

Song of Prayer

Prayer

The Greatest Gift

Prayer is the greatest gift with which God blessed
His Son at his¹ creation. It was then
What it is to become; the single voice
Creator and creation share; the song
The Son sings to the Father, who returns
The thanks it offers him unto the Son.
Endless the harmony, and endless too
The joyous concord of the love they give
Forever to each other; and in this
Creation is extended. God gives thanks
To his extension in his Son; his Son
Gives thanks for his creation in the song
Of his creating in his Father's name.
The love they share is what all prayer will be
Throughout eternity, when time is done
For such it was before time seemed to be.
To you who are in time a little while
Prayer takes the form that best will suit your need.
You have but one—what God created one
Must recognize its oneness, and rejoice
That what illusions seemed to separate
Is one forever in the mind of God.

¹Sons in his S

Prayer now must be the means by which God's Son
Leaves separate goals and separate interests by
And turns in holy gladness to the truth
Of union in his Father and himself.
Lay down your dreams, you holy Son of God
And rising up as God created you
Dispense with idols and remember him.
Prayer will sustain you now, and bless you as
You lift your heart² to him in rising song
That reaches higher and then higher still
Until both high and low have disappeared.
Faith in your goal will grow and hold you up
As you ascend the shining stairway to
The lawns of Heaven and the gate of peace.
For this is prayer, and here salvation is!
This is the way; it is God's gift to you.

Asking is Holy

Asking is holy, and it is holy because it is a way of reaching God. He is the Answerer because you are in need of an answer. No one can³ ask for another and receive the answer for him. But you can, and indeed you must, help him by offering your love and support that his asking⁴ be holy and his true need recognized. That is prayer; it is the same for yourself or for another. There is no difference; if you received the answers for another, there would be a difference.

This does not mean you cannot get messages for another, if it is God who chooses this way of reaching him. This will usually happen unexpectedly, generally in the form of a sudden feeling that you have something to tell him; a message to deliver. You have not been wrong in the past about how you have asked, but you are ready for a step ahead now.

There are joint decisions in which unanimity of response is a good indication of authenticity; this should not be abandoned. But asking is a lesson in trust, and no one can trust for another. He can only strengthen another's

²hearts T; Lam. 3:42

³You cannot (?) C

⁴answer C

trust by offering it to him and having faith in his ability to hear for himself.

Asking is the way to God because if offers you⁵ his will as he would have you⁶ hear it. We will have a series of lessons on asking because you have not understood it. But do not think because of that you have been mistaken in your attempts; you have done well and will do better.

Any specific question involves a large number of assumptions which invariably limit the answer. A specific question is actually a decision about what kind of answer would be acceptable. The purpose of words is to limit, and by limiting to make a vast area more manageable. But that means manageable by *you*. For many aspects of living in this world that is necessary, but not for asking. God does not use words and does not answer in words. He can only speak to the Christ in you, who translates his answer into whatever language you can understand and accept. Sometimes words will limit fear; sometimes not. That is why some people hear words, some people receive feelings of inner conviction, and some do not become aware of anything. Yet God has answered, and his answer will reach you when you are ready.

Answers are not up to you; any limit you place upon them interferes with hearing. God's Voice is silent and speaks in silence.⁷ That means that you do not phrase the question and you do not restrict the answer.

Asking is⁸ prayer. It is not a demand, it is not questioning, it is not limitation. The only real request is for God's answer. It⁹ needs the humility of trust, not the arrogance of false certainty. Trust cannot lie in idols, for that is merely faith in magic. Trust requires faith that God understands, knows, and will answer. It means a state of peace. For this you may safely ask. In fact, if you do not have it, asking is the only real request¹⁰ you can make.

True Prayer

Prayer is a way offered by the Holy Spirit to reach God. It is not merely a question or an entreaty; it cannot succeed until you realize that it asks for

⁵us T

⁶us T

⁷1 Kings 19:12, Ps. 46:10

⁸*insert* a form of C

⁹Thus it C

¹⁰*insert* that C

nothing. How else could it serve its purpose? It is impossible to pray for idols and hope to reach God. True prayer must avoid the pitfall of asking to entreat; ask, rather, to receive what is already given, to accept what is already there.

You have been told to ask the Holy Spirit for the answer to any specific problem, and that you will receive a specific answer if such is your need; you have also been told that there is only one problem and one answer. In prayer this is not contradictory. There are decisions to make here, and they must be made whether they be illusions or not. You cannot be asked to accept answers which are beyond the level of need that¹¹ you recognize. Therefore it is not the form of the question that matters, nor how it is asked. The form of the answer, if given by God¹², will suit your need as you see it. This is merely an echo of the reply of his Voice; the real sound is always a song of thanksgiving and of love.

You¹³ cannot, then, ask for the echo; it is the song that is the gift. Along with it come the overtones, the harmonics, the echoes, but these are secondary. In true prayer you hear only the song; all the rest is merely added. You have sought first the Kingdom of Heaven, and all else has indeed been given you.¹⁴

The secret of true prayer is to forget the things you think you need. To ask for the specific is much the same as to look on sin and then forgive it.¹⁵ In¹⁶ the same way, in prayer you overlook your specific needs as you see them, and let them go into God's¹⁷ hands. There they become your gifts to him, for they tell him that you would have no gods before him; no love but his.¹⁸ What could his answer be but your remembrance of him? Can this be traded for a bit of trifling advice about a problem of an instant's duration? God answers only for eternity; but still, all little answers are contained in this.

Prayer is a stepping aside, a letting go, a quiet time of listening and loving. It should not be confused with supplication of any kind, because it

¹¹ *omit C*

¹² *insert* through his Voice T

¹³ We T

¹⁴ Matt. 6:33

¹⁵ "When I pray for something I do not pray; when I pray for nothing I really pray."
Meister Eckhart

¹⁶ Also in T

¹⁷ his T

¹⁸ him A

is a way of remembering your holiness. Why should holiness entreat, being fully entitled to everything love has to offer? And it is to Love one goes¹⁹ in prayer. Prayer is an offering; a giving up of oneself²⁰ to be at one with Love. There is nothing to ask because there is nothing left to want. That nothingness becomes the altar of God; it disappears in him.

