Who would he be? When would he come?

The Jesus who taught the Lord's Prayer was identified as that king before his birth (Lk 1:31-33) and at his birth (Lk 2:11). At his baptism he was anointed with the Holy Spirit. While priests and prophets were also anointed, the first thought that comes to mind upon hearing the designation "Messiah/Christ/Anointed" is the anointed *king*. Thus Nathanael says, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel" (Jn 1:49). Jesus not only accepted testimony like that, but he also treated it as crucially important (Mt 16:16-20). He often kept the title "Christ" under wraps because it could be misunderstood in political terms or because frequent open claims would have provoked a crisis before the time was right. But he did lay claim to the title on more than one occasion (e.g., Jn 4:25-26; Mk 14:62). And he found other ways to say the same thing, as when he identified himself as the Son of Man in Daniel's vision (Mt 26:64)—the Son of Man who comes on the clouds and receives from the Ancient of Days sovereign power over all nations and an everlasting dominion, so that "his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (Da 7:13-14).

The other great point about God's kingdom is that we possess it now and will enjoy its future glory through faith in the gospel of Jesus. Already in Mark 1:15 we hear Jesus proclaim, "The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent *and believe the good news!*" The rest of his ministry makes it ever clearer that the good news is good news *about him* and that the blessings of the kingdom are received through faith *in him*.

"The royal reign of God" is a mighty peg on which we could hang all the theology of the Bible if we had the time. The point for now is to see that the unfolding of this concept in the ministry of Jesus was a matter of huge importance to him. It would be absurd to try to understand Jesus' use of the words, "May your royal reign come" apart from his testimony about himself as the Messiah. He emphasizes his central role in the gospel of the kingdom and the consequent importance of faith in him. Thus he invites us to pray the Second Petition with an explicitly Christian understanding.

An expanded paraphrase of the Second Petition:

²¹ David P. Kuske, *Luther's Small Catechism: The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther and an Exposition for Children and Adults Written in Contemporary English* (Milwaukee: WELS Board for Parish Education, 1982), pp. 6, 300.

²² Kolb-Wengert ed., p. 447. There is a footnote on "through the final revelation": "That is, at the second coming of Christ."

Father, reign in our hearts through the gospel of Jesus. Make our faith in him stronger so that we serve you better. Establish your reign in the hearts of others by bringing them to faith in Jesus. When Jesus returns in glory, unveil your perfect reign and let us see you face to face.

The Third Petition

<p><u>Matthew 6:10</u></p> <p>γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς·</p> <p>May your will be done on earth as (it is) in heaven.</p>	<p><i>Luke has no corresponding petition.</i></p> <p>(The textual witnesses that lack this petition are more likely to preserve the original text of Luke than those that seem to assimilate Luke to Matthew).</p>
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A literal translation reads, "Your will be done, as in heaven, (so) also on earth." When *καί* occurs in the second half of a comparison, the adverbial meaning "also" can expand into "so also."²³ The linking of "in heaven" and "on earth" in this fashion raises some questions. Does it amount to saying "May your will be done *both in heaven and on earth*"? Some might justify that by saying we want God's will to be done in heaven because we are conscious of demons carrying on spiritual war in heavenly places (Eph 6:11-12). But that way of speaking seems remote from Matthew's Gospel. I assume rather that in Matthew's usage, "heaven" refers to a place where God's will is already being carried out perfectly. That would still leave open the possibility that we ask God not only to do his will on earth but also to maintain the perfect performance of his will in heaven, which could be understood as our way of embracing God's will in its totality. But it seems strained to combine so concisely these somewhat divergent thoughts: "God, see to it that your will is done in heaven (where it already is carried out perfectly) and on earth (where it encounters much opposition)." It is preferable to adopt the traditional understanding in which we do not pray for God's will to be done in heaven but use the fact that God's will *is* done perfectly in heaven as a standard for what we want to take place on earth. We can bring that out by inserting an understood "it is" after "as": "as it is in heaven." We then rearrange the words for smoother English, and it is no longer necessary to translate the *καί* at all (*καί* is often redundant in comparisons). Thus we arrive at the familiar-sounding translation, "May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Since I am adopting this traditional understanding, I decline the suggestion that *ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς* applies to all three of the first three petitions. While it would fit the First Petition, it would seem odd to understand the Second Petition as saying, "May your royal reign come on earth as it is coming (or already has come) in heaven." The words *ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς* can nicely cap off the first half of the prayer even if they are taken only with the Third Petition.

²³ BDAG s.v. □□□□ 2c. p. 496a; BDF sect. 453.1.

I understand "heaven" here as the place where the good angels serve God, an interpretation at least as old as Augustine and Cyril of Jerusalem and Chrysostom.²⁴ While we would not limit God's will to his will for rational creatures, that is a natural point of emphasis. We want God's will to be carried out by human beings on earth just as it is carried out by angels in heaven. The thought that "heaven" here means the visible sky in which the sun, moon, and stars obey God's will seems less apt as a standard for the doing of God's will on earth. Granted, we here have "heaven" in the singular (οὐρανῶ) in contrast to the plural "heavens" in the Address, but that need not indicate a shift to a physical understanding of "heaven" as the visible sky. Matthew routinely uses "heaven" in the singular whenever it is paired with "earth," regardless of the meaning attached to "heaven." That meaning must be determined contextually, and here context favors "heaven" as the home of the angels in contrast to "earth" as the home of human beings.

The verb γενηθήτω is another third person singular aorist passive imperative (like ἀγιασθήτω in the First Petition), and again it has the complexive sense, covering all performance of God's will up to a certain anticipated point. That point is best taken as the completion of the great plan of salvation, when the last judgment is over, the condemned have been banished, and the glorified saints have begun to experience the beatific vision of God. We will find out then what else God wants us to do and experience, but meanwhile we focus on the plan that has been revealed to us, and we pray for it to be brought to completion (hence an *aorist* imperative, rather than an open-ended present imperative).

