

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

The recent translation of the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, issued with the blessing of His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew by His Eminence Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain, and published by Oxford University Press in 1995, includes a new version of the Lord's Prayer.

The translation was arrived at by the following process. Fr Ephrem first prepared an annotated draft from the original Greek which was then circulated to the members of the Committee, who then sent Fr Ephrem their comments and suggestions. These were incorporated into a second draft which was discussed by the full Committee under the chairmanship of the Archbishop. The results of this discussion were incorporated into the next draft by Fr Ephrem. This process was continued until a text was arrived at which had been fully discussed and worked over by a Committee not lacking in linguistic, pastoral and theological competence.

Fr Ephrem's own method of working was similar. He first translated the original Greek without reference to earlier translations, and then compared his draft with earlier English versions, which frequently provided more felicitous or precise words and expressions.

The position of the Lord's Prayer was somewhat different from that of the rest of the Liturgy, since this is a text taken directly from the Gospel and therefore assistance could be sought from the many biblical translations and commentaries. Moreover the Lord's Prayer is used liturgically by the other Christian churches and communities, many of which have issued, or are about to issue, revised liturgical texts.

Since no one at any stage contemplated the use of the ELLC translation, the Committee was faced with three possible courses of action:

1. It could retain the 'traditional' English version of the Prayer, which was familiar to most people. This might prove pastorally useful on occasions, such as, weddings and funerals when non-Orthodox might be present.
2. It could 'tinker' with the traditional version, but leave it basically unchanged. This is in fact the practice of a number of English-speaking groups, which alter the last phrase 'from evil' to 'from the evil one'.
3. It could produce a new translation from the original Greek.

Of these solutions the least satisfactory is number 2. One of the problems with number 1 is that it is no longer the case that there is one version of the Prayer in use by all English-speaking Christians. People of older generations are still familiar with the one in the Book of Common Prayer, though this is in fact commonly modified, 'Who art', for example, replacing 'Which art'. However younger people may not be so familiar with the old version, particularly since the Alternative Service Book provides a completely new version of the Prayer in all its services, except for the Rite B Communion Service, which uses the modified Prayer Book version. Other denominations, like the Baptists, offer the same two versions of the Prayer in their recent publications. The Roman Catholics use only the modified BCP form. Moreover most of the Churches in Great Britain and Ireland are increasingly moving towards the adoption of the international version produced by ELLC, either alone or

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alongside the modified traditional one. There was thus no compelling reason for the Committee to retain the 'traditional' version.

There was, moreover, an important principle underlying the Committee's work. This was expressed with great clarity at its first meeting by Professor Andrew Louth, himself a former Anglican clergyman, as follows, 'Our point of reference is not the King James Version and the Book of Common Prayer, but the Greek Bible, in particular the Septuagint, and the Fathers'.

The translation adopted by the committee, which was, of course, made directly from the Greek, can be compared both with other recent versions of the Bible and with other liturgical translations. This is illustrated in Tables 1 and 2.

**TABLE 1<sup>1</sup>**

1	THYATEIRA	REB	NRSV	NAB	NIV	NJB
2	Our Father	Our Father	Our Father	Our Father	Our Father	Our Father
3	in heaven,	in heaven,	in heaven,	in heaven,	in heaven,	in heaven,
4	may your name be hallowed,	may your name be hallowed;	hallowed be your name.	hallowed be your name,	hallowed be your name,	may your name be held holy,
5	your kingdom come,	your kingdom come,	Your kingdom come.	your kingdom come,	your kingdom come,	your kingdom come,
6	your will be done	your will be done,	Your will be done,	your will be done,	your will be done	your will be done,
7	on earth as in heaven.	on earth as in heaven.	on earth as it is in heaven.	on earth as in heaven.	on earth as it is in heaven.	on earth as in heaven.
8	Give us today our daily bread,	Give us today our daily bread.	Give us this day our daily bread.	Give us today our daily bread;	Give us today our daily bread.	Give us today our daily bread.
9	and forgive us our debts,	Forgive us the wrong we have done,	And forgive us our debts,	and forgive us our debts,	Forgive us our debts,	And forgive us our debts,
10	as we forgive our debtors;	as we have forgiven those who have wronged us.	as we also have forgiven our debtors.	as we forgive our debtors;	as we also have forgiven our debtors.	as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.
11	and do not lead us into temptation,	And do not put us to the test,	And do not bring us to the time of trial,	and do not subject us to the final test,	And lead us not into temptation,	And do not put us to the test,
12	but deliver us from the evil one.	but save us from the evil one.	but rescue us from the evil one.	but deliver us from the evil one.	but deliver us from the evil one.	but save us from the Evil One.

