

# Prayer as Informational Disclosure: Invocational Alignment, Causal Readability, and Reality-Experience

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## **Abstract:**

Prayer is commonly examined as petition, ritual performance, religious coping, sacred speech, devotional expression, or psychological self-regulation. These approaches explain important dimensions of prayer, but they do not fully account for its deeper function as a disciplined transformation of access to reality. This article develops a symbolic-informational theory of prayer as informational disclosure. It defines prayer as an invocational alignment process through which consciousness is oriented toward a reference order and reality becomes causally, morally, and existentially readable.

Reality is defined here as the field of explicit and latent intelligibility: not only what is already available to consciousness, but also causal relations, constraints, meanings, obligations, possibilities, and paths of action that may belong to a situation before they are recognized. Prayer does not manufacture reality by subjective command. It discloses latent intelligibility by reorganizing attention, symbolic articulation, desire, self-reference, and agency under a reference order.

The article introduces the Invocational Disclosure Model, which analyzes prayer through eight operations: invocation, attention concentration, symbolic articulation, self-decentering, reference alignment, disclosure, agency conversion, and stabilizing closure. The model is grounded in ritual-language theory, comparative prayer studies, cognitive approaches to religion, philosophy of information, cybernetic difference theory, transformational information, condition-dependent knowledge, and speech act theory. Its central contribution is the claim that prayer is a formalized symbolic practice through which fragmented experience is reordered and latent structures of meaning, causality, responsibility, and action become present, stable, and actionable.

**Keywords:** prayer, informational disclosure, invocational alignment, causal readability, reference order, ritual language, sacred texts, reality-experience, latent intelligibility, agency, comparative religion

## 1. Introduction

Prayer is not merely a wish spoken into uncertainty. It is one of the oldest symbolic practices through which human beings confront reality, gather consciousness, and place desire, fear, guilt, gratitude, suffering, and hope before a higher order of meaning. It appears as psalm, lament, praise, confession, mantra, du'ā', litany, blessing, thanksgiving, chant, hymn, and invocation. These forms differ doctrinally and historically, yet many of them perform a comparable operation: they draw consciousness out of fragmentation, articulate a condition, place that condition before a reference order, and convert disclosed meaning into conduct, endurance, repentance, trust, or action.

Existing scholarship has shown that prayer and ritual language cannot be reduced to ordinary information transfer. Wheelock's analysis of ritual language describes a movement from information to situation, Keane treats religious language as social and semiotic practice, and Csordas shows how ritual language can transform experience through genre, motive, metaphor, embodiment, and performance [1–3]. Ritual theory clarifies that ritual authorizes, stabilizes, and performs relations between persons, symbols, and worlds [4,5]. Speech act theory further shows that certain utterances become consequential within recognized contexts of use [6,7].

Comparative prayer studies have identified formal correspondences across traditions. Sperl's comparison of Qur'ān Sūra One, the Lord's Prayer, and a Babylonian prayer to the Moon God demonstrates that prayer forms can be studied structurally across distinct scriptural and liturgical environments [8]. Classical and psychological studies show that prayer includes multiple modes, including adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, reception, obligatory prayer, and everyday prayer practices [9–11]. Cognitive approaches to religion connect ritual practices with attention, memory, salience, repetition, transmission, and embodied form [12,13].

The present article identifies the intermediate mechanism between ritual form and transformed experience: invocational alignment discloses latent intelligibility and converts it into agency. Prayer is therefore examined as a causal-symbolic access-process. It does not produce reality as a magical object of desire; it brings consciousness into alignment with a reference order through which reality becomes readable as meaning, responsibility, direction, and action.

The thesis is:

*Prayer is a disciplined symbolic-informational access-process through which invocation, attention, articulation, self-decentering, and reference alignment disclose the latent causal and meaningful structure of reality-experience and convert it into agency.*

The power of prayer lies not in manufacturing events, but in transforming the causal readability of reality-experience.

## 2. Scope and Methodology

This article develops the Invocational Disclosure Model as a theoretical codebook for analyzing prayer as a symbolic-informational access-process. The model is designed for articulated, invocational, liturgical, recitational, and devotional prayer forms. It is not intended as a general theory of all meditation, silence, contemplation, or religious experience.