When we understand the will (τό θέλημα) of our Father in that definite way as his plan of salvation, we are really including all of this world's history, as Paul tells us:

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (Eph 1:8-9)

God manages every detail in his governance of history to carry out his plan of bringing all things under Christ. As further proof of that, he has exalted Jesus according to his human nature and given him authority over all things in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18). Our Brother is now making sure that everything goes according to plan.

Identifying our Father's will on this vast scale includes, of course, the little details of our lives. When we pray, "May your will be done," we include this thought: If ever any of our little plans or desires is in conflict with our Father's plan of bringing all things together under Christ, we want him to carry out his will, not ours. We often make a separate prayer out of that thought as we anticipate the future, and that is fine. "Help me, Lord, to make it through medical school—but your will be done." "Lord, I hope things work out and my girlfriend agrees to marry me someday—but your will be done." "Lord, let it not be cancer—but your will be done."²⁵ But when we pray the Third Petition according to its original sense, we take the big view and ask that everything may happen to further God's great plan of salvation in Christ.

That big view explains a comment made in the Small Catechism (and in a number of modern commentaries on Matthew and Luke): God's will is done when his name is hallowed and his kingdom comes. That in turn may help explain why this petition is lacking in Luke's version of the prayer. He who says the first two petitions with understanding has covered the

²⁴ Cf. Davies and Allison, p. 606, for references.

²⁵ Compare the prayer of Paul's friends in Acts 21:14. They urged him not to go to Jerusalem because of prophetic messages concerning the dangers and hardships awaiting him there. "When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, 'The Lord's will be done.'"

third. So we have greater brevity in Luke and greater fullness of expression in Matthew—an advantage for those of us who are slow to understand or quick to forget how much is included in the first two petitions.

An expanded paraphrase of the Third Petition:

Direct our lives to conform to your will. Govern history so that your plan of salvation in Christ may be fulfilled. Bring all your elect to stand before your throne, made new in your image and perfectly conformed to your will, the loving children of a loving Father.

The Fourth Petition

<u>Matthew 6:11</u>	<u>Luke 11:3</u>
<p>Τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δός ἡμῖν σήμερον·</p> <p>Give us today our ___ bread.</p>	<p>τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν·</p> <p>Keep giving us day by day our ___ bread.</p>

Matthew's δός is a second person singular aorist active imperative of δίδωμι, "Give." Here the time-frame is limited by the adverb "today," so we are not looking at a long span of time reaching into the future. Luke uses a *present* imperative, "Be giving, give repeatedly, keep giving," because he has an adverbial expression that reaches beyond today: "day by day."²⁶ Matthew's version brings out a little more clearly that prayer is a daily practice and the Lord's Prayer is suitable as a daily prayer.

I do not know for sure the meaning of the adjective ἐπιούσιον. Origen (c. 185-254) "maintained that it was unknown both in Greek literature and in ordinary Greek parlance and that it had been invented by the evangelists."²⁷ Recent commentators have much the same difficulty. Despite a huge amount of research, we have no reliable attestations of the adjective ἐπιούσιος -ον apart from the Lord's Prayer and references to the Lord's Prayer. As a result, many meanings and explanations have been suggested over the centuries.

Those who want to delve into the ancient and modern suggestions are encouraged to look at major commentaries of scholars such as Davies and Allison or Ulrich Luz²⁸ on Matthew and Fitzmyer on Luke, as well as word studies such as that of W. Foerster.²⁹ It is a complicated subject. We will briefly look at three of the significant options. All three have some support in ancient translations or ancient discussions of the Lord's Prayer.

²⁶ In καθ' ἡμέραν we have the distributive use of κατά: "according to day" means "day by day." The addition of the adverbial accusative article τό makes the phrase slightly more prominent but does not change the sense.

²⁷ Fitzmyer, p. 904, with a reference to Origen's *De oratione* 27.7.

²⁸ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, trans. James E. Crouch, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), pp. 319-22.

²⁹ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 590-99.

a) "Give us today our *daily* bread (our bread *for the day*)." There are linguistic difficulties in trying to get "daily" or "for the day" out of ἐπιούσιον though perhaps they are not so severe as to disqualify this option. Another problem is that Greek had a number of well-established words for "daily" or "for the day" (e.g., ἐφημέριος and ἐφήμερος), so why reach for a new or exceedingly rare one? And why add a word to express the thought "daily, for the day" when it is already implied in Matthew's "today" and Luke's "day by day"?

Still, that redundancy gives me some curious reassurance when I pray the Lord's Prayer in its familiar liturgical form. I am not at all confident that ἐπιούσιον means "daily," but at least the thought "daily" is covered by "today," and thus we do not introduce an alien thought into the prayer. Perhaps that is one of the reasons "daily" and similar expressions have remained so popular with translators.

b) "Give us today our *necessary* bread (the bread we need)." We encounter some of the same problems here. There are difficulties in getting "necessary" out of ἐπιούσιον, and Greek has other convenient ways of saying "necessary" (e.g., ἐπιτήδειος). But on the positive side, "necessary" avoids any redundant or complicated piling-up of temporal expressions, and the thought is suitably modest. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus talks about basics like food and clothing and tells us not to worry about them because "your heavenly Father knows that you need them" (Mt 6:32). Confident *prayer* about our needs is a good way to overcome *worry* about our needs, so we could easily suppose that Jesus would teach us to pray for the bread we need.