This is not a level of prayer that everyone can yet attain.²¹ Those who have not²² need²³ help in prayer because their asking is not yet based upon acceptance. Help in prayer does not mean that another mediates between you and God, but it does mean that another can stand²⁴ beside you and help²⁵ to raise you up to him. One who has realized the goodness of God prays without fear, and one who prays without fear cannot but reach him. He can therefore also reach his Son, wherever he may be and whatever form he may seem²⁶ to take.

Praying to Christ in anyone is true prayer because it is a gift of thanks to his Father. To ask that Christ be but himself is not an entreaty, it is²⁷ a song of thanksgiving for what you are. Herein lies the power of prayer: it asks nothing and receives everything. This prayer can be shared because it receives for everyone. To pray with one who knows that this is true is to be answered. The²⁸ specific form of solution for a specific problem may²⁹ occur to either of you; it does not matter which. Perhaps it will reach both, if you are genuinely attuned to one another. It will come because you have *realized* that it does not matter; therein lies its only truth.³⁰

¹⁹you go C

²⁰yourself C

²¹attain as yet C

²²Until they do they A

²³still need C

²⁴stands C

²⁵helps C

²⁶seems C

²⁷but it is T

²⁸Perhaps the T

²⁹will T

³⁰It will come because you have realized that Christ is in both of you; that is its only truth C

The Ladder of Prayer

Prayer has no beginning and no end. It is a part of life; but it does change in form, and grow with learning until it reaches to³¹ its formless state, and fuses into total communication with God. In its asking form it need not, and often does not, make appeal to God or even involve belief in him. At that level³² prayer is merely wanting, out of a sense of scarcity and lack. The prayer, or asking out of need, always involve feelings of weakness and inadequacy, and could never be made by a Son of God who knows who he is. No one, then, who is sure of his identity could pray in this form. Yet it is also true that no one who is uncertain of his identity could³³ avoid praying in this way, and prayer is as continual as life. Everyone prays without ceasing.³⁴ Ask and you have received³⁵, for you have established what it is you want.

It is also possible to reach a higher form of asking out of need, for in this world prayer must be used for reparation³⁶, and so it must entail levels of learning. Here the asking may be addressed to God in honest belief, though not yet with understanding. A vague and usually unstable sense of identification has generally been reached, but it³⁷ tends to be blurred by a deep-rooted sense of sin. It is possible at this level to continue to ask for things of this world in various forms, but it is also possible to ask for qualities³⁸ such as honesty or goodness, and particularly for forgiveness for the many sources of guilt that inevitably underlie any prayer of need. Without guilt there is no scarcity; the sinless have no needs.

At this level also comes³⁹ that curious contradiction in terms known as “praying for one’s enemies.”⁴⁰ The contradiction lies not in the actual words, but⁴¹ in the way in which they are usually interpreted. While you believe you have enemies, you have limited prayer to the laws of this world, and⁴²

³¹ *omit C*

³² *At these levels C*

³³ *can C*

³⁴ *1 Thess. 5:17*

³⁵ *Luke 11:9*

³⁶ *is reparative C*

³⁷ *omit C*

³⁸ *gifts C*

³⁹ *omit C*

⁴⁰ *begins C*

⁴¹ *insert rather C*

⁴² *insert have also C*

limited your ability to receive and to accept to the same narrow margins. And yet, if you have enemies you have need of prayer, and great need, too. What does the phrase really mean? Pray for yourself, that you may not seek to imprison Christ and thereby lose the recognition of your own identity. Be traitor to no one, or you will be treacherous to yourself.

An enemy is the symbol of an imprisoned Christ, and who could he be except yourself? The prayer for enemies thus becomes a prayer for your own freedom; now it is no longer a contradiction in terms. Rather, it is⁴³ a statement of the unity of Christ and a recognition of his sinlessness, and now it has become holy; for it acknowledges the Son of God as he was created.

Let it never be forgotten that prayer at any level is always for yourself. If you unite with anyone in prayer, you make him part of you. The enemy is you, as is the Christ. Before it can become holy, then, prayer becomes a choice. You do not choose for another; you can but choose for yourself. Pray truly for your enemies, for herein lies your own salvation. Forgive them for your sins and you will be forgiven indeed.

Prayer is a ladder reaching up to Heaven.⁴⁴ At the top there is a transformation much like your own, for prayer is part of you. The things of earth are left behind, all unremembered; there is no asking, for there is no lack. Identity in Christ is fully recognized as set forever, beyond all change and incorruptible. The light no longer flickers, and will never go out. Now, without needs of any kind, and clad forever in the pure sinlessness that is the gift of God to you, his Son, prayer can again become what it was meant to be. For now it rises as a song of thanks to your Creator, sung without words or thoughts or vain desires, unneedful now of anything at all. So it extends, as it was meant to do; and for this giving God himself gives thanks.

God is the goal of every prayer, giving it timelessness instead of end. Nor has it⁴⁵ beginning, because the goal has never changed. Prayer in its earlier forms is an illusion, because there is no need for a ladder to reach what one has never left. Yet prayer is part of forgiveness as long as forgiveness, itself an illusion, remains unattained. Prayer is tied up with learning until the goal of learning has been reached, and then all things will be transformed together,

⁴³It has become C

⁴⁴Gen. 28:12. The trope of a ladder, or more generally of a scale, in reference to prayer and spirituality is an old one in the Christian tradition, cf. St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Walter Hilton, *The Ladder of Perfection*, St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*.

⁴⁵a C

and returned unblemished into the mind of God. Being beyond learning, this state cannot be described. The stages necessary to its attainment, however, need to be understood if peace is to be restored to the Son of God⁴⁶, who lives now with the illusion of death and the fear of God.⁴⁷

Praying for Others

We said that prayer is always for yourself, and this is so. Why, then, should you pray for others at all? And if you should, how should you do it? Praying for others, if rightly understood, becomes a means for lifting your projections of guilt from your brother, and enabling you to recognize it is not he who is hurting you. The poisonous thought that he *is* your enemy, your evil counterpart, your nemesis, must be relinquished before *you* can be saved from guilt. For this the means is prayer, of rising power and with ascending goals, until it reaches even up to God.

The earlier forms of prayer, at the bottom of the ladder, will not be free from envy and even malice; they call for vengeance, not for love. Nor do they come from one who understands that⁴⁸ they are calls for death, made out of fear by those who cherish guilt. They call upon a vengeful god, and it is he who seems to answer them. Hell cannot be asked for another, and then escaped by him who asks⁴⁹; only those who are in hell can ask for hell. Those who have been forgiven, and who accepted their forgiveness, could never make a prayer like this.