The analysis is comparative and functional. It does not claim that God, Dao, Dharma, Logos, divine will, liberation, and awakening are doctrinally equivalent. It compares how prayer forms orient consciousness toward a reference order, disclose latent intelligibility, and convert that disclosure into agency.

In non-theistic traditions, reference order does not require an external personal deity. It may refer to Dharma, awakening, compassion, liberation, the cessation of suffering, Daoist order, or another soteriological structure. Invocation and reference alignment are therefore coded functionally rather than theologically.

The selected examples are widely transmitted prayer, recitation, or liturgical forms for which reliable translations or scholarly treatments are available. They are used to demonstrate the model across different traditions, not to exhaust the field. Less canonical cases, including folk prayers, healing prayers, curse prayers, material petitions, and magical-religious border cases, remain important tests of the model.

The coding categories are:

1. Reference order: What sacred, moral, metaphysical, or soteriological order is invoked?
2. Attention operation: How is attention gathered or redirected?
3. Articulated condition: What need, praise, guilt, lament, gratitude, fear, or communal state is given form?
4. Self-decentering marker: How is egoic self-reference suspended, humbled, redirected, or displaced?
5. Alignment marker: How is desire, fear, or intention placed under the reference order?
6. Disclosure content: What latent intelligibility becomes experientially available?
7. Agency consequence: What conduct, endurance, repentance, trust, ethical action, or reorientation follows?
8. Stabilizing closure: How is the disclosed orientation fixed through Amen, blessing, vow, gratitude, repetition, silence, or trust?

The model generates a clear testable expectation: prayer texts should display these operations more consistently than ordinary wishes, doctrinal statements, legal formulas, narrative episodes, affirmations, meditative instructions, or magical commands.

### 3. Reality as Explicit and Latent Intelligibility

Reality is defined here as the field of explicit and latent intelligibility. It includes what is already available to consciousness, but also causal relations, constraints, meanings, obligations, possibilities, and paths of action that may belong to a situation before they are recognized.

Latent intelligibility is not fantasy, projection, or arbitrary possibility. It refers to real but not yet experientially accessible structure. A causal relation may operate before it is understood. A moral obligation may bind before it is accepted. A destructive pattern may govern conduct before it is named. A path of action may be possible before it becomes visible. A reconciliation may be available before pride or fear permits recognition.

Prayer operates at this threshold. It does not add reality from outside. It reorders consciousness so that hidden relations within reality-experience become readable. In prayer, the subject does not command reality; the subject is placed before a reference order through which reality can disclose its causal, moral, and practical structure.

This is the central distinction between reality-production and reality-disclosure. Reality-production treats the subject as generating reality through desire, intention, or verbal force. Reality-disclosure treats prayer as an access-process through which the structure of a situation becomes more intelligible, more morally charged, and more actionable.

Prayer is therefore not reducible to inner consolation. It is a disciplined practice of reading reality under a reference order.

#### 4. Information, Transformation, and Access

Information is not limited to transmitted data. Classical information theory clarifies signal, selection, uncertainty, and noise, while cybernetic and philosophical information theories extend the discussion toward difference, meaning, knowledge, and semantic relevance [14–17]. In the present article, information is used in a symbolic and experiential sense: as structured difference capable of becoming meaningful, stable, transmissible, and consequential.

Information is not used here in the narrow Shannonian sense of statistical signal transmission alone, but in a semantic and cybernetic sense: as a structured difference that makes a difference within cognition, orientation, and agency. In this sense, prayer is informational when it changes the organization of attention, meaning, responsibility, and action, thereby reducing experiential uncertainty and increasing causal readability.

The informational difference produced by prayer is the transition from unstructured or fragmented experience to ordered intelligibility. Before prayer, a situation may appear as fear, confusion, guilt, desire, resentment, despair, or uncertainty. Through prayer, the same situation may become readable as responsibility, danger, forgiveness, duty, patience, renunciation, reconciliation, judgment, mercy, or action. This transition is informational because it changes the structure through which reality is interpreted and acted upon.