c) Perhaps the favorite option among scholars is, "Give us today our bread *for the coming day*." Here there are no linguistic difficulties. It would be unobjectionable to create an adjective ἐπιούσιος -ον from the well-known expression ἡ ἐπιούσα (ἡμέρα), "the coming (day)," "tomorrow." Ancient Greek has no other adjective meaning "pertaining to tomorrow," so we could imagine an early Christian coining one to translate this prayer (on the assumption that Jesus originally taught it in Aramaic or Hebrew and included an expression for "tomorrow"). But "bread for the coming day" raises questions in the area of content. If we are counting on God to provide for us, why specify that we ask to receive *tomorrow's* bread *today*? Perhaps Jesus adopts the perspective of a laborer who works all day, gets paid at the end of the day, and uses that pay to feed himself and his family the next day. But was that set of circumstances common enough to set the pattern in a model prayer for every Christian to use? Some suggest that we could also think of the Fourth Petition as a morning prayer and then understand "the coming day" as the day that has just dawned. Like Israelites gathering manna in the morning hours for use during the rest of the day, Christians might pray in the morning to receive bread for the coming daylight hours. But does that perhaps make the prayer less suitable for praying at noon or in the middle of the afternoon? Is this manner of reckoning "today" and "the coming day" starting to look needlessly complicated?

I do not know what ἐπιούσιον means. Let us move on to other matters.

The common interpretation that "bread" in the Fourth Petition includes more than baked goods is correct. The question is, How far does it extend? Luz says, "As the most important article of food 'bread' can represent *pars pro toto* sustenance in general, but it may not be expanded to include all of life's needs."³⁰ He adds a footnote criticizing Luther for doing that very thing in the Small Catechism. He says that Luther's list ("food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace,

³⁰ p. 321.

health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like"³¹) "does not correspond to the intention of the text."³² This requires a response.

We can grant that on a *linguistic* level, "bread" as a *pars pro toto* expression most naturally refers to food. But Luther is not operating on a purely linguistic level in the Small Catechism. He is thinking in terms of *further implications* of the Fourth Petition, *things we are reminded of* when we ponder the actual words of the petition. For example, Luther says we pray here that God would make us grateful for his gifts. When he says that, no one supposes for a moment that "Give us bread" *literally* means "Make us grateful." Rather, the point is that it would obviously be untrue to Jesus' intention if we were to say, "I will ask God for bread, but I will not thank him for it." By the same token, we can hardly say, "I will ask God for food, but not for any of the other necessities of life; I will thank God for food, but for nothing else." Thinking through the implications of Jesus' words inevitably leads us to Luther's broad view.

Furthermore, does Luz suppose that Luther is turning Jesus' prayer for modest needs into a prayer for riches? And does Luz take Jesus' words to mean, "Father, keep us poor—never give us more than the absolute minimum of life support"? Jesus does not say that. His petition leaves the whole question of "How much is needed?" in God's hands. If God wants me to serve him as a professor, he may decide to let me have such wonderful luxuries as a good computer, access to a good library, a well-appointed classroom and office, and the like. If God wants you to be a pastor, he may decide to let you have wonderful luxuries such as a fine worship facility and an office and a good car so you can visit your members. But if God decides it is time for us to bear a severe cross, he may let us be put in prison without even an adequate amount of dry bread crusts. It is up to him to provide the kind of blessings necessary for the kind of service he desires from us. We leave that in his hands.

And does Luz suppose Luther has any other view? Luther's list is not designed to inflame Christians with greed. Luther does not say, "Jesus guaranteed us all these blessings in abundance when he taught us his prayer, and so we have a right to insist on all these blessings when we pray." Rather it is a list of things to be grateful for when they are received. So we pray for "bread" from a Father who often gives much more than a subsistence diet, and we recognize that he decides how much to give us. We also thank him for whatever we do receive.

We have been speaking of *implications* in the text, and that raises another question. Should we understand "bread" as implying also spiritual bread, the gospel of Jesus?

We need not quarrel with someone who says, "Just as the word 'Father' reminds me of the Son, and just as 'kingdom' reminds me of Jesus the King, so 'bread' reminds me of Jesus, the Bread of Life, and therefore I will pray for spiritual food as well as physical food when I pray the Fourth Petition." But there really is no need to include that thought here. We have already prayed for the success of the gospel and its wholesome impact on ourselves in the first three petitions. I do not think Matthew or Luke was intent on making a connection between the Fourth Petition and the Bread of Life, for the Bread of Life discourse is found in John, not in Matthew or Luke. Matthew and Luke do report the use of bread in the institution of the Lord's Supper, but there is no clue that they want us to include a request for the Sacrament in our praying of the Fourth Petition. That would be too much like saying Christians should only pray the Fourth Petition ("Give us *today*...") on days when they expect to receive the Sacrament.

Finally, a word about "us" and "our." The perspective of the Fifth Petition points to the understanding of "us" as "us Christians." It is not that we are insensitive to the bodily needs of

³¹ Kolb-Wengert ed., p. 357.

³² Luz, p. 321, nt. 115.

unbelievers. We are free to pray for them also, and we can include that thought in "May your will be done." God's will includes his desire to give earthly blessings even to the wicked. But we have a higher obligation to look after the needs of our fellow Christians (Gal 6:10), and in the Fourth Petition we take them upon our hearts and pray for them. It is all too easy for "us" to collapse into "me and my immediate family" and finally just "me." Jesus teaches us to take a larger view of our opportunity to help other Christians, here and around the world. And if we pray for them, we will be that much readier to help them in other ways, too, as opportunity arises.

An expanded paraphrase of Matthew's version of the Fourth Petition:

Father, you provide generously for your children. Give us today all the material blessings we need to serve you in the manner you desire, and make us grateful for all we receive. I pray this especially for Christians distressed by need, wherever they may be.

The Fifth Petition

<p><u>Matthew 6:12</u></p> <p><i>καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ἐφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν</i></p> <p>And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.</p>	<p><u>Luke 11:4</u></p> <p><i>καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν, καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν·</i></p> <p>And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who owes us.</p>
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The Fifth Petition follows the Fourth. It would be rash to infer that we pray for material benefits first because they are more important than spiritual ones. Perhaps the order reflects the order in which we experience God's blessings. We are part of God's creation before we become part of his new creation through the gospel of forgiveness. We are born before we are reborn.