<sup>1</sup> The versions in the Table are the *Revised English Bible*, *New Revised Standard Version*, *New American Bible*, *New International Version* and *New Jerusalem Bible*. REB NRSV and NIV are inter-denominational versions, the Orthodox being represented on the second. NAB and NJB are Roman Catholic, from America and England respectively.

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Perhaps the most striking thing about this table, which is necessarily selective, is the very large measure of agreement between the different translations, particularly in the first two thirds of the Prayer [2-9]. **Red** indicates places where two or more versions agree; **Blue** where a version is on its own.

If we make a similar comparison between the various liturgical versions the situation is somewhat different.

**TABLE 2<sup>2</sup>**

1	THYATEIRA	BCP	ASB 1	ASB 2	AUS	ELLC 1988
2	Our Father	Our Father	Our Father,	Our Father	Our Father	Our Father
3	in heaven,	<b>which art</b> in heaven,	<b>who art</b> in heaven,	in heaven,	in heaven,	in heaven
4	<b>may your name be HALLOWED,</b>	<b>HALLOWED</b> by thy Name,	<b>HALLOWED</b> be thy name;	<b>HALLOWED</b> be your name,	<b>HALLOWED</b> be your name;	<b>HALLOWED</b> be your name,
5	your kingdom come,	Thy kingdom come,	thy kingdom come;	your kingdom come,	your kingdom come,	your kingdom come,
6	your will be done,	Thy will be done,	thy will be done;	your will be done,	your will be done,	your will be done,
7	on earth as in heaven.	in earth as <b>it is</b> in heaven.	on earth as <b>it is</b> in heaven.	on earth as in heaven.	on earth as <b>it is</b> in heaven.	on earth as in heaven.
8	Give us to-day our <b>DAILY</b> bread;	Give us <b>this</b> day our <b>DAILY</b> bread;	Give us <b>this</b> day our <b>DAILY</b> bread;	Give us to-day our <b>DAILY</b> bread.	Give us to-day our <b>DAILY</b> bread;	Give us today our <b>DAILY</b> bread.
9	and forgive us our <b>debts</b> ,	And forgive us our <b>trespasses</b> ,	and forgive us our <b>trespasses</b> ,	Forgive us our <b>sins</b>	and forgive us our <b>sins</b> ,	Forgive us our <b>sins</b>
10	as we forgive <b>our debtors</b> ;	As we forgive them that <b>trespass</b> against us;	as we forgive those who <b>trespass</b> against us.	as we forgive those who <b>sin</b> against us.	as we forgive those who <b>sin</b> against us.	as we forgive those who <b>sin</b> against us.
11	and do not lead us into <b>TEMPTATION</b> ,	and lead us not into <b>TEMPTATION</b> ;	And lead us not into <b>TEMPTATION</b> ;	Lead us not into <b>TEMPTATION</b>	And lead us not into <b>TEMPTATION</b>	<b>Save us from the time of trial</b>
12	but deliver us from the evil <b>one</b> .	but deliver us from evil.	but deliver us from evil.	but deliver us from evil.	but deliver us from evil.	and deliver us from evil.

