

anthropomorphic, were written at a much later time. They place this section in the latest document which they call 'P'. Therefore it is worth noticing that, with all its spirituality, the blessing contains statements which are markedly anthropomorphic, e.g., the Lord make his face shine upon thee, the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee (25,26). This illustrates the fact that anthropomorphism is not inconsistent with spirituality. In fact, true spirituality must recognize the personality of God, and personality can hardly be described to a human being in terms other than those drawn from human life.

The blessing consists of three verses, and there is a noticeable progress in them. Verse 24 is rather general: The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. Keep (Heb. shamar) would be better rendered in modern English as 'guard' or 'protect;' it refers to physical well-being, and prevention of trouble from external sources. It is the first and lowest stage of our prayer for divine help. Many people never get beyond this stage. It is a vital stage, but the Christian must go past it into the next two.

The second verse of the blessing takes us a step higher: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The expression is definitely in the spiritual realm, and involves a more personal relationship with God, but is still rather general in nature. The Lord causes the rain to fall upon the just and the unjust. The Lord shows His countenance to all the world. Here the prayer is that the Lord's face shall shine upon the one who is blessed, and that he shall be the recipient of favour from the Almighty. We might say that this verse is fulfilled most truly through the death of Christ on Calvary's cross, where God showed forth His love to a world lost in sin, where the shining of the face of our wonderful God was most clearly made manifest, and where He showed favour to all who believe in the name of Christ. This second verse, then, marks the step into distinctive Christianity.

The third verse goes yet a step higher: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. The word that both AV and RB render here as countenance is exactly the same as the word which they translate face in the previous verse.