Matthew and Luke start in a similar way. Both use the second person singular aorist active imperative of ἀφίημι namely ἄφε, "Forgive." Should we assume that the time-frame of the Fourth Petition is still operative here and mentally supply "today" in Matthew and "day by day" in Luke? That will not work in Luke. In the petition for bread, Luke shifted to a present imperative ("Keep giving") to go along with "day by day," but now he shifts back to an aorist imperative in the petition for forgiveness. Since Luke does not maintain the same time-frame as he moves from the bread petition to the petition for forgiveness, we should not assume that Matthew does, either. It is best to regard the verb ἄφες in both versions as another long-range complexive aorist. We need God's forgiveness now and for the rest of our lives and when we stand before our Judge in the last judgment. We are not asking merely for forgiveness today to cover today's sins. We seek forgiveness for the totality of our sins. We do not ever want to be treated as our sins deserve and experience God's anger. We want him always to justify us.

In all of this we have been assuming that "debts" here are "moral debts, sins," and that is in fact the meaning of *ὀφειλήματα* in Matthew's version.³³ This usage has an Aramaic background. That may explain why Luke uses the word *ἁμαρτίας*. He wants his readers to see clearly that we are praying to have our sins forgiven, not our financial obligations cancelled. (The reference to "debtors" or "everyone who owes us" in the latter part of the petition is likewise talking about people who have sinned against us, not borrowers of money.)

The foundation for forgiveness is the grace of God and the vicarious active and passive obedience of Christ. The Father sent his Son, the Lamb of God, to bear the sins of the world, and he has taken them all away (Jn 1:29). God "forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross" (Col 2:13-14). In Christ's resurrection his death and its cause, our sin, are overcome, and thus our forgiveness is demonstrated in salvation history (1 Co 15:17).

When Jesus taught this prayer, his disciples were much clearer about God's grace than about Jesus' role in fulfilling God's prophecies with a sacrificial death. They heard Jesus' predictions of his passion with perplexity and dismay (Mt 16:21-22). Clearly there was room for them to grow into a deeper understanding of the Fifth Petition, and with God's help they did grow and saw clearly that Christ's death was a death for our sins in fulfillment of the Scriptures and that this is a matter of central importance (1 Co 15:3-5).

The further teaching of Jesus also made clear that God was not content with saying in his heart, "I have forgiven the sins of the world," while leaving people to wonder where they stand in his sight. Neither was God content with demonstrating his forgiveness in mute events at the cross and empty tomb of Jesus. In God's view, the whole purpose of forgiveness is to have a loving relationship with his rebellious creatures and bring them into his family. So Jesus absolves sinners (Mt 9:2), preaches forgiveness himself, and sends others out to preach his gospel message, announcing to all that God has forgiven them.

We keep all this in mind as we pray the Fifth Petition. When we lose sight of the objective basis of forgiveness in God's own nature and in salvation history and in the means of grace, forgiveness is shifted to a false basis and becomes illusory. When the objective basis is there but obscured, faith in forgiveness becomes weak. That is why it is good to have a statement like Luther's in the Large Catechism:

Here again there is great need to call upon God and pray: "Dear Father, forgive us our debts." Not that he does not forgive sins even apart from and before our praying; for even before we prayed for it or even thought about it, he gave us the gospel, in which there is nothing but forgiveness.³⁴

Jesus teaches us that the great drama of forgiveness does not stop when the sinner becomes his disciple and possesses forgiveness through faith. For forgiveness is not a physical object, like an admission ticket on which is printed *Admit the Bearer of This Ticket to Heaven*. If it were, you could put your ticket in your pocket and safely forget about it until you needed to present it at the door. Instead, possessing God's forgiveness means that we have entered an intensely personal relationship with God. It is very much like marriage. The wife who possesses her husband's love does not get tired of hearing him say, "I love you," especially when she has done something to disappoint him. In the same way the Christian soul treasures the forgiving love with which God began to woo her and delights in hearing God say again, "I forgive you," especially in view of the way she keeps disappointing him. It may seem paradoxical to pray for

³³ BDAG s.v. *ὀφειλήματα* 2, p. 743.

³⁴ Kolb-Wengert ed., p. 452, section 88.

forgiveness—after all, who but a believer in the gospel can really pray, and how can a believer in the gospel not possess forgiveness through faith? But the Christian knows this petition is not about collecting superfluous tickets. It is all about hanging on to and deepening the most important relationship imaginable.

That is how Jesus sees it. He does not prescribe the Fifth Petition as an occasional remedy to be used only when consciences are burning with fear and shame. He includes it in a daily prayer. And he does not think of it as psychological self-help ("Get it off your chest and you will feel better"). He tells us to *pray* for forgiveness, and he knows that our Father will hear that prayer and respond.

Our Father responds by forgiving. The Bible uses the word "forgive" to bring out various facets of his grace: the decision in his heart to show mercy to sinners for Christ's sake as he views the vicarious obedience of Christ (Col 2:14), the declaration of that decision in the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments (Mk 2:5; Ac 22:16; 1 Co 11:23), and the personal application of that decision to the individual through faith (Mt 12:23).³⁵ When we pray for forgiveness, we are not trying to use our contrition to melt God's heart and make him gracious. He is already gracious and well-disposed toward us in Christ. We ask rather that he renew the work of the gospel in us and cause us to appropriate it anew through faith. And God does this for us. He stirs up our memory of some gospel passage or paraphrase, or he sends a fellow Christian to say what we need to hear, or he lets us hear a sermon or hymn that makes an impact on us, or he admits us to his table for the Sacrament. Thus he forgives us and draws us closer to himself.