By framing prayer as an informational access-process, the model does more than interpret symbolic meaning. It tracks how ritual form, attention, articulation, and reference order reorganize the conditions under which a situation becomes causally readable and actionable.

Information becomes transformational when it produces durable and examinable change in orientation, coherence, agency, or trajectory [18]. Prayer belongs to this domain when it reorganizes perception, stabilizes orientation, clarifies responsibility, and increases coherent agency.

Access is central. Certain forms of knowledge are not acquired by passive exposure to information alone; they require preparation, attention, participation, and the formed condition of the knower [19]. Prayer functions as such an access-condition. It prepares consciousness for truth, meaning, causality, moral order, and practical direction to become recognizable.

The structure is therefore not:

**request → waiting → result**

but:

**fragmentation → invocation → alignment → disclosure → agency**

Prayer begins in partial access, proceeds by ordering the field of consciousness, and culminates when reality-experience becomes more intelligible, more causally readable, and more actionable.

## 5. The Invocational Disclosure Model

The Invocational Disclosure Model describes prayer as a structured symbolic-informational access-process.

Table 1. Functional operations of the Invocational Disclosure Model

Operation	Function	Textual or Ritual Indicator
Invocation	Opens relation to reference order	Divine name, sacred address, mantra, praise, remembrance
Attention concentration	Reduces experiential fragmentation	Silence, rhythm, repetition, liturgical entry, concentrated address
Symbolic articulation	Gives form to diffuse experience	Petition, lament, confession, praise, thanksgiving, vow
Self-decentering	Suspends egoic self-reference	Surrender, submission, refuge, humility, repentance, non-attachment
Reference alignment	Places consciousness under reference order	God, Dao, Dharma, Logos, truth, mercy, justice, liberation
Disclosure	Makes latent intelligibility present	Guidance, forgiveness, causal clarity, moral recognition, peace
Agency conversion	Translates disclosed meaning into life	Decision, endurance, ethical action, repentance, reconciliation
Stabilizing closure	Fixes the new orientation	Amen, blessing, gratitude, silence, repetition, vow, trust

Invocation establishes reference order. Attention concentration reduces fragmentation. Symbolic articulation forms the inner or communal condition. Self-decentering prevents egoic inflation. Reference alignment orders desire. Disclosure makes latent intelligibility present as meaning, causal clarity, moral orientation, or practical agency. Agency conversion translates insight into conduct. Closure stabilizes the new orientation.

The model does not require every prayer to display all operations with equal clarity or in a fixed sequence. It offers analytic categories that can be present, absent, weak, distorted, or contested in particular cases.

## 6. Comparative Textual Application

### 6.1 Biblical Prayer

The Lord's Prayer begins with address and reference order before petition. Divine name, kingdom, and will precede requests for provision, forgiveness, deliverance, and protection [20]. Its articulated conditions are dependence, debt, temptation, and vulnerability. Its disclosure content includes provision, forgiveness,

deliverance, and moral dependency. Its agency consequence includes forgiving others, accepting dependence, resisting temptation, and living under divine will.

Many Psalms move from fragmentation to disclosed order. Lament begins with distress, threat, abandonment, injustice, or confusion, yet often moves through remembrance, trust, praise, vow, or renewed agency [21,22]. Suffering is not denied; it is reinterpreted within covenantal, moral, and divine intelligibility. The prayer does not erase suffering; it makes suffering readable within a higher causal and moral horizon.

Hannah's prayer and the Magnificat show a related pattern. Personal reversal becomes intelligible through a broader divine order of humiliation and exaltation, barrenness and fertility, pride and mercy, hunger and fullness [20]. The private condition is disclosed as part of a larger order of reversal, justice, and divine agency.

## 6.2 Qur'anic Prayer

Al-Fātiḥa establishes reference order before request. Praise, mercy, sovereignty, worship, and dependence precede the request for guidance on the straight path [23]. The reciter is placed within divine lordship, mercy, judgment, worship, and direction.