At this level⁵⁰, then, the learning goal must be to recognize that prayer will bring an answer only in the form in which the prayer was made. This is enough; from here it will be an easy step to the next level.⁵¹ The next ascent begins with this: “What I have asked for for my brother is not what I would have; thus have I made of him my enemy.”

It is apparent that this step cannot be reached by anyone who sees no value or advantage to himself in setting others free. This may be long delayed, because this step⁵² may seem to be dangerous instead of merciful. To the

⁴⁶God's Son C

⁴⁷Father A

⁴⁸*omit* C

⁴⁹for this A, for it C

⁵⁰these levels C

⁵¹levels C

⁵²it C

guilty there seems indeed to be a real advantage in having enemies; and this imagined gain must go, if enemies are to be set free. Guilt must be given up, and not concealed; nor can it⁵³ be without some pain, and a glimpse of the merciful nature of this step may for some time be followed by a deep retreat into fear. For fear's defenses are fearful in themselves, and when they are recognized they bring their fear with them.

Yet what advantage has an illusion of escape ever brought a prisoner? His real escape from guilt can lie only in the recognition that the guilt has gone. And how can this be recognized as long as he hides it in another, and does not see it as his own? Fear of escape makes it difficult to welcome freedom, and to make a jailer of an enemy seems to be safety. How then can he be released without an insane fear for yourself? You have made of him your salvation and your escape from guilt; your investment in this escape is heavy, and your fear of letting it go is strong.

Stand still an instant now, and think what you
Have done; do not forget that it is you
Who did it, and who can therefore let it go.
Hold out your hand—this enemy has come
To bless you; take his blessing and feel how
Your heart is lifted and your fear released.
Do not hold on to it, nor onto him;
He is a Son of God along with you.
He is no jailer, but a messenger of Christ;
be this to him that you may see him thus.
It is not easy to realize that prayers
for things, for status⁵⁴, for external gifts
of any kind, are always made to set
up jailers⁵⁵ and to hide from guilt.

Yet these things too⁵⁶ are used for goals that substitute for God, and therefore distort the purpose of prayer. The desire for them *is* the prayer; one need not ask explicitly. The goal of God is lost in the quest for lesser goals of any kind, and prayer becomes requests for enemies. The power of

⁵³this be done C

⁵⁴attributes A

⁵⁵a jailer A

⁵⁶These things C

prayer can be quite clearly recognized even in this. No one who wants an enemy will fail to find one; but just as surely will he lose the only true goal that is given him.

Think of the cost, and understand it well:
All other goals are at the cost of God.

Praying with Others

Until the second step⁵⁷ at least⁵⁸ begins, one cannot share in prayer. For until that point, each one must ask for different things. But once the need to hold the other as an enemy has been questioned, and the reason for doing so has been recognized if only for an instant, it becomes⁵⁹ possible to join in prayer. Enemies do not share a goal, and⁶⁰ it is here⁶¹ their enmity is kept. Their separate wishes are their arsenals; their fortresses in hate. The key to rising further still in prayer lies in this simple thought; this change of mind: “We go together, you and I.”

Now it is possible to help in prayer, and so reach up yourself. This step begins the quicker ascent, but there are still many lessons to learn. The way is open, and hope is justified. Yet it is likely at first that what is asked for⁶² by those who⁶³ join in prayer is not the goal that prayer should truly seek. Even together they may ask for things, and thus set up but an illusion of a goal they share. They may ask together for specifics, and not realize that they are asking for effects without the cause. And this they cannot have. For no one can receive effects alone, and choose⁶⁴ a cause from which they do not come to offer them to him.

Even the joining, then, is not enough
If those who pray together do not ask
Before all else, what is the will of God.

⁵⁷level C

⁵⁸*omit* at least C

⁵⁹*insert* at last C

⁶⁰*omit* C

⁶¹in this C

⁶²even A

⁶³*insert* sometimes C

⁶⁴ask C

From this cause only can the answer come
In which are all specifics satisfied,
All separate wishes unified in one.
Prayers for specifics always ask to have
The past repeated in some way. What was
Enjoyed before, or seemed to be; what is
Another's and he seemed to like—all these
Are but illusions from the past. The aim
Of prayer is to release the present from
Its chains of past illusions; to let
It be a freely chosen remedy
From every choice that stood for a mistake.
What prayer can offer now so far exceeds
All that you asked before that it
Is pitiful to be content with less.
You have chosen a newborn chance each time you pray;
And would you stifle and imprison it
In ancient prisons, when the chance has come
To free yourself from all of them at once?
Do not restrict your asking; prayer can bring
The peace of God. What time-bound thing can give
You more than this, in just the little space
That lasts until it crumbles into dust?

The Ladder Ends

Prayer is a way to true humility
And⁶⁵ here again it rises slowly up⁶⁶
And grows in strength and love and holiness.
Let it but leave the ground where it begins
To rise to God, and true humility
Will come at last to grace the mind that thought
It was alone and stood against the world.
Humility brings peace because it does
Not claim that you must rule the universe,

⁶⁵But T

⁶⁶slowly at first T

Nor⁶⁷ judge all things as you would have them be.
All little gods it gladly lays aside
Not in resentment, but in honesty
And recognition that they did not serve.
Illusions and humility have goals
So far apart they cannot coexist
Nor share a dwelling place; where one has come
The other disappears.⁶⁸

The truly humble have no goal but God
Because they need no idols, and defense
No longer serves a purpose. Enemies
Are useless now, because humility
Does not oppose. It does not hide in shame
Because it is content with what it is,
Knowing creation is the will of God.
Its selflessness is Self, and this it sees
In every meeting, where it gladly joins
With every Son of God, whose purity
It recognizes that it shares with him.
Now prayer is lifted from the world of things,
Of bodies, and of gods of every kind,
And you can rest in holiness at last.
Humility has come to teach⁶⁹ you how
To understand your glory as God's Son,
And recognize the arrogance of sin.
A dream has veiled the face of Christ from you;

⁶⁷or T

⁶⁸

Illusions and humility have goals
so far apart they cannot coexist
nor share a dwelling place where they can meet.
Where one has come the other disappears.

C

There are markings here and elsewhere on the Urtext which suggest the editors were attempting to determine the metrical structure; hence we cannot assume that the more metrically regular version is necessarily correct. Which version is to be preferred depends on how one evaluates the third line above as poetry.