Jesus adds a word about our forgiving of others. Jesus values faith that grasps forgiveness, but he also values love that grows out of faith. If the love is not there, neither is the faith. Jesus brings this out by saying in Matthew 6:14-15, "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Your Father will not forgive your sins (in the sense of applying forgiveness to you through faith) if there is no faith. So Jesus embeds a reminder in his prayer to keep us from deluding ourselves that we are forgiven believers when we willfully refuse to practice love by forgiving.

The logic of the reminder is basically the same in both versions. We can see a reason being mentioned and a comparison being suggested. In Luke the word γάρ, "for," points to our ongoing practice of forgiving as a reason. It is our reason for praying, not a meritorious basis for God's forgiving.³⁶ Luke includes a καί, "also," and the pronoun αὐτοί, "we ourselves," which suggest a comparison: "Father, forgive—we ourselves also forgive." In Matthew the connection is made by way of ὡς, "as," probably with about the same force as Luke's γάρ,³⁷ though there may be a suggestion of comparison as well. The idea of comparison between God and us is in any case suggested by καί, "also," and the pronoun reinforcing the subject, ἡμεῖς, "we." In

³⁵ Jesus says that someone who commits blasphemy against the Holy Spirit "will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come" (Mt 12:32). Such a person is in fact included in the vicarious atonement and may hear the gospel of forgiveness preached to him even after he blasphemes against the Holy Spirit. But God will not cause him to appropriate that forgiveness through faith. In that sense God will not forgive him.

³⁶ Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* in the *New International Greek Testament Commentary* series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 461: "The petition has a 'condition' attached. God can be asked to forgive us because we too forgive everyone who is indebted to us. J. Carmignac...observes that the condition is attached to our *asking* God to forgive and not to his act in forgiving which is dependent purely on his grace."

³⁷ BDF 453.2; BDAG s.v. ὡς 3αγ, p. 1105, col. a.

Matthew's text we ask God to forgive us "as we also have forgiven (aorist) our debtors." In both texts the thinking seems to be, "Recognizing that Jesus emphatically requires us to forgive, we mention our practice of forgiving others as a reason why we can ask our Father to forgive us." It would be hypocritical to ask God to forgive us if we refused to forgive others.

We speak as our Father's children. He forgives; we forgive. Of course we cannot claim to equal the intensity and purity of God's forgiving love. But that must not become an excuse for cutting ourselves plenty of slack, for then we undermine the urgency of Jesus' insistence that we forgive one another. We are imperfect, but Jesus teaches us all the same to rebuke our unforgiving nature and discover in the gospel the power to forgive. Then the added clause in the Fifth Petition becomes a reassurance, and our forgiving becomes a sign and seal to us that we have been forgiven.³⁸

In this petition we pray not just for our own forgiveness but for the forgiveness of Christians everywhere. They may be personally annoying and hard to get along with at times. They may belong to a denomination with a defective confession that causes us pain and impedes our work. But we ask that God would forgive them no less than us and bring us all together to stand at Jesus' right hand on Judgment Day.

Since the petition includes the thought that I pray for forgiveness for my own sins, it is clear that Jesus did not pray this petition in just this manner. He had no sins of his own.³⁹ We call it the Lord's Prayer because he taught it, not because it exactly reflects his own prayer life.

An expanded paraphrase of the Fifth Petition:

Do not hold our sins against us. Use the gospel of Jesus to bring home to us the joy of your forgiveness, and enable us to stand before you fearlessly on the Last Day. I pray this for myself and all Christians. I pray this as one who has learned from you, Father, how to forgive, and I strive to prove myself your child in this way.

The Sixth Petition

Matthew and Luke have the same words in this petition.

Matthew 6:13 and Luke 11:4

καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν

And do not bring us into temptation

The word *εἰσενέγκῃς* is from *εἰσφέρω*, "bring in, bring into." Since the "into" idea is covered also by the prepositional phrase "into temptation," we will translate our verb as "bring" (the traditional rendering "lead" is fairly close in meaning). The form is a second person singular

³⁸ Cf. Large Catechism, III,97 (Kolb-Wengert ed., p. 453).

³⁹ Against Betz, who reduces Jesus to a typical Jew with a typical Jewish understanding of himself as a sinner: "As a Jew, Jesus must certainly have acknowledged his sinfulness because such a confession belonged to the marks of the righteous man" (*The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 373, col. b).

aorist active subjunctive. The use of the subjunctive rather than the imperative in aorist prohibitions is normal. An aorist prohibition simply says, "Do not do something" (as opposed to a present prohibition, "Do not be doing it" or "do not keep on doing it, stop doing it"). There is no contextual limitation to a particular set of circumstances (as we noted above, the "today" or "day by day" of the Fourth Petition is no longer operative). The words are broad enough to suggest, "And do not bring us into temptation—ever."

In the Fifth Petition we asked for God's help in dealing with the sins Christians commit. But it would be good not to commit them in the first place. We need damage prevention as well as damage repair. We have a sense that the Sixth Petition is tied to the Fifth with "and" because of that thought connection. We are attracted to an understanding of the Sixth Petition that amounts to saying, "Help us avoid sinning." The problem is, how do you get that thought out of the words? Why does the petition say, "And do not bring us into temptation"?

This is a long-standing problem, perhaps the biggest exegetical difficulty in the whole prayer. I can do no more than offer a tentative answer. But first let us look at some other ways of handling the problem. You may decide you like some of them better than the one I shall recommend. But you will also better understand why I lean the way I do after we go through some other proposals and see the difficulties they entail.