The articulated condition is dependence upon guidance. The disclosure content is the straight path as an intelligible orientation. The agency consequence is submission, direction, and path-following. Guidance is not merely information about what to do; it is the disclosure of a path within reality. The prayer makes life readable as direction, deviation, mercy, judgment, and return.

## 6.3 Hindu Mantra and Vedic Prayer

The Gāyatrī Mantra invokes divine radiance and seeks illumination of the intellect. Its interpretation is philologically complex, but many traditional and translated readings understand it as a prayer for awakened understanding [24,25].

The reference order is divine radiance or Savitr. The articulated condition is the need for illumination. The disclosure content is awakened understanding. The agency consequence is right cognition and orientation. This is not merely a generic cognitive insight, because the transformation is ritually mediated through mantra, invocation, sacred transmission, and orientation toward a divine source of illumination. Its religious specificity lies in the union of recitation, reference order, and transformed understanding.

In informational terms, the mantra seeks a change in the condition of cognition itself. Reality becomes readable because the intellect is illuminated under a sacred reference order.

## 6.4 Daoist Ritual and Liturgical Practice

Daoist ritual and liturgical practice provide a comparative case that is not reducible to Western petitionary prayer. Published scholarship emphasizes liturgical action, purification, petition, offerings, cosmic order, priestly mediation, and the organization of religious life through formal ritual structures [26,27].

The reference order is Daoist cosmic and moral order. The articulated condition may include impurity, suffering, calamity, disorder, or the need for cultivation. The self-decentering marker appears in

repentance, purification, reverence, ritual placement, and subordination to Daoist liturgical order. The disclosure content is restoration of relation to Dao, purification, and orientation toward harmonized order. The agency consequence is cultivation, repentance, ritual participation, and ethical or communal reorientation.

Because this article does not code a single Daoist primary liturgical text, the Daoist case has lower evidential weight than the Lord's Prayer, Al-Fātiḥa, or the Gāyatrī Mantra. It functions here as a ritual-liturgical comparison case and should be tested through direct coding of specific Daoist liturgical corpora.

### 6.5 Buddhist Recitation

Buddhist refuge formulas and mettā recitations show that invocational alignment does not require a creator-God model. The reference order may be Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, compassion, awakening, liberation, or the cessation of suffering [28].

The articulated condition is vulnerability, suffering, fear, attachment, or the need for liberation. The alignment marker is taking refuge, cultivating compassion, or orienting consciousness toward non-harm and awakening. The disclosure content may be impermanence, non-attachment, compassion, ethical clarity, or release from self-centered fixation. The agency consequence is ethical conduct, non-harm, compassion, discipline, and meditative orientation.

The coding of Buddhist recitation therefore measures the functional structure of cognitive and soteriological reorientation, not doctrinal conformity to a theistic model. Taking refuge is treated here as a formal shift of orientation toward Dharma, awakening, and liberation, rather than as submission to a cosmic hierarchy.

This case marks a boundary of the model. Recitational and refuge-based Buddhist practices may fit the invocational-disclosure structure. Silent non-dual meditation, by contrast, may suspend symbolic articulation and therefore requires separate analysis.

### 6.6 Hermetic Prayer

Hermetic prayers of thanksgiving emphasize knowledge, divine mind, gratitude, and recognition [29]. Their center is not demand but disclosure. The human being gives thanks for knowledge, relation, and participation in divine intelligibility.

The reference order is divine mind or Nous. The articulated condition is gratitude for knowledge and recognition. The disclosure content is participation in intelligible order. The agency consequence is thanksgiving, purification of orientation, and transformation of knowing.

Hermetic prayer makes explicit what is implicit in the broader model: prayer is not primarily a request for external satisfaction, but an act through which consciousness becomes aligned with intelligible order.