⁶⁹taught T

Now can you look upon his sinlessness.
 High has the ladder risen; you have come
 Almost to Heaven. There is little more
 To learn before the journey is complete.
 Now can⁷⁰ you say
 To everyone who joins⁷¹ in prayer with you:
 "I cannot go without you, for you are
 A part of me;" and so he is in truth.
 Now can you pray
 Only for what you truly share with him.⁷²
 For you have understood he never left,
 And you who seemed alone are one with him.
 The ladder ends with this, for learning is
 No longer needed. Now you stand before
 The gate of Heaven, and your brother stands
 Beside you there. The lawns are deep and still
 For here the place appointed for the time
 When you should come has waited long for you.
 Here will time end forever; at this gate
 Eternity itself will join with you.
 Prayer has become what it was meant to be,
 For you have recognized the Christ in you.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness offers wings to⁷³ prayer, to make

⁷⁰omit T

⁷¹comes to join C

⁷²If we use "comes to join" rather than "joins" we get a version which is less adventerous; as before we find metrical markings on the Urttext.

Now can you say to everyone who comes
 To join in prayer with you: "I cannot go
 Without you, for you are a part of me."
 And so he is in truth; now can you pray
 Only for what you truly share with him.

⁷³of T

Its rising easy and its progress swift.
Without its strong support it would be vain
To try to rise above prayer's bottom step,
Or even to attempt to climb at all.
Forgiveness is prayer's ally; sister in
The plan for your salvation. Both must come
To hold you up and keep your feet secure;
Your purpose steadfast and unchangeable.
Behold the greatest help that God ordained
To be with you until you reach to him!
Illusion's end will come with this; unlike
The timeless nature of its sister, prayer,
Forgiveness has an end, for it becomes
Unneeded when the rising up is done.
Yet now it has a purpose beyond which
You cannot go, nor have you need to go.
Accomplish this and you have been redeemed,
Accomplish this and you have been transformed,
Accomplish this and you will save the world.

True versus False Forgiveness

No gift of Heaven has been more misunderstood than has forgiveness. It has, in fact, become a scourge; a curse where it was meant to bless, a cruel mockery of grace, a parody upon the holy peace of God. Yet those who have not yet elected to begin the steps of prayer cannot but use it thus. Forgiveness' kindness is obscure at first because salvation is not understood, *nor truly sought for*. What was meant to heal is used to hurt because forgiveness is not wanted. Guilt becomes salvation, and the remedy appears to be a terrible alternative to life.

Forgiveness to destroy will therefore suit
The purpose of the world far better than
Its true objective, and the honest means
By which this goal is reached. Forgiveness to
Destroy will overlook no sin, no crime,

No guilt that it can seek and⁷⁴ find and love.
 Dear to its heart is error, and mistakes
 Loom large and grow and swell within its sight.
 It carefully picks out all evil things,
 And overlooks the loving as a plague;
 A hateful thing of danger and of death.
 Forgiveness to destroy *is* death, and this
 It sees in all⁷⁵ it looks upon and hates.
 God's mercy has become a twisted knife
 That would destroy the holy Son he loves.
 Would you forgive yourself⁷⁶ for doing this?
 Then learn that God has given you a⁷⁷ means
 By which you can return to him in peace.
Do not see error. Do not make it real
 Select the loving and forgive the sin
 By choosing in its place the face of Christ.
 How otherwise can prayer return to God?
 He loves his Son. Can you remember him
 And hate what he created? You will hate
 His Father if you hate the Son he loves;
 For as you see the Son you see yourself,
 And as you see yourself is God to you.

As prayer is always for yourself, so is forgiveness always⁷⁸ given you. It is impossible to forgive another, for it is only your sins you see in him. You want to see them there, and not in you. That is why forgiveness of another is an illusion.

Yet it is
 The only happy dream in all the world;
 The only one that does not lead to death.
 Only in someone else can you forgive
 Yourself, for you have called him guilty of

⁷⁴ *omit* seek and T

⁷⁵ everything T

⁷⁶ yourselves T

⁷⁷ the C

⁷⁸ *omit* T

Your sins, and in him must your innocence
Be found. Who but the sinful need to be
Forgiven? And do not ever think you can
See sin in anyone except yourself.
This is the great deception of the world,
And you the great deceiver of yourself.
It always seems to be another who
Is evil, and in his sin you are
The injured one. How could freedom be
Possible if this were true? You would
Be slave to everyone, for what he does
Entails your fate, your feelings, your despair
Or hope, your misery or joy. You have
No freedom unless he gives it to you, and
Being evil, he can only give of what he is.
You cannot see his sins and not your own;
But you can free him and yourself as well.
Forgiveness, truly given, is the⁷⁹ way
In which your only⁸⁰ hope of freedom lies.
Others will make mistakes and so will you,
As long as this illusion of a world
Appears to be your home. Yet⁸¹ God himself⁸²
Has given all his Sons a remedy
For all illusions that they think they see.
Christ's vision does not use your eyes, but you
Can look through his and learn to see like him.
Mistakes are tiny shadows, quickly gone,
Which for an instant only seem to hide
The face of Christ, which still remains unchanged
Behind them all. His constancy remains
In tranquil silence and in perfect peace.
He does not know of shadows; his the eyes
That look past error to the Christ in you.
Ask then his help, and ask him how to learn

⁷⁹only T

⁸⁰*omit* only T

⁸¹*omit* T, *alternate* for C

⁸²*omit* T

Forgiveness as his vision lets it be.
You are in need of what he gives, and your
Salvation rests on learning this of him.
Prayer cannot be released to Heaven while
Forgiveness to destroy remains with you.
God's mercy would remove this withering
And poisoned thinking from your holy mind.
Christ has forgiven you, and in his sight
The world becomes as⁸³ holy as himself.
Who sees no evil in it sees like him.
For what he has forgiven has not sinned,
And guilt can be no more. Salvation's plan
Is made complete, and sanity has come.
Forgiveness is the call to sanity,
For who but the insane would look on sin
When he could see the face of Christ instead?
This is the choice you make; the simplest one,
And yet the only one that you can make.
God calls on you to save his Son from death
By offering the love of Christ⁸⁴ to him;
This is your need, and God himself⁸⁵ holds out
This gift to you. As he would give, so must
You give as well; and thus is prayer restored
To formlessness, beyond all limits into timelessness,
With nothing of the past to hold it back
From reuniting with the ceaseless song
That all creation sings unto its God.⁸⁶