As we consider these proposals, let us keep in mind that at this stage we are looking for a precise explanation of the *explicit* meaning of the text. Some of the proposals contain wholesome thoughts that are related to the topic of temptation, but they do not account for the exact wording of the text. I will reject them for now. But after I indicate what I think the *explicit* meaning of the text is, I will come back to some of the other ideas and allow them a place as *implicit meanings* or *associated ideas* prompted in our mind as we pray Jesus' words. On that level they can find a place in our praying of this petition.

a) One approach is simply to substitute other words. Bruce M. Metzger notes concerning the text of Luke 11:4, "Marcion apparently read *μὴ ἀφῆς ἡμᾶς εἰσενεχθῆναι* ('Do not allow us to be led into temptation'), a theological amelioration of the usual form of the petition."⁴⁰ Even though Marcion (excommunicated c. 144) is earlier than most of our evidence for the text of the New Testament, his unusual form of the Sixth Petition cannot be considered the original text of Luke. It may represent Marcion's understanding of the genuine text, but in the absence of exegetical support it would be willful to equate the two.

b) The attempt has been made to justify a permissive sense similar to the one we find in Marcion (do not bring us = do not allow us to be brought) by appealing to Hebrew or Aramaic usage. It is suggested that *μὴ εἰσενέγκης* is a translation of a Hebrew or Aramaic causative verb (bring = cause to go) used in a permissive sense (allow to go). But we do not have the Lord's Prayer in Hebrew or Aramaic. We have it in Greek. A Greek reader has no reason to translate *μὴ εἰσενέγκης* into another language or to use the grammar of another language to understand his own. According to normal Greek usage, *μὴ εἰσενέγκης* simply means, "Do not bring."⁴¹

c) Sometimes the word *πειρασμόν* is made to yield a solution. It can refer to a temptation (in which Satan tries to get us to sin) or to a test (in which God gives faith a chance to use his

⁴⁰ *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 156.

⁴¹ A variation on this strategy is J. Carmignac's explanation that the negative with a Hebrew causative verb could involve a special idiom; instead of "Do not cause us to go into temptation," the idiomatic meaning would be "Cause us *not* to go into temptation," in other words, "Cause us not to succumb to temptation." I. Howard Marshall cites this explanation with approval, pp. 461-62. Parts of it have value, but to the extent that it requires us to treat simple Greek as though it were Hebrew, it fails.

help and prevail). God does not *tempt* us. He does not try to get us to sin (Jas 1:13-14). God *tests* us for our good, as we see in Abraham (Ge 22:1,12) and Job. So why would we ask God to spare us his good tests? Accordingly, some suggest that we should take *πειρασμόν* in a special sense. In line with 1 Corinthians 10:13 they explain the Sixth Petition as meaning, "Do not bring us into any test or temptation *beyond what we can bear*." But of course the vital qualifying words are not hinted at in the text of the petition.⁴² The same is true of an interpretation that says, "Do not bring us into the great eschatological *πειρασμόν*." alluding to the words of Jesus to the church in Philadelphia, "I will also keep you from the hour of trial (τῆς ὥρας τοῦ πειρασμοῦ) that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live upon the earth" (Rev 3:10). The very fact that there is no article in the Sixth Petition (*πειρασμόν* not *τόν πειρασμόν*) is fatal to that interpretation. We are talking about temptation in general.

d) Do we say this petition to remind ourselves that temptation is dangerous and train ourselves to avoid it? That would turn a prayer into nothing more than instruction. Do we pray this petition simply to tell God what we would prefer,⁴³ even though we expect God to set aside our preferences by subjecting us to many tests? That would make this the one petition in the Lord's Prayer in which we would ignore the reality of God's revealed will for our lives and express instead our own preference.

I think the correct understanding of this petition begins with a recognition of how much *πειράσμος* we experience. We are tempted by pride when we do well and by envy and resentment when we do poorly. We are tempted by prosperity to forget God and by adversity to mistrust him. We are tempted by friends and enemies, pains and pleasures. Whether strong or weak, obvious or subtle, temptation is our frequent companion. Furthermore, it is not as though God's tests for our good and Satan's temptations to do evil are miles apart. They come to us as two sides of the same situation. God tested Job for a good purpose by allowing Satan to tempt him with evil intent. After his baptism in the Jordan, "Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil" (Mt 4:1). God was in control, and he deliberately led Jesus into a situation in which he was to be tempted by Satan.

If we have been assuming that "Lead us not into temptation" means "do not bring or lead us into a situation in which we will be tempted," we may want to reconsider. Many, many situations in life can be occasions for temptation. God led Jesus into such a situation in order to have him defeat the devil. God leads us into situations in which we are tempted so that we can resist the devil and make him flee, as James tells us (4:7). James even says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials (*πειρασμοῖς*) of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (1:2-3).

A clue to the meaning of "bring into temptation" can be found in a similar expression Jesus used in speaking to his disciples in Gethsemane: "Keep watching and praying, that you may not *enter into temptation* (*εἰσέλθητε εἰς πειρασμόν*)" (Mt 26:41 NASB). Under the circumstances in Gethsemane, it is not likely that Jesus thinks the disciples are free of temptation. The situation will get much worse, but there already are temptations for the disciples to deal with. The point rather seems to be that they are in danger of *entering* temptation by

⁴² Lenski likewise reads something into the text when he limits temptation to *effective* temptation, the kind that would overcome us (*Matthew*, p. 270).

⁴³ Cf. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 251: "If *peirazo* is here taken in that more positive sense, the point of the petition would not be that testing is in itself bad, but that disciples, aware of their weakness, would prefer not to have to face it."

succumbing to it.⁴⁴ Picture temptation as a snare or trap. Once you have entered it, you have already suffered harm.⁴⁵

If the phrase "enter into temptation" means *succumb to temptation*, it is plausible that "bring someone into temptation" would mean *cause someone to succumb to temptation*.⁴⁶ I suggest that in the Sixth Petition we are asking God not to cause us to succumb to temptation. Keep in mind that such a prayer does not compromise God's goodness. As R. T. France observes, "a negative request does not necessarily imply that the positive is otherwise to be expected."⁴⁷ I am not saying that God would ever cause us or anyone else to sin.

