

Preach the Universal and Everlasting Gospel of Boundless, Universal Love for the entire human race, without exception. . . . Proclaim and publish to all the people of the world a Universal Gospel that shall restore, in time, all the human species. . . . The inner Spirit makes us feel that behind every appearance of diversity there is an interdependent unity of all things.

George de Benneville (1703-1793)

We must not look for religion in creeds or formularies of human invention. We must look for it in the honest, the pious, the devotional heart; in the heart which truly loves God, loves its [sister and] brother also. The principle of love to God and goodwill is true religion.

Hosea Ballou (1771-1852)

The liberal Christian outlook is directed to a power that is living, that is active in love seeking concrete manifestation and that finds its decisive response in the living posture and gesture of Jesus of Nazareth.

James Luther Adams (1901-1994)

In the end it won't matter how much you have, rather how much you have given. It won't matter how much you know, but rather how much you love. And it won't matter how much you profess to believe, but rather how deeply you live the few enduring truths you claim as ultimate. All the rest is discipline.

John Morgan

A Pattern of Daily Prayer



Gather or scatter us, O Lord, according to Your will.
Build us into one church, a church with open doors and
large windows, a church which takes this world seriously,
ready to work and to suffer, and even to bleed for it.

Unitarian Christian Association
Cambridge MMVI

This book is offered as an encouragement daily to use some of the texts our liberal Christian tradition has thought indispensable. It is offered up in the form of a first person prayer book envisaging that it will, in the first instance, primarily be used by individuals. But there is no reason why it should not form the basis for some form of daily collective prayer.

The underlying inspiration for this prayer book has been the European Anabaptist, Mystical and Pietist traditions of the Radical Reformation which were the well springs from which our own group of churches in both Britain and the US sprung. However, as noted at the end of this volume, four of the prayers have been adapted from the Brahma Samaj (Society of God) - a liberal Hindu reform movement which still maintains a tradition of daily personal piety. We can learn much from their commitment to a daily devotional practice.

But lying at the heart of it all is an encounter with Scripture which formed and shaped our forebears in everyway imaginable. We should meditate upon it and then, like them, take the lessons we discover there to heart and live them. It is important to understand that in our daily devotional reading we need not agree with every word of Scripture for it is there as much to provoke us to critical thought as it is to calm and satisfy us. Like Jacob's struggle with God by the river Jabbok (Gen. 32), we need to wrestle with the text bringing to it our personal experiences and reason as well as the gentle but powerful insights of our liberal Christian tradition.

SOURCES & A FINAL NOTE

The main Biblical texts are from the NRSV. The prayers and passages of scripture printed in smaller type are taken from John Henson's "Good as New - A Radical Retelling of the Scriptures" (O Books, 2005) and are offered for those who, on some days, might wish to encounter these familiar words in a different register and key. The text can also be found online at <http://www.one4god.org/GANhome.htm>

Martineau's "Prayer of Consecration" (p. 7) remains a classic prayer in our tradition and it, like the evening prayer (p. 8), has been taken and adapted from "Orders of Worship" (Lindsey Press, 1932).

The prayer on the front cover is from the 17th century Polish Brethren who taught the Oneness of God & the humanity of Jesus. The quotations on the back cover have been offered to give a flavour of the liberal Christian spirit this prayer book hopes to see flourish in the twenty-first century.

The "Prayer for the Bathroom", "A Prayer before the Commencement of Daily Business", "A Prayer before going to Bed", and "A Grace at Meals" are adapted from "A Manual of Brahma Rituals & Devotions (Sadharan Brahma Samaj, Calcutta, 1924 & 1971).

"Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called - that you might inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:8-9 NRSV).

Andrew Brown - Cambridge, 7 February 2006

your love and my entire dependence upon you. Through sleep and waking, rest and labour, you fulfil your holy will in my life and lead me on to my goal. After the blessed sleep you mercifully grant me, may I wake to a deepened consciousness of your presence within and without me. In the spirit of Jesus, Amen.

A GRACE AT MEALS

Loving God, sustainer of all, your love and care is present in all this food and drink before me and in every moment of its growth and preparation. With heartfelt gratitude I give thanks for this manifestation of your love. May I always remember your love with thankfulness, and use in your service the health and strength gained through these your gifts. In the spirit of Jesus, Amen.

MORNING & EVENING PRAYER

g Begin by bringing yourself to silence (lighting a candle if possible). Then say:

Jesus taught us: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Jesus said: "The most important rule is, 'Listen, people of Israel. There is only one God. Love God with everything you have - your feelings, your intelligence, your physical strength.' The next most important rule is, 'Love the person next to you as you love yourself.' These are the most important rules."

With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God

on high? He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:6a, 8).