⁸³is T

⁸⁴Christ's love C

⁸⁵omit C

⁸⁶If we choose instead the version with "Christ's love," we obtain:

God calls on you to save his Son from death
By offering Christ's love to him. This is
Your need, and God holds out this gift to you;
As he would give, so must you give as well.
And thus is prayer restored to formlessness,
Beyond all limits into timelessness,
With nothing of the past to hold it back
From reuniting with the ceaseless song

But to achieve this end you first must learn
Before you reach where learning cannot go.
Forgiveness is the key, but who can use
A key when he has lost the door for which
The key was made, and where alone it fits?
Therefore we make distinctions, so that prayer
Can be released from darkness into light.
Forgiveness' role must be reversed, and cleansed
From evil usages and hateful goals.
Forgiveness to destroy must be unveiled
In all its treachery, and then let go
Forever and forever. There can be
No trace of it remaining, if the plan
That God established for returning be
Achieved at last, and learning be complete.
This is the world of opposites, and you
Must choose between them⁸⁷ every instant while
This world retains reality for you.
Yet you must learn alternatives for choice,
Or you will not be able to attain
Your freedom. Let it then be clear to you
Exactly what forgiveness means to you
And learn what it should be to set you free.
The level of your prayer depends on this
For here it waits its freedom to ascend
Above the world of chaos into peace.

Forgiveness to Destroy

Forgiveness to destroy has many forms
Being a weapon of the world of form.
Not all of them are obvious, and some

That all creation sings unto its God.

However, the line "To formlessness, beyond all limits into timelessness" breaks from iambic pentameter to achieve an extraordinary literary effect, a marriage of form and substance which seems authentic; and the other verses flow more smoothly in this version.

⁸⁷omit T

Are carefully concealed beneath what seems
Like charity. Yet all the forms that it
May seem to take⁸⁸ have but this single⁸⁹ goal:
Their purpose is to separate and make
What God created equal, different.
The difference is clear in several forms
Where the designed comparison cannot
Be missed, nor is it ⁹⁰ meant to be.
In this group, first, there are the forms in which
A “better” person deigns to stoop to save
A “baser” one from what he truly⁹¹ is.
Forgiveness here rests on an attitude⁹²
Of gracious lordliness so far from love
That arrogance could never be dislodged.
Who can forgive and yet despise? And who
Can tell another he is steeped in sin,
And yet perceive him as the Son of God?
Who makes a slave to teach what freedom is?
There is no union here, but only grief.
This is not mercy.⁹³ This is death.
Another form, still very like the first
If it is understood, does not appear
In quite such blatant arrogance, for now⁹⁴
The one who would forgive the other does
Not claim to be the better. Now he⁹⁵ says
That here is one whose sinfulness he shares
Since both have been unworthy and deserved
The retribution of the wrath of God.
This can appear to be a humble act,
And can indeed become a rivalry

⁸⁸ *omit* seem to T

⁸⁹ “one” in place of “this single” T

⁹⁰ really C

⁹¹ *omit* truly T

⁹² “solely on the base” in place of “on an attitude” T

⁹³ really C

⁹⁴ *omit* for now C

⁹⁵ *insert* merely T

In baseness⁹⁶ and in⁹⁷ guilt. It is not love
 For God's creation and the holiness
 That is his gift forever. Can his Son
 Condemn himself and still remember him?
 Here is⁹⁸ the goal⁹⁹ to separate from God
 The Son he loves, and keep him from his Source.
 This goal is also sought by those who seek
 The role of martyr at another's hand.
 Here must the aim be clearly seen, for this
 May pass as meekness and as charity
 Instead of cruelty. Is it not kind
 To be accepting of another's spite
 And not respond except with silence and
 A gentle smile? Behold, how good are you
 Who bear with patience and with saintliness
 The anger and the hurt another gives,
 And do not show the bitter pain you feel.
 Forgiveness to destroy will often hide
 Behind a cloak like this. It shows the face
 Of suffering and pain, in silent proof
 Of guilt and of the ravages of sin.
 Such is the witness that it offers one
 Who could be savior, not an enemy.
 But having¹⁰⁰ made him¹⁰¹ enemy, he must
 Accept the guilt and heavy-laid reproach
 That thus is put upon him. Is this love?
 Or is it rather treachery to one
 Who needs salvation from the pain of guilt?
 What is it for¹⁰² except to keep
 The witnesses of guilt away from love?

⁹⁶sinfulness C

⁹⁷omit in C

⁹⁸omit C

⁹⁹insert of S, is C

¹⁰⁰insert been C

¹⁰¹omit C

¹⁰²“What could the purpose be” in place of “What is it for”, giving a line of pentameter

C

Forgiveness to destroy can also take
The form of bargaining and compromise.
“I will forgive you if you meet my needs,
For in your slavery is my release.”
Say this to anyone and you are slave.
And you will seek to rid yourself of guilt
In further bargains which can give no hope
But only greater pain and misery.
How fearful has forgiveness now become
And how distorted is the end it seeks.
Have mercy on yourself who bargains thus!
God gives and does not ask for recompense.
There is no giving but to give like him.
All else is mockery. For who would try
To strike a bargain with the Son of God,
And thank his Father for his holiness?
What would you show your brother? Would you try
To reinforce his guilt and thus your own?
Forgiveness is the means for your escape;
How pitiful it is to make of it
A means for further slavery and pain.
Within the world of opposites there is
A way to use forgiveness for the goal
Of God, and find the peace he offers you.
Take nothing else, or you have sought your death
And prayed for separation from your Self.
Christ is for all because he is in all;
It is his face forgiveness lets you see,
It is his face in which you see your own.
All forms forgiveness takes that do not lead
Away from anger, condemnation and
Comparisons of every kind are death,
For that is what their purposes have set.
Be not deceived by them, but lay them by
As worthless in their tragic offerings.
You do not want to stay in slavery,
You do not want to be afraid of God,
You want to see the sunlight and the glow

Of Heaven shining on the face of earth
Redeemed from sin and in the Love of God;
From here is prayer released, along with you.
Your wings are free, and prayer will lift you up
And bring you home where God would have you be.