Commentators sometimes object that such a petition would be pointless. Why ask God not to do something which he has already promised not to do (1 Co 10:13), something which is contrary to his very nature?

But how much of the Lord's Prayer would be left if we applied that argument consistently? God has promised to show the holiness of his name—so why bother to ask him to do that in the First Petition? God has promised to establish his royal reign and carry out his will—"Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him" (Ps 115:3). So why do we pray the Second and Third Petitions? There is more of the same in the rest of the Lord's Prayer, and in the Psalms, and in the Bible generally. Often we pray by aligning our wills to God's revealed will and asking him to do things he does by nature and promises to do, or by asking him not to do things his nature abhors and he has promised not to do. "Deliver me...do not abandon me...hear me...do not treat me as my sins deserve."

Jesus teaches us to escape the horrible prospect of committing sin and apostasy by asking God to be the kind of God he is, a God who takes no delight in sin, a God whose nature recoils from sin, a God who is not like us, a bundle of mutually contradictory wishes, but utterly true to himself. In his moral will he tells us what he wants us to do, and so he would never cause us to do the contrary. In his gospel he tells his children he loves them, and so he would never bring

⁴⁴ Origen comments on LXX Psalm 17:29, "He does not enter into temptation, not by not being tempted, but by not being captured by the snares of temptation" (translated from the quotation in Erich Klostermann, *Das Mattheusevangelium*, vol. 4 of the *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1927), p. 58. Among modern exegetes, cf. I. Howard Marshall, p. 461-62: "J. Carmignac... has shown that 'to enter temptation' means not 'to be tempted' but 'to yield to temptation' (4QFlor 1:8)." Fitzmyer, p.1441, on Luke 22:40: "To 'enter into' temptation means to succumb to its evil power." Cf. also F. F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983), chapter 19, "Lead Us Not into Temptation," pp. 81-85.

⁴⁵ In 1 Timothy 6:9, Paul says, "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction." Are those three successive stages, such that they do not arrive at "foolish and harmful desires" until after they first have fallen into temptation and then into a trap? Is it not more likely that the three things they "fall into" are a composite picture? By succumbing to temptation they become entrapped in foolish and harmful desires.

⁴⁶ An ancient Jewish prayer (*b. Ber.* 60b) can be translated, "Bring me not into the power of sin, and not into the power of guilt, and not into the power of temptation, and not into the power of anything shameful" (Davies and Allison, p. 612). "Into the power of" could more literally be translated "into the hand of." Is the New Testament expression "bring into temptation" perhaps a concise Greek equivalent for the Semitic expression, from which the "hand" has been omitted as less idiomatic in Greek? Also of interest is Martin Chemnitz, *The Lord's Prayer*, trans. Georg Williams (St. Louis: Concordia, 1999), p. 85: "The words of this petition do not mean 'that we may not be tempted,' but 'that we may not be led into temptation.'... It is one thing when we are openly tempted and have to struggle with it. It is another thing when being tempted, oppressed, and overwhelmed by it, that we fall down under it and are overcome, either consenting to it or completely giving in to it. To be led into temptation is to be tantalized with the idea of some sin, to be carried totally into it, and to completely consent to the temptation."

⁴⁷ *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 251.

about their fall. Asking God to be God provides us with a firm foundation as we look to the future.

As with the other petitions, we can see a wider set of implications hovering around the brief phrase Jesus teaches. Those who say with stark simplicity, "Do not bring us into temptation, do not cause us to succumb to temptation," would add in a more verbose prayer, "God, do not do anything that would cause us to fall, and do not allow us to fall." While it would be strained exegesis to say that the *explicit* meaning of the petition conveys the thought of 1 Corinthians 10:13, "Do not let us encounter any temptation beyond our ability," such a prayer makes sense as a thought *implicitly* associated with the Sixth Petition. Another associated thought that could be articulated is, "Do not abandon us, but give us help in the hour of temptation, and strengthen us through your Spirit."

I venture to think that this matter of implications helps to explain the different stopping points for the two versions of the Lord's Prayer. In Luke's version, Jesus uses "Do not bring us into temptation" as the final petition. He is content to let his disciples pray those words and think about their implications, including some thoughts of a very positive nature. In Matthew's version he chooses to reinforce some of those positive thoughts by adding one last petition.⁴⁸

An expanded paraphrase of the Sixth Petition:

Keep your promise and be true to yourself, Father, by not doing anything that would cause us to sin. Do not abandon us in temptation, and do not let any temptation beyond our strength befall us, but send us your Spirit to defend us in every temptation. I pray this for myself and all your children.

The Seventh Petition

<p><u>Matthew 6:13</u></p> <p><i>ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.</i></p>	<p><i>Luke has no corresponding petition.</i></p> <p>(The textual witnesses that lack this petition are more likely to preserve the original text of</p>
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⁴⁸ This comparison of the two versions can serve as the occasion for mentioning—and rejecting—one of the exegetical proposals made by Jeffrey A. Gibbs in a volume in the Concordia Commentary series, *Matthew 1:1 – 11:1* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), pp. 341-45. He takes the Sixth and Seventh Petitions closely together as a unit, which makes it possible for him to see here an example of dialectical negation. Dialectical negation is an idiom which can occur in the form "not A but B," and the idiomatic force of it is that A is not understood as fully negated but as a foil to bring out the greater importance of B. Thus "not A but B" can mean "not A only, but even more B." The proposal is to take the Sixth and Seventh Petitions as meaning, "Do not only lead us into temptation (that is, into combat with Satan and his forces), but even more deliver us from the evil one (when we are in combat with him)" (my summary, not an exact quotation). This exegesis depends entirely on taking the Sixth and Seventh Petitions together, and Gibbs insists, "...the Sixth Petition must not, under any understanding, be read or prayed apart from the Seventh, which is the real thrust of 6:13" (p. 345). He must be talking about Matthew's Sixth Petition and not the identically worded petition in Luke, where there is no "but deliver us from the evil one." Still, it is unsatisfactory to suggest that the same words in Matthew and Luke have such different meanings that Matthew's "Do not bring us into temptation" cannot *under any understanding* be prayed apart from "but deliver us from the evil one," whereas Luke clearly does have an understanding of "Do not bring us into temptation" that enables him to end the prayer there. Why is Gibbs unwilling to let Luke's understanding of the words be applied to the same words in Matthew? Jesus is speaking in both accounts. Did Jesus change his mind about the meaning of "Do not bring us into temptation"? We should not assume such a change simply to salvage Gibbs' proposal.

