

## THE LORD'S PRAYER Matthew 6.9-13 : Luke 11.2-4

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1 SING by "lining out" (the leader reading a line, then all singing--to Beatitudo, the usual tune to "O for a closer walk with God") "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, / Uttered or unexpressed; / The motion of a hidden fire / That trembles in the breast....O thou by whom we come to God-- / The Life, the Truth, the Way-- / The path of prayer thyself hast trod; / **Lord! teach us how to pray.**"---- Jas. Montgomery's 1818 poem became famous, & he added this final stanza to make it a "hymn" (lit., a song addressed to a deity) so he could put it in the hymnal he published many years later.

I have boldfaced the words with which Luke (11.1) introduces his version of the Lord's Prayer--almost certainly the original form, as (1) simpler, Matthew's form being a liturgical expansion, & (2) probably earlier (granted Robt. Lindsay's priority of L. over Mt.).

2 Let's PRAY the Prayer together, using "sins...sin" (on which see #2438, "How to render L.11.4..."). ("Trespases" is a territorial metaphor RSV/52 [below] does not use; "debts" is a financial metaphor used in RSV/52 in both Mt. & L., in L. along with "sins.")

3 Now let's view the versions in parallel (p.25, Huck-Lietzmann-Throckmorton, GOSPEL PARALLELS [Nelson/67]):

## Matt. 6:9-15

9 "Pray then like this:

Our Father who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name.  
10 Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
11 Give us this day our daily  
bread; \*  
12 And forgive us our debts,  
As we also have forgiven our  
debtors;  
13 And lead us not into temp-  
tation,  
But deliver us from evil †. ‡  
14 For if you forgive men  
their trespasses, your heavenly  
Father also will forgive you; \*  
15 but if you do not forgive  
men their trespasses, † neither  
will your Father forgive your  
trespasses."

## Mark

11:25-26

25 "And whenever you stand  
praying, forgive, if you have  
anything against any one; so  
that your Father also who is  
in heaven may forgive you your  
trespasses." †

## Luke 11:2-4

2 And he said to them, "When  
you pray, say:  
"Father,"  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
3 Give us each day our daily  
bread; \*  
4 and forgive us our sins,  
for we ourselves forgive every-  
one who is indebted to us;  
and lead us not into temp-  
tation."

\* Cf. Matt. 18:35 (§ 136, p.100).

Matt. 6:6—Isaiah 26:20 (Septuagint). 6:8—cf. 6:32.

† text: S B D λ it (some MSS.) vg sy<sup>c</sup> sy<sup>a</sup> sa bo; add, *openly*: W Θ ϕ ϩ it (some MSS.) sy<sup>p</sup>. †† text: P<sup>75</sup> S B λ vg sy<sup>a</sup> Marcion, Origen; *Our Father who art in heaven*: A C D W Θ ϕ ϩ it sy<sup>c</sup> sy<sup>p</sup> sa bo. Cf. Matt. 6:9.  
\* Or, *our bread for the morrow*. † Or, *the evil one*. ‡ text: S B D λ it vg bo; add, *for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen*: W Θ ϕ ϩ sy<sup>p</sup>; add, *for thine is the power and the glory for ever. Amen*: sa (Didache omit *Amen*); add, *for thine is the kingdom and the glory for ever. Amen*: sy<sup>c</sup>. †† text: B W Θ ϕ ϩ sy<sup>c</sup> sa bo (some MSS.); omit: *their trespasses*: S D λ it vg sy<sup>p</sup> bo (some MSS.) Augustine. †† text: S B W sy<sup>a</sup> sa bo; add verse 26: "But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses": A C D Θ λ ϕ ϩ it vg sy<sup>p</sup> Cyprian.

4 "PRAYER merging into MEDITATION: 'The Lord's Prayer'" is p.4. WRITE a prayer-extension or meditation after each section....Voluntary oral sharing of

what's been written.

5 What's the prayer's MOOD? Can you manage to capture in one word what you think it is? Is it trust in God? Is it love for God? (So often the ending of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" comes to my mind: "He prayeth best who loveth best / all things both great & small; / For the dear God who loveth us, / he made & loveth all.") Is it God-centering? (A student of mine made a poster with "God" as target-center & my saying as circumference: "What gets your attention gets us, & what holds your attention is your god.")

6 FREQUENCY of praying the L.P. (which Catholics call the O.F., "Our Father")? Certainly daily. The Didache (mid-2nd c.) says thrice; later Christians, five times (thence the Muslim frequency of daily prayer)....In The Apostolic Fathers, read chap.8, which includes the Mt. form of the L.P.

7 In the ancient church, the long (Mt.) form was used in the Eucharist, the short (L.) form everywhere else, including baptism....Discuss the increasingly important Western concern for the SIMPLIFICATION of life, vis-a-vis the L.P., which is the essence of Judaism expressed (in L.) in the fewest possible words.

In Reform Judaism's official prayerbook, GATES OF PRAYER, read a Kaddish (eg, p.114) & note similarities & differences. Too, the L.P. can be seen as a shortening of the synagogue's Eighteen Benedictions....What the priest is in a complex culture, the shaman is in a simple culture. Is Jesus shamanic in moving from complex to simple?

8 Why was prayer **the heart of Jesus' teaching**? Because continuous communion with God was the essence of his piety. The shaman, as intermediary between the natural & the supernatural, seeks to open the sky. For Jesus, the sky that opened at his baptism (Mt.3.16 M.1.10 L.3.21) stayed open even in the final confusion through which he committed himself to his Father.