Forgiveness for Salvation

Forgiveness for Salvation has one form
And only one. It does not ask for proof
Of innocence, nor pay of any kind.
It does not argue, nor evaluate
The errors that it wants to overlook.
It does not offer gifts in treachery
Nor promise freedom while it asks for death.
Would God deceive you? He but asks for trust
And willingness to learn how to be free.
He gives his Teacher to whoever asks
And seeks to understand the will of God.
His readiness to give lies far beyond
Your understanding and your simple grasp.
Yet he has willed you learn the way to him
And in his willing there is certainty.
You child of God, the gifts of God are yours
Not by your plans but by his holy will.
His Voice will teach you what forgiveness is
And how to give it as he wills it be.
Do not then seek to understand what is
Beyond you yet, but let it be a way
To draw you up to where the eyes¹⁰³ of Christ
Become the sight¹⁰⁴ you choose. Give up all else
For there *is* nothing else. When someone calls
For help in any form, he is the one
To answer for you. All that you need do
Is to step back and not to interfere.

¹⁰³sight T

¹⁰⁴eyes T

Forgiveness for salvation is his task
And it is he who will respond for you.
Do not establish what the form should be
That his¹⁰⁵ forgiveness takes; he knows the way
To make of every call a help to you
As you arise in haste to go at last
Unto your Father's house.¹⁰⁶ Now can he make
Your footsteps sure, your words sincere; not with
Your own sincerity, but with his own.
Let him take charge of how you would forgive
And each occasion then will be to you
Another step to Heaven and to peace.
Are you not weary of imprisonment?
God did not choose this sorry path for you.
What you have chosen still can be undone
For prayer is merciful and God is just.
His is a justice he can understand
But you cannot as yet. Yet¹⁰⁷ will he give
The means to you to learn of him, and know
At last that condemnation is not real
And makes illusions in its evil name.
And yet it matters not the form that dreams
May seem to take; illusions are untrue.
God's will is truth, and you are one with him
In will and purpose; here all dreams are done.
"What should I do for this¹⁰⁸, your holy Son?"
Should be the only thing you ever ask
When help is needed and forgiveness sought.
The form the seeking takes you need not judge,
But¹⁰⁹ let it not be you who sets the form
In which forgiveness comes to save God's Son.
The light of Christ in him is his release
And it is this that answers to his call.

¹⁰⁵Christ's C

¹⁰⁶Luke 15:18

¹⁰⁷Still C

¹⁰⁸him C

¹⁰⁹And C

Forgive him as the Christ decides you should
And be his eyes through which you look on him
And speak for him as well. He knows the need
The question and the answer; he will say
Exactly what to do in words that you
Can understand and you can also use.¹¹⁰
Do not confuse his function with your own;
He is the answer, you the one who hears.
And what is it he speaks to you about?
About salvation and the gift of peace
About the end of sin and guilt and death
About the role forgiveness has in him.
Do you but listen, for he will be heard
By anyone who calls upon his name
And places his forgiveness in his hands.
Forgiveness has been given him to teach
To save it from destruction and to make
The means for separation, sin and death
Become again the holy gift of God.¹¹¹
Prayer is his own right hand made free to save
As true forgiveness is allowed to come
From his eternal vigilance and love.
Listen and learn, and do not judge; it is
To God you turn to hear what you should do.
His answer will be clear as morning nor
Is his forgiveness what you think it is.
Still does he know, and that should be enough,
Forgiveness has a teacher who will fail
In nothing. Rest a while in this; do not
Attempt to judge forgiveness, nor to set
It in an earthly frame. Let it arise
To Christ, who welcomes it as gift to him.
He will not leave you comfortless, nor fail
To send his angels down to answer you
In his own name. He stands beside the door

¹¹⁰“and that you can use as well” and “and that you can also use” S

¹¹¹love T

To which forgiveness is the only key.
Give it to him to use instead of you
And you will see the door swing silently
Open upon the shining face of Christ.
Behold your brother there beyond the door
The Son of God as he created him!

Healing

The Cause of Sickness

Prayer has both aids and witnesses which make
The steep ascent more gentle and more sure,
Easing the pain of fear and offering
The comfort and the promises of hope.
Forgiveness' witness and an aid to prayer,
A giver of assurance of success
In ultimate attainment of the goal,
Is healing. Its importance should not be
Too strongly emphasized, for healing is
A sign or symbol of forgiveness' strength
And only an effect or shadow of
A change of mind about the goal of prayer.
Do not mistake effect for cause, nor think
That sickness is apart and separate
From what its cause must be. It is a sign,
A shadow of an evil thought that seems
To have reality and to be just
According to the usage of the world.
It is external proof of inner sin
And witnesses to unforgiving thoughts
That injure and would hurt the Son of God.
Healing the body is impossible, and this
Is shown by the brief nature of the cure;
The body yet must die, and healing it
Is but a brief delay in its return

To dust¹¹², where it was born and will go back.¹¹³
 The body's source¹¹⁴ is unforgiveness of
 The Son of God. It has not left its source
 And in its pain and aging and the mark
 Of death upon it this is clearly shown.
 Fearful and frail it seems to be to those
 Who think their life is tied to its command
 And linked to its unstable, tiny breath.
 Death stares at them as every moment goes
 Irrevocably past their grasping hands,
 Which cannot hold them back. And they feel fear
 As bodies change and sicken. For they sense
 The heavy scent of death upon their hearts.
 The body can be healed as an effect
 Of true forgiveness. Only that can give
 Remembrance of immortality¹¹⁵,
 Which is the gift of holiness and love.
 Forgiveness must be given by a mind
 Which understands that it must overlook
 All shadows on the holy face of Christ,
 Among which sickness should be seen as one.
 Nothing but that; the sign of judgment made
 By brother upon brother, and the Son of God
 Upon himself. For he has damned
 His body as his prison¹¹⁶, and forgot
 That it is he who gave this role to it.
 What he has done now must God's Son undo,

¹¹²Gen. 3:19
¹¹³

Healing the body is impossible,
 And this is shown by the brief nature of
 The cure. The body yet must die, and so
 Its healing but delays its turning back
 To dust, where it was born and will return.