but deliver us from evil. (or: but deliver us from the evil one.)	Luke than those that seem to assimilate Luke to Matthew).
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The word $\rho\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\alpha\iota$ is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of $\rho\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$, a middle deponent verb meaning "to rescue from danger, *save, rescue, deliver, preserve*."⁴⁹ Once again we can take it in the complexive sense. We pray for deliverance for ourselves and all Christians now and in the future leading up to the time of Christ's return, when our deliverance will be complete (hence the aorist tense).

For a long time scholars have discussed $\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\omicron\upsilon$. Should it be translated as "evil" (neuter) or "the evil one" (masculine), namely Satan? One can cite great theologians and commentators and language experts on both sides, and some of the best leave the matter undecided.⁵⁰ I do not know the answer, and I do not think it matters much. If we pray for deliverance from Satan, it is with the understanding that he represents his entire evil kingdom and all its forces. It will not do us much good to be delivered from a personal attack by Satan himself if we then succumb to one of the lesser demons or a human opponent or our own flesh. On the other hand, if we pray for deliverance from evil, that certainly includes deliverance from Satan.

Another question is whether the explicit meaning of the text is only of a *moral* nature. That limitation could be observed with either translation of $\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\omicron\upsilon$: Deliver us from moral evil, or deliver us from Satan, the head of a kingdom that does people *moral* harm by getting them to sin. Or should we, regardless of the gender of $\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\omicron\upsilon$, take a wider view and include not only moral harm but bodily and emotional harm as well? The word $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ can include those features, and we see in the story of Job that they are part of Satan's arsenal.

For some exegetes the matter is decided by the connection between the Sixth and Seventh Petitions (and they might prefer to treat them as one petition). Adolf Schlatter says, "The contextual connection with temptation establishes the meaning of $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\acute{\omicron}\nu$: it refers to what is morally reprehensible."⁵¹ If so, one could still say that the wider meaning of $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\acute{\omicron}\nu$ is implicit, for in God's plan, deliverance from moral evil ultimately results in deliverance from evil of every kind. But I am not convinced by Schlatter's argument in any case. One could have a broadening of scope as one goes from "Do not bring us into temptation" to "but deliver us from (the) evil (one)," especially as a way of bringing the prayer to a splendid climax.

I am inclined to see in these final words a sweeping prayer for deliverance from evil of every kind. Moral evil is the worst kind because it separates us from God, and so we are particularly conscious of our need for God's help in the fight against sin. What was implicit in the Sixth Petition (and was left implicit in Luke's version) becomes explicit in Matthew's text: "Deliver us from evil, above all, the evil of sin! Do not let temptation prevail over us! Stand by us with your help, and strengthen us through your Word!" But along with that I see a prayer for deliverance from other kinds of harm. In this life, that happens when God takes the sting out of bereavement, ill health, bodily pain, financial loss, and all the other difficulties that come upon

⁴⁹ BDAG s.v. $\rho\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$, p. 907, col. b.

⁵⁰ BDAG s.v. $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ 1b β cites some of the proponents of either view and withholds judgment. BDF sect. 263.1 also withholds judgment.

⁵¹ *Der Evangelist Matthaeus: Seine Sprache, sein Ziel, seine Selbstaendigkeit*, 7th ed. (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1982), p. 216.

us. He assures us that as long as we have him, we have everything (Ps 73:23-26), that in all things he is working for our good (Ro 8:28), that our sufferings conform us to Christ (Ro 8:21), and that nothing can "separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 8:39). And when Christ returns and raises us in glory or glorifies our living bodies, we will experience life without any trace of any kind of evil—no tears, no fears, no pain—in the unveiled presence of God.

An expanded paraphrase of the Seventh Petition:

Father, rescue me and all your saints in the church militant from evil. Protect us when we are tempted, assure us of your love, and transform everything that seems to harm us into blessing. Bring us all to glory, where we will worship you, our all in all. I pray this in the name of the One who taught us this prayer, Jesus Christ, your Son.

I agree with those who conclude that neither Matthew's Gospel nor Luke's originally included a doxology or Amen at the end of the Lord's Prayer, and so I will not provide an exegesis of those words. While many manuscripts and early translations of Matthew and Luke have a doxology in some form and an Amen, the textual tradition is varied, and some important early witnesses to the text end the prayer with its last petition. Schlatter explains the situation well in his commentary on Matthew by referring to ancient Jewish practice:

It was customary to close a prayer with a testimony to God's greatness, from which the person praying drew the certainty that made his prayer a prayer of faith. The Palestinian Jews called this a "seal." Such a seal [the doxology] appears in some of the texts of Matthew and then also (albeit with only two members in the phrase) in the "Teaching of the Apostles" [the *Didache*]. Since this corresponds to the Jewish custom of prayer, it is likely that the Our Father was concluded already from earliest times with such a proclamation of God's majesty, whether it was done by the worship leader or by those who quietly prayed along with him. However, the variation in the textual transmission shows that the petitions were considered to be the new prayer that Jesus gave his disciples, whereas the doxology remained a matter for the person praying to formulate freely.⁵²

It was a good custom to conclude a prayer with a doxology in Jesus' day, and it remains a good practice for us to follow today.

⁵² *Matthaeus*, p. 217.