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Loving God, here and everywhere, help us proclaim your values and bring in your New World. Supply us our day to day needs. Forgive us for wounding you, while we forgive those who wound us. Give us courage to meet life's trials and deal with evil's power. Amen.

me. When my energy and patience flag, may your touch refresh and encourage me. When I feel tempted to neglect my work or do carelessly, may I meet your eyes and be restored and steadied. Enable me to treat with kindness and compassion all with whom I may come into contact in the course of the day. Cure me of all selfish and ambitious desires, of the love of human applause, and enable me to seek only your glory in all that I do. May my work, instead of estranging my soul from you, draw me ever nearer and nearer to you and help my everlasting union with you. In the spirit of Jesus, Amen.

A PRAYER BEFORE GOING TO BED

O loving God, after the labours of the day you have given me rest and invite me to resign all my thoughts and anxieties and fall asleep in the embrace of your everlasting and loving arms. I feel now

A PRAYER FOR THE BATHROOM

Loving God, this pure water, which will refresh, restore and purify my body, is a special manifestation of your love and care. It is a symbol of your saving grace, the grace that purifies and strengthens the soul. With gratitude I give thanks for this most valued gift of yours. As this water daily refreshes, restores and purifies my body so, too, may my soul be hallowed and strengthened by constant communion with you. In the spirit of Jesus, Amen.

A PRAYER BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF DAILY BUSINESS

Loving God, you are within and without me and, through my daily tasks and duties, you call me to loving service. May I always feel your presence in the work I am going to begin. May your wisdom enlighten and your inspiration strengthen

¶ Reading/s

¶ A period of silent, meditative prayer on a verse or a word from the readings of the day.

¶ Prayer (praying as the Spirit moves you) but particularly on

Sunday: for all peoples and creation

Monday: for family and friends

Tuesday: for your church community

Wednesday: for your village, town or city

Thursday: for your country

Friday: for the Church Invisible & Universal

Saturday: for yourself

¶ In the morning pray the Benedictus:

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty saviour for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

What a wonderful God, the God of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel! This God has come to help us and set us free. The world will be healed by the power of love, by a descendent of David and Bathsheba. Those who spoke God's promises were right: the

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.

May we know first-hand the beautiful character of our Leader, Jesus, God's Chosen, and the Love of God, and the special being together God's Spirit brings. Amen.

g In the evening conclude with the Nunc Dimittus:

Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. Amen.

Your helper, God, moves on content, your plans my eyes have seen; a new day dawns for every land, beyond your people's dream. Amen.

g End by resting in silence (and extinguishing the candle).

own me as at one with him and you.
Amen.

¶ In the evening pray the following or another prayer:

O Lord, our God, I come to you, the refuge of my soul, and in the quiet of this evening hour would rest under the shelter of your love. Here, in communion with you, I would gain strength for the labours, patience for the trials, light for the perplexities and difficulties; and remembering my past failures, weakness and sin, humbly seek again the support and guidance which I have never yet trusted as I ought. I ask for your forgiveness; and may I, in a holier spirit and with a more steadfast will, renounce the evil I lament and press forward in the way that leads to life and light. Amen.

¶ In the morning conclude with the Grace:

days of hate and having enemies are passing. God was generous to our ancestors, a loyal and reliable friend. God promised Abraham and Sarah an end to hostility and fear. Freedom to worship and serve. You, little baby, will speak for God; You will go in front of God's Chosen Leader and roll out the carpet. You'll tell the people their problems are over, free from guilt at last. God is kind and gentle; God will turn darkness into daylight, so we can make our way in peace.

¶ In the evening pray the Magnificat:

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He

has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Mary said: I sense the greatness of God who makes my joy complete. God smiled at me and asked my help, and everyone will dance with glee at the wonderful thing happening to me. What a God! In every age God aids the good, upsetting the plans of the arrogant: See how the powerful fall off their perches! Honour for the modest, a banquet for the hungry; the rich get nothing and slink away! God keeps promises to friends and companions - Abraham, Sarah, and their like today.

¶ In the morning pray the following or another prayer consecrating yourself to a life of faith as a disciple of Jesus Christ:

Eternal God, who has committed to me the swift and solemn trust of life; since I know not what a day may bring forth, but only that the hour for serving you is always present, may I wake to the instant claims of your holy will; not waiting for tomorrow, but yielding to-day. Lay to rest, by the persuasion of your Spirit, the resistance of my passion, indolence, or fear. Consecrate with your presence the way my feet may go; and the humblest work will shine, and the roughest places be made plain. Lift me above unrighteous anger and mistrust into faith and hope and charity, by a simple and steadfast reliance on your sure will: and so may I be modest in my time of wealth, patient under disappointment, ready for danger, serene in death. In all things, draw me to the mind of Christ, that your lost image may be traced again, and you may