<sup>2</sup> The liturgical books cited are the *Book of Common Prayer*, *Alternative Service Book* and a *Prayer Book*, issued by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia. The ELLC text is taken from *Praying Together* [The Canterbury Norwich, 1990, ISBN 1-85311-005-1], which contains the agreed liturgical texts together with explanatory notes. The ELLC text was originally issued in 1975 by its predecessor ICET, and revised in 1988.

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GREEN indicates the three most difficult words in the Prayer, and where all the translators have thrown in the sponge, except for ELLC at number three. Red and Blue has the same meaning as in Table 1.

There are two preliminary methodological points that are worth noting.

- The Lord's Prayer is in Greek, and has been since the first century. Exegetes may speculate about possible, or even probable, Semitic *Vorlagen*, but this is no more than speculation and today's certainties in exegesis are notoriously unstable. It is unwise, therefore, to abandon the tradition of the Church in favour of the currently fashionable opinions of the academics.
- The liturgical version of the Prayer, at least since the *Didache*, has always been that in the Gospel according to Matthew [6:9–13]. The text is remarkably stable and the only important variant that affects translation is the tense of the verb 'as we forgive', where the critically preferred text has 'as we have forgiven'. This has never been part of the liturgical text. The Lukan version has never been used liturgically. There are **two** Greek texts, that in Matthew and that in Luke. ELLC's comment 'The ELLC translation of the Greek text is based mainly on that in St Matthew's Gospel' is therefore somewhat misleading.
- The ELLC text dates from 1975 and it is important to note that the first guideline for the 1988 revision was that 'in order to avoid pastoral disruption, only necessary changes should be made', though ELLC admits that 'Its acceptance has been growing but is still far from universal'.

### NOTES ON THE TABLES

1. There is unanimity about the opening [2-3]. The added verb in the 'traditional' version is derived not from the Greek, but from the Latin *qui es in caelis*. This was quite natural in medieval England, but there is no reason to retain it in versions made from the Greek. Some of the more conservative Orthodox versions retain the plural 'heavens'. This is quite unnecessary. The singular is in fact found in Greek as early as the *Didache*.

With the exception of NJB all the translations retain the somewhat archaic 'hallowed'. An obvious alternative would be 'sanctified', but it does not feel quite right and there is no other obvious word. 'Sanctified' was used in some pre-Reformation versions of the prayer. There is an interesting example in one of the plates in Dr Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars*. The Committee at first considered putting 'glorified', which is how St John Chrysostom understands the word, 'For *hallowed* is *glorified*' [Hom. in Matt. 19]. One may note that Jesus in John 12:28 asks the Father, 'glorify your name'. On the other hand Jewish tradition uses the expression 'to sanctify the Name' to mean 'to suffer martyrdom', to be 'set aside as an offering to God'. This nuance of meaning may not be absent from John 17:19. In St John's language it is by the Cross that Jesus is 'glorified'. St John Chrysostom also says that we are to 'seek that God may be glorified also by our life'. In the end though the Committee shrank from 'glorified' as being too close to interpretation rather than translation. The verb was put first in an attempt to preserve the rhetorical structure of the

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original; though English requires the order of verb and noun to be reversed. A French version can do this much more easily.

After much thought and discussion, I am persuaded that 'hallowed' really will not do, and that we should use 'sanctified'. ELLC admits that 'though the word "hallowed" has an archaic ring, it has not entirely passed out of currency ("hallowed ground", "hallowed memory"), and no satisfactory synonym for it is at hand'. I am not at all sure that the connotations of the word in the examples given are those that one wants in the Our Father. For reasons of rhythm and structure the second line should run: 'May your name be sanctified'.