C

¹¹⁴cause C

¹¹⁵*Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, Wordsworth

¹¹⁶*Phaedo*, Plato

But not alone. For he has thrown away
The prison's key; his holy sinlessness
And the remembrance of his Father's love.
Yet help is given to him in the Voice
His Father placed in him. The power to heal
Is now his Father's gift, for through his Voice
He still can reach his Son, reminding him
The body may become his chosen home
But it will never be his home in truth.
Distinctions therefore must be made between
True healing and its faulty counterpart.
The world of opposites is healing's place,
For what in Heaven could there be to heal?
As prayer within the world can ask amiss
And seeming charity forgive to kill,
So healing can be false as well as true;
A witness to the power of the world
Or to the everlasting Love of God.

True versus False Healing

False healing merely makes a substitution¹¹⁷
Of one illusion for a nicer one;
A dream of sickness for a dream of health.
This can occur at lower forms of prayer,
Combining with forgiveness kindly meant
But not completely understood as yet.
Only false healing can give way to fear
So sickness will be apt¹¹⁸ to strike again.
False healing can indeed remove a form
Of pain and sickness. But the cause remains,
And will not lack effects. The cause is still
The wish to die and overcome the Christ.
And with this wish is death a certainty,
For prayer *is* answered. Yet there is a kind

¹¹⁷poor exchange T

¹¹⁸free C

Of seeming death that has a different source.
It does not come because of hurtful thoughts
And raging anger at the universe.
It merely signifies the end has come
For usefulness of body functioning.
And so it is discarded as a choice,
As one lays by a garment now outworn.
This is what death should be; a quiet choice
Made joyfully and with a sense of peace,
Because the body has been kindly used
To help the Son of God along the way
He goes to God. We thank the body then
For all the service it has given us.
But we are thankful too the need is done
To walk the world of limits, and to reach
The Christ in hidden forms and clearly seen
At most in lovely flashes. Now we can
Behold him without blinders, in the light
That we have learned to look upon again.¹¹⁹
We call it death, but it is liberty.
It does not come in forms that seem to be
Thrust down in pain upon unwilling flesh,
But as a gentle welcome to release.
If there has been true healing, this can be
The form in which death comes when it is time
To rest a while from labor gladly done
And gladly ended.¹²⁰ Now we go in peace
To freer air and gentler climate, where it
Is not hard to see the gifts we gave
Were saved for us. For Christ is clearer now;

¹¹⁹1 Cor. 13:12

¹²⁰

Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie:
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

Requiem, Robert Louis Stevenson

His vision more sustained in us; his Voice,
The Word of God¹²¹, more certainly our own.
This gentle passage to a higher prayer,
A kind forgiveness of the ways of earth,
Can only be received with thankfulness.
Yet first true healing must have come to bless
The mind with loving pardon for the sins
It dreamed about and laid upon the world.
Now are its dreams dispelled in quiet rest;
Now its forgiveness comes to heal the world
And it is ready to depart in peace¹²²,
The journey over and the lessons learned.
This is not death according to the world,
For death is cruel in its frightened eyes
And takes the form of punishment for sin.
How could¹²³ it be a blessing, then? And how
Could it be welcome when it must be feared?
What healing has occurred in such a view
Of what is merely opening the gate
To higher prayer and kindly justice done?
Death is reward and not a punishment.
But such a viewpoint must be fostered by
The healing that the world cannot conceive.
There is no partial healing, what but shifts
Illusions has done nothing; what is false
Cannot be partly true. If you are healed
Your healing is complete. Forgiveness is
The only gift you give and would receive.
False healing rests upon the body's cure,
Leaving the cause of illness still unchanged,
Ready to strike again until it brings
A cruel death in seeming victory.
It can¹²⁴ be held at bay a little while,
And there can be brief respite as it waits

¹²¹John 3:34, Acts 4:31, Eph. 6:17, Heb. 4:12

¹²²Luke 2:29

¹²³can S

¹²⁴but S

To take its vengeance on the Son of God.
Yet it cannot be overcome until
All faith in it has been laid by and placed
Upon God's substitute for evil dreams;
A world in which there is no veil of sin
To keep it dark and comfortless. At last
The gate of Heaven opens and God's Son
Is free to enter in the home that stands
Ready to welcome him, and was prepared
Before time was and still but¹²⁵ waits for him.

Separation versus Union

False healing heals the body in a part
But never as a whole. Its separate goals
Become quite clear in this, for it has not
Removed the curse of sin that lies on it.
Therefore it still deceives, nor is it made
By one who understands the other is
Exactly like himself; for it is this
That makes true healing possible. When false,
There is some power that another has,
Not equally bestowed on both as one.
Here is the separation shown, and here
The meaning of true healing has been lost,
And idols have arisen to obscure
The unity that is the Son of God.
Healing to separate may seem to be
A strange idea, and yet it can be said
Of any form of healing that is based
On inequality of any kind.
These forms may heal the body, and indeed
Are generally limited to this.
Someone knows better, has been better trained,
Or is perhaps more talented and wise.
Therefore he can give healing to the one

¹²⁵must S

Who stands beneath him in his patronage.
The healing of the body can be done
By this because in dreams equality
Cannot be permanent. The shifts and change
Are what the dream is made of; to be healed
Appears to be to find a wiser one
Who by his arts and learning will succeed.
Someone knows better; this the magic phrase
By which the body seems to be the aim
Of healing as the world conceives of it.
And to this wiser one another goes
To profit by his learning and his skill;
To find in him the remedy for pain.
How can that be? True healing cannot come
From inequality assumed and then
Accepted as the truth, and used to help
Restore the wounded and to calm the mind
That suffers from the agony of doubt.
Is there a role for healing then, that one
Can use to offer help for someone else?
In arrogance the answer must be "no."
But in humility there is indeed
A place for helpers; it is like the role
That helps in prayer, and lets forgiveness be
What it is meant to be. You do not make
Yourself the bearer of the special gift
That brings the healing; you but recognize
Your oneness with the one who calls for help.
For in this oneness is his separate sense
Dispelled, and it is this that made him sick.
There is no point in giving remedy
Apart from where the source of sickness is,
For never thus can it be truly healed.
Healers there are, for they are Sons of God
Who recognize their Source, and understand
That all their Source creates is one with them.
This is the remedy that brings relief
Which cannot fail; it will remain to bless

For all eternity. It heals no part,
But wholly and forever—now the cause
Of every malady has been revealed
Exactly as it is, and in that place
Is written now the holy Word of God.
Sickness and separation must be healed
By love and union. Nothing else can heal
As God established healing; without him
There is no healing, for there is no love.
God's Voice alone can tell you how to heal.
Listen, and you will never fail to bring
His kindly remedy to those he sends
To you to let him heal them, and to bless
All those who serve with him in healing's name.
The body's healing will occur because
Its cause has gone. And now without a cause,
It cannot come again in different form.
Nor will death anymore be feared because
It has been understood; there is no fear
In one who has been truly healed, for love
Has entered now where idols used to stand,
And fear has given way at last to God.