## 6.7 Comparative Coding Summary

Table 2. Comparative coding summary

Text / Tradition	Anchor type	Anchor	Reference order	Self-decentering / alignment marker	Disclosure content	Agency consequence
Lord's Prayer	Direct textual phrase	"your will be done"	Divine fatherhood, kingdom, will	Divine will before petition	Provision, forgiveness, deliverance under divine order	Forgiveness, dependence, moral reorientation
Psalms / biblical lament	Structural movement	lament → remembrance/trust /praise	Covenant, divine justice, mercy	Distress redirected toward trust, praise, vow	Suffering interpreted within divine order	Endurance, trust, renewed agency
Al-Fātiḥa	Direct textual phrase	"Guide us to the straight path"	Divine lordship, mercy, judgment	Worship, dependence, straight path	Guidance as disclosed orientation	Submission, path-following
Gāyatrī Mantra	Direct Sanskrit phrase	"dhiyo yo naḥ praco-dayāt"	Savitṛ / divine radiance	Illumination of intellect	Awakened understanding	Right cognition, orientation
Daoist ritual / liturgical practice	Corpus-level ritual marker	purification, repentance, petition, ritual placement	Daoist cosmic and moral order	Ritual subordination, repentance, purification	Restoration of relation to Dao	Cultivation, repentance, participation in order
Buddhist refuge / mettā	Formulaic phrase / practice marker	"I take refuge..." / loving-kindness formula	Buddha, Dharma, Sangha / compassion	Refuge, non-attachment, non-harm	Suffering, impermanence, compassion	Ethical conduct, discipline, compassion
Hermetic thanksgiving	Thematic textual marker	thanksgiving for knowledge	Nous / divine intelligibility	Gratitude and recognition	Participation in intelligible order	Thanksgiving, purification of knowing

Text / Tradition	Anchor type	Anchor	Reference order	Self-decentering / alignment marker	Disclosure content	Agency consequence
		/ divine mind				

The table identifies a functional structure: reference order, self-decentering, disclosure, and agency conversion. It also distinguishes direct textual phrases, structural movements, formulaic anchors, and corpus-level ritual markers. This prevents the table from treating all anchors as equivalent evidence.

### 7. Distinction from Petition, Manifestation, Coping, Meditation, and Spell

Prayer includes petition, but petition becomes prayer when need is placed under reference order. Without reference order, petition remains desire.

Prayer differs from manifestation discourse. Manifestation treats subjective intention as the organizing center. Prayer disciplines intention by subordinating it to truth, God, Dao, Dharma, Logos, mercy, justice, liberation, or moral order. The decisive movement is alignment, not command. Manifestation imagines reality as responsive to desire; prayer subjects desire to reality as disclosed through reference order.

Prayer differs from coping. Prayer may regulate emotion, reduce anxiety, and support resilience [10,11]. Yet coping does not explain the full structure of invocation, self-decentering, sacred address, moral correction, gratitude, disclosure, and agency conversion. Prayer is not merely a way of feeling better; it is a way of accessing reality differently.

Prayer also differs from silent non-symbolic meditation. Some meditative practices share attention concentration and self-decentering, but they may suspend invocation, petition, verbal articulation, and reference-address. Such practices require a different model unless they include recitation, refuge, mantra, liturgical formula, or explicit orientation toward a reference order.

In ideal-typical terms, magical command is oriented toward operational control and the imposition of will, whereas prayer, in the present model, is oriented toward alignment and the subordination of will to reference order. Empirical prayer practices may overlap with healing, protection, blessing, curse, magical control, or manifestation, but the model isolates the alignment-structure that makes prayer analytically distinct.

Border cases exist, especially in folk religion, healing rites, curse prayers, and magical-religious petitions. These cases are not marginal embarrassments; they are necessary tests of the model's boundaries.

### 8. Discernment and Failure Modes

A theory of disclosure requires discernment. Prayer does not become disclosure merely because it is intense, emotional, consoling, or subjectively certain. Disclosure occurs when prayer clarifies reality-experience: when it increases intelligibility, reduces fragmentation, clarifies responsibility, and converts insight into coherent agency.

The Invocational Disclosure Model is not a linear proof of successful prayer, but a feedback model of alignment. Invocation, attention, articulation, self-decentering, reference alignment, disclosure, and agency conversion form a regulatory sequence. When self-decentering fails, prayer collapses into projection. When reference alignment fails, desire replaces order. When stabilizing closure fails, trust becomes avoidance rather than integration.