2. Only NRSV and NIV preserve the verb of the old translation in 7. The others all leave open the possibility of taking this clause as modifying the three preceding clauses [4-7].
3. Only NRSV retains 'this' in 8. The Greek word is the very ordinary word for 'today' and there seems no need for any other translation. The word *epiousios*, traditionally rendered 'daily' is of course one of the most celebrated *cruces interpretum* in the NT, and as there is no consensus among scholars as to its precise meaning it was decided to keep the translation 'daily', which is how the word has been understood by many since at least the fourth century. St John Chrysostom says quite clearly that the word means 'for one day'. An exact rendering would be 'Give us today our bread for today', for which there is something to be said, even though this suggests a play on words that is not in the original. St John Chrysostom's comments on this petition are interesting.
4. In the next two clauses [9-10] there is remarkable agreement among the biblical translations that the financial metaphor should be retained. Our Lord himself devotes a whole parable, that of the Unforgiving Servant [Mat. 18:21-35], to explaining his meaning, and it may be urged that if the Lord chose to use a metaphor to express what he wanted to say, who are we to deprive him of it. ELLC rejects the metaphor because 'many find it puzzlingly concrete and narrow'. Others may feel it to be challengingly vivid and direct. Incidentally, in using 'debts' and 'debtors' we rejoin the King James translators and the Church of Scotland. One considerable advantage, apart from greater accuracy, of using the words 'debts' and 'debtors' is that the wordy periphrases of the other versions, all of which use four or five words for one in Greek, are avoided. On the other hand, in Scotland the use of 'debts' and 'debtors' is felt by many to be Protestant and that of 'trespasses' Roman Catholic.

The New Testament use of 'debt' and the cognate words is interesting. The word used in the Lord's Prayer for 'debt' is only found elsewhere in Romans 4:4, 'The worker's wage is not reckoned as a gift, but as a debt'. The related word for 'debt' used in the parable at Matthew 18:32 is only found elsewhere at Romans 13:7, 'Pay to all their debts [i.e. 'what is their due']' and 1 Corinthians 7:3, where husbands and wives are told to 'pay to the other their debt', in the same sense as in Romans, 'what is their due'. The Church's text has 'the goodwill that is owed him/her', but this

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does not affect the main point. The word 'debtor' only occurs in Matthew in the Lord's Prayer and in the parable. Elsewhere in Gospels it only occurs at Luke 13:4, of the men killed by the tower of Siloam and has a wider meaning, almost 'sinner'. St Paul uses it four times with the sense of someone who is 'under an obligation'. The verb is used six times by St Matthew, four of them in the parable. St Luke uses it in his version of the Lord's Prayer, 'Forgive us our sins, as we forgive every one who is in debt to us'. At 17:10 he has 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to'. Although the verb often means little more than 'ought', it seems desirable to keep the idea of 'obligation' where possible in English. For example, in St John's Gospel [13:14], Our Lord says, 'You have an obligation to wash one another's feet'.

It is also worth noting that material being published in connection with proposed Jubilee and the problem of Third World debt in the year 2000 uses 'debts' and 'debtors'. One of the leaflets concerned with the millennium celebrations put out by the 'ecumenical instruments' in Great Britain and which comments on the Lord's prayer in the ELLC version, contains the curious and misleading statement, 'Some versions have "debts" and "debtors"', when what it should read is 'the original text and most ancient and modern versions have "debts" and "debtors"'.

5. Most of the modern biblical versions use a past tense for the second clause [10] because it is the general view of textual critics that the original text read an aorist and not a present. However the Church's text of the Prayer both in the Liturgy and in the Gospel has the present, which is attested as early as the *Didache*, and so we felt it was not our task to alter the Church's own text. REB is the odd one out, but like its progenitor the NEB it has a tendency to paraphrase.
6. The most commonly held opinion among contemporary scholars is that the next petition [11] refers to the final eschatological test or trial, and it is this opinion that ELLC seeks to impose. In the first place it is worth pointing out that in the Greek the noun is anarthrous, though all the recent biblical versions add the definite article. The word is used by Our Lord, again without the article, in Matthew 26:41, where the reference is presumably to the imminent 'test' that he is about to undergo. However in the tradition the word has also been given a more general application and so the word 'temptation' was retained from the old version. Luther's comment, which ELLC itself quotes, is much to the point here.
7. There is no justification for replacing the Lord's 'Do not lead' by 'Save us'. ELLC defends its version by saying that 'two errors must be avoided'. Of these 'the first is the misconception that God would 'tempt' or entice people to evil'. This is not at all the same as saying that God does not test us, as ELLC itself admits, 'a reference to any occasion of testing, including the lure to sin is not excluded', which is precisely what the ELLC text does! This is because of their second misconception to be avoided, which is 'to think that the original Greek word *peirasmos* means 'temptation' as it is meant today'. The Greek word has a wider meaning, but the ELLC version