How Holy are the Healed

How holy are the healed! For in their sight
Their brothers share their healing and their love.
Bringers of peace, the Holy Spirit's voice,
Through whom He speaks for God, Whose Voice he is,
Such are God's healers. They but speak for him
And never for themselves. They have no gifts
But those they have from God, and these they share
Because they know that this is what he wills.
They are not special—they are holy. They
Have chosen holiness, and given up
All separate dreams of special attributes
Through which they can bestow unequal gifts

On those less fortunate. Their healing has
Restored their wholeness so they can forgive,
And join the song of prayer in which the healed
Sing of their union and their thanks to God.
As witness to forgiveness, aid to prayer,
And the effect of mercy truly taught,
Healing is blessing. And the world responds
In quickened chorus through the voice of prayer;
Forgiveness shines its merciful reprieve
Upon each blade of grass and feathered wing
And all the living things upon the earth.
Fear has no haven here, for love has come
In all its holy oneness. Time remains
Only to let the last embrace of prayer
Rest on the earth an instant, as the world
Is shined away. This instant is the goal
Of all true healers, whom the Christ has taught
To see his likeness and to teach like him.
Think what it means to help the Christ to heal!
Can anything be holier than this?
God thanks his healers, for he knows the cause
Of healing is himself, his love, his Son,
Restored as his completion and returned
To share with him creation's holy joy.
Do not ask partial healing, nor accept
An idol for remembrance of him
Whose love has never changed and never will.
You are as dear to him as is the whole
Of his creation, for it is¹²⁶ in you
As his eternal gift. What need have you
Of shifting dreams within a sorry world?
Do not forget the gratitude of God,
Do not forget the holy grace of prayer,
Do not forget forgiveness of God's Son.
You first forgive, then pray, and you are healed;
Your prayer has risen up and called to God,

¹²⁶lies C

Who hears and answers. You have understood
 That you forgive yourself and pray for you¹²⁷
 And in this understanding you are healed.
 In prayer you have united with your Source
 And understood that you have never left.
 This level cannot be attained until
 There is no hatred in your heart and no
 Desire to attack the Son of God.
 Never forget this; it is you who are
 God's Son, and as you choose to be to him
 So are you to yourself, and God to you.
 Nor will your judgment fail to reach to God
 For you will give the role to him you see
 In his creation. Thus have you become
 Creator in his place, and he becomes
 No longer cause but only an effect.¹²⁸
 Now healing is impossible, for on him lies
 The blame for your deception and your guilt;
 He who is love is now the source of fear,
 For only fear can now be justified.¹²⁹
 Vengeance is his—his great destroyer, death.
 And sickness, suffering and grievous loss

¹²⁷That you forgive and pray but for yourself C?
¹²⁸

Nor will your judgment fail to reach to God
 For you will give the role to him you see
 In his creation. Do not choose amiss
 Or you will think that it is you who are
 Creator in his place, and he is then
 No longer cause but only an effect.

C
¹²⁹

Now healing is impossible, for he
 Is blamed for your deception and your guilt;
 He Who is love becomes the source of fear,
 For only fear can now be justified.

C

Become the lot of everyone on earth,
Which he abandoned to the devil's care,
Swearing he will deliver it no more.

Come Unto Me

Come unto me my children, once again,
Without such twisted thoughts upon your hearts.
You still are holy with the holiness
Which fathered you in perfect sinlessness,
And still surrounds you with the arms of peace.
Dream now of healing—then arise and lay
All dreaming down forever. You are he
Your Father loves, who never left his home
Nor wandered in a savage world with feet
That bleed, and with a heavy heart made hard
Against the love that is the truth in you.
Give all your dreams to Christ and let him be
Your guide to healing, leading you in prayer
Beyond the sorry reaches of the world.
He comes for me and speaks my word to you.
I would recall my weary Son to me
From dreams of malice to the sweet embrace
Of everlasting Love and perfect peace.
My Arms are open to the Son I love,
Who does not understand that he is healed
And that his prayers have never ceased to sing
His joyful thanks in unison with all
Creation, in the holiness of love.
Be still an instant; underneath the sounds
Of harsh and bitter striving and defeat
There is a Voice that speaks to you of me.
Hear this an instant and you will be healed;
Hear this an instant and you have been saved.
Help me to wake my children from the dream
Of retribution and a little life
Beset with fear, that ends so soon it might

As well have never been. Let me instead
 Remind you of eternity, in which
 Your joy grows greater as your love extends
 Along with mine beyond infinity,
 Where time and distance have no meaning. While
 You wait in sorrow Heaven's melody
 Is incomplete, because your song is part
 Of the eternal harmony of love.
 Without you is creation incomplete¹³⁰;
 Return to me who never left my Son.
 Listen my child, your Father calls to you!
 Do not refuse to hear the call for love,
 Do not deny to Christ what is his own,
 Heaven is here and Heaven is your home.
 Creation leans across the bars of time
 To lift the heavy burden from the world.
 Lift up your hearts to greet its advent. See
 The shadows fade away in gentleness;
 The thorns fall softly from the bleeding brow
 Of him who is the holy Son of God.
 How lovely are you, child of holiness!
 How like to me! How lovingly I hold
 You in my heart and in my arms. How dear
 Is every gift that you have given me¹³¹
 Who healed my Son and took him from the cross.
 Arise and let my thanks be given you;
 And with my gratitude will come the gift
 First of forgiveness, then eternal peace.
 So now return your holy voice to me;
 The song of prayer is silent without you.
 The universe is waiting your release
 Because it is its own. Be kind to it
 And to yourself, and then be kind to me.
 I ask but this; that you be comforted
 And live no more in terror and in pain.

¹³⁰unfulfilled C

¹³¹Is every gift to me that you have made C

Do not abandon love—remember this:
Whatever you may think about yourself,
Whatever you may think about the world,
Your Father needs you and will call to you
Until you come to him in peace at last.