Distortion remains possible. Projection occurs when private desire is misread as divine response. Symbolic inflation occurs when a feeling, sign, dream, image, or phrase receives more authority than it can justify. False closure occurs when gratitude, humility, self-decentering, or trust is used to avoid responsibility. Manipulative certainty occurs when prayer is used to end inquiry rather than deepen alignment. Fragmented revelation occurs when emotional agitation is mistaken for disclosed truth.

These failure modes do not weaken the model; they make it testable. A prayer may be disclosive, non-disclosive, or distorted. The analysis therefore does not ask whether prayer felt powerful. It asks whether prayer disclosed a more coherent relation between attention, reference order, causality, responsibility, and action.

## 9. Prayer as Causal Readability

The Invocational Disclosure Model shifts the analysis of prayer from outcome-production to access-formation. Prayer is analyzed as a disciplined symbolic-informational process that alters the condition under which reality becomes intelligible.

This model does not reduce prayer to cognition, affect regulation, or coping. A cognitive account may describe prayer in terms of attention, memory, salience, appraisal, social learning, or ritualized transmission. A psychological account may describe it in terms of coping, emotion regulation, or meaning-making. The present model describes the same domain at the level of symbolic form, reference order, disclosure, causal readability, and agency.

The model contributes to comparative religion, ritual-language theory, cognitive approaches to religion, and philosophy of information. For comparative religion, it offers a method for comparing prayer without flattening doctrinal differences. For ritual-language theory, it extends the movement from information to situation by identifying the intermediate role of latent intelligibility, alignment, disclosure, and agency. For cognitive and psychological approaches, it provides a symbolic-level vocabulary that can be tested against attention, memory, affect, and agency measures. For philosophy of information, it shows how symbolic structures can transform access to reality-experience without claiming to manufacture reality itself.

The central implication is that prayer is not a primitive substitute for causal understanding. It is a symbolic discipline through which causal understanding may become accessible. Prayer does not cancel causality; it opens reality to causal, moral, and practical readability.

## 10. Limitations and Future Research

The model operates at the level of reality-experience: the condition under which reality becomes intelligible, meaningful, causally readable, and actionable to consciousness. It does not claim that prayer

manufactures external events. It claims that prayer can disclose latent structure within reality-experience by reorganizing attention, self-reference, desire, meaning, and agency under a reference order.

The model does not require every prayer to contain all eight operations with equal clarity or in a fixed sequence. Particular prayers may be disclosive, non-disclosive, distorted, incomplete, or mixed. This is essential to the model: failure, projection, magical control, and egoic closure are not excluded but treated as boundary cases.

Future research should test the model through larger and more varied corpora, including canonical prayers, ordinary devotional prayers, petitions for material outcomes, curse prayers, healing prayers, folk prayers, magical-religious border cases, and non-prayer comparison texts. A strong test would compare prayer texts with doctrinal statements, ordinary wishes, legal formulas, narrative episodes, affirmations, magical commands, and meditative instructions.

If the proposed operations appear more consistently in prayer than in comparison categories, and if disclosive prayer events can be distinguished from distorted or non-disclosive events without circular classification, the model gains analytical strength.

## 11. Conclusion

Prayer is a formalized practice of informational disclosure. It gathers consciousness, articulates need or praise, places desire under a reference order, reduces experiential fragmentation, discloses latent intelligibility, and converts meaning into agency.

Its power lies not in manufacturing events, but in transforming the causal readability of reality-experience. Prayer makes aspects of reality present not by inventing them, but by aligning consciousness with an order through which what was latent becomes intelligible, meaningful, morally charged, causally clear, and actionable.

The central contribution of this article is the Invocational Disclosure Model. It provides a symbolic-informational framework for studying prayer across sacred and liturgical traditions. It distinguishes prayer from petition, manifestation, coping, spell, affirmation, meditation, and doctrinal speech by identifying prayer as an act of alignment that discloses reality rather than commands it.

Prayer is therefore not a primitive substitute for knowledge. It is a disciplined symbolic practice through which consciousness becomes capable of reading reality.

## 12. Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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