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narrows it only one of a range of meanings, which is equally misconceived. Our Lord himself was 'led —though the Greek word is different — by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted/tested' [Matthew 4:1]. The old order of words 'lead us not' was in the end rejected by Archbishop Gregorios's committee because this way of expressing a negative wish or command is now wholly archaic. ELLC considered restoring the original negative, but because many Churches had already adopted their version, 'the practical problem of making a change ... was too great to be countenanced', which is a most inadequate reason. This whole clause in the ELLC version is quite unacceptable.

8. All modern interpreters take the noun in the last clause [12] as masculine and as a reference to the devil. This is also the view of the majority of the Fathers. This change to the traditional version has been in use for some times among different groups of English-speaking Orthodox. 'Evil' is not really quite the right word, since the Greek, like the Slavonic, has a nuance of 'cunning'. 'Wicked' might really be better. The replacement of the strong adversative 'but' by 'and' is a considerable weakening. It is curious that, whereas ELLC opt for current exegetical correctness in 11, they eschew it in 12, despite the fact that here current exegesis is also that of a long tradition, going back to the early Fathers.
9. Of the liturgical translations the most common is ASB 1, which is used by many other denominations, including the RCs and various groups of Orthodox in America. In the British Isles, as we have noted, the Orthodox frequently use it with the alteration of the last phrase to 'the evil one'. It is what is usually regarded as the 'traditional' version in England, though not in Scotland. The translation published recently with the blessing of the Greek Archbishop in Australia [AUS] unfortunately deprives the Lord of his metaphor, in common with ASB 2. The latter, since it is the one used everywhere in ASB — except, as noted above, in the Rite B Communion service — and since is also used among various Protestant bodies, might well have been expected to replace ASB 1 as the 'traditional' version among the non-Orthodox, except perhaps among RCs. However there is now an increasing consensus among the non-Orthodox on the adoption of the ELLC version, sometimes with the 'traditional' version as an alternative. It is noteworthy that none of the liturgical versions uses any of the numerous versions of the Gospel text to be found in current versions of the New Testament; but this was also the case in the sixteenth century, both with regard to the Lord's Prayer and the Psalter in the *Book of Common Prayer*, in which the text of the Authorised Version never replaced that of Coverdale for liturgical use.
10. In Orthodox liturgical practice the concluding doxology is always Trinitarian and reserved to the celebrating Bishop or Presbyter. It has never been part of Latin liturgical use, nor, until recently of English-speaking Roman Catholics.

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In conclusion it may be reasonably claimed that the version proposed for the new translation of the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, though imperfect, is both an accurate rendering of the original Greek, that can hold its own alongside those produced by international and interdenominational committees of New Testament and liturgical scholars, and perfectly suitable for use in the public worship of the Church, whether recited or sung. Indeed it has already been set to music by the distinguished Orthodox composer John Tavener. It could also, I believe, make a suitable first draft if it were ever felt desirable to produce an agreed version for use by the Orthodox in these islands. Those congregations, or individuals, that still prefer 'thou' can easily substitute it for 'you' without any other changes being necessary. Some of the non-Orthodox are proposing to include the traditional version alongside the ELLC, and there is much to be said for this.

On the other hand all the Orthodox, including the Oriental Orthodox, would, I think, be united in rejecting the ELLC version. Since it is likely that from the year 2000 the ELLC version will be the one taught in schools and the one printed in educational material, quite apart from prayer books and service sheets, it is important that the Orthodox make their views on the question heard.