In JESUS, A NEW VISION, Marcus J. Borg (H&R/87) well lays out this perspective on our Lord's life & ministry. Jesus was a **charismatic**, to whom the world of Spirit was open (p.200): "The vision of Jesus as a prince of Spirit, deeply involved in the historical crisis of his own time, can shape the church's discipleship today. For us, as for the world in which he lived, he can be the light in our darkness," for we're living "in a culture whose values are largely alien to the Christian message," so we must be "once again the church of the catacombs," for whom all the NT's titles for Jesus may come alive again.

(He was, said another scholar recently, not a hopeless romantic but a hopeful fanatic. Does this make sense to you?)

9 The Lord's Prayer is to be read in the context of Jesus' whole life & ministry, which were characterized by **intimate communion with God** (thus the warm address, "Abba-Father") & **radical love** of humanity (thus "Love your enemies...." [Mt.5.44] --Jesus' two most important distinctive emphases, paralleling his summation of Torah in the double-love commandment (Mt.22.37-40, M.12;28-34, L.10.25-28). What private & public issues emerge for you as you hold Father/enemies & God/neighbor on the bridge of love?

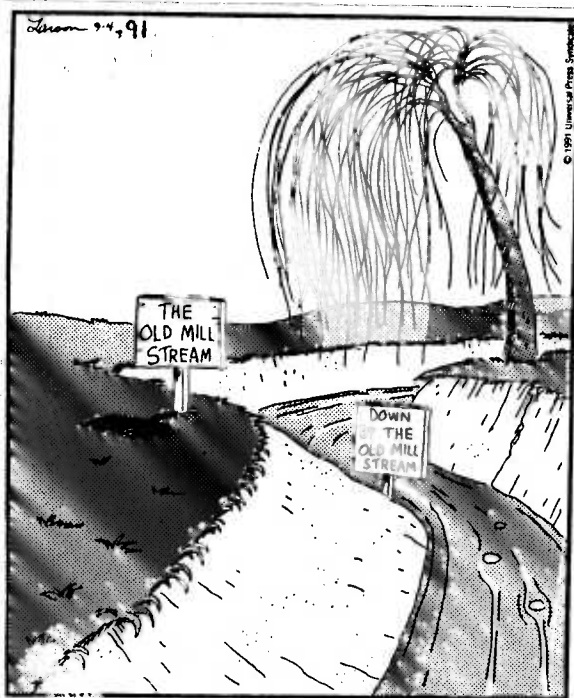
10 Jesus' intimate communion with God, which in the Lord's Prayer he enjoins on all of us his followers, is termed "the Abba experience" by Bernard J. Cooke in his forthcoming (Trinity Press International/92) GOD'S BELOVED: JESUS' EXPERIENCE OF THE TRANSCENDENT. The author contends that this experience is central for Jesus & so should be central to attempts to understand both his inner life & his ministry. Have you personally ever tried praying to "Abba," or has it been always in the English translation of the Aramaic, viz "Father"? Do you experience any discomfort in addressing God in prayer as "Father"? What is the source, or are the sources, of your discomfort? If you have tried to give up "Father," what alternative(s) have you tried--& with what result(s)?

11 Creeds, Confessions & Statements of Faith, are minimalist, stating only the basic basics, what we as Christians generation after generation **can't do without**. Is "Father" a basic, or might the church find a better word?

12 In the Lord's Prayer, what does "**bread**" mean? Yes, it's a synecdoche, signaling more than it says--but how much more? what does "bread" cover?

13 Jesus used figurative language. His speech was colorful, metaphoric, poetic, often narrative (parables)--in the mode of other rabbis of his time but with his distinctive style & stresses. Because our speech is more prosaic, we're in constant danger of mishearing him. Here's the paradox: In his day, even the unsophisticated understood his style (though often misunderstood his content): today, everybody needs some sophisticating to "catch on" to him. Our culture is so different, & our memory-store does not include some of the riches that reverberated in the minds & hearts of his first hearers.

Gary Larson did a "Far Side" that visualizes the problem:



The sign on the left has no meaning other than **literal**. It's nothing more than a place sign. Anybody not knowing that "Down by the Old Mill Stream" is a song will read the sign on the right **literally**, wrongly. (I tried it on someone I had reason to believe did not know the song, & the sign seemed an unnecessary & queer repetition of the sign on the left.)

But when I saw the second sign, I laughed at the **reification of the metaphor**, the song turned into a mere place sign (the sign of course being literally where its words say it is).

Why didn't I misunderstand? Memory, that's why. I can hear my father singing "Dbtoms, where I first met you, with your eyes so blue, dressed in gingham, too. It was there I knew, that I loved you true. You were sixteen, my village queen, dbtoms."

14 When our Lord taught us to say "**Father**" when we pray, was he using figurative language? Of course he was. Did his hearing

disciples know he was? Of course they did. Though they were more used to hearing God addressed as "King," they were not unfamiliar with the "Father" address: they could hear it in their audio-memory as well as at home & in synagogue.

Is "Father" in your audio-memory, your home, your church, your heart? Should the church today (a) be content with "Father," as coming directly from our Lord's instruction, or (b) continue "Father" only till an offenseless substitute (a word offending nobody) can be found, or (c) immediately discontinue "Father" while trying replacements? How does this current controversy bear on the church's need to improve biblical literacy?

Note the bread/Father connection: "bread" means more than bread, & "Father" means more than father. THE CHOICE: We can sophisticate folk to the biblical language, or bowdlerize the Bible (ie, remove from it any words that offend anybody). My choice is showing!

15 The 5th centennial of Columbus is upon us. At the 4th, the World's Parliament of Religions (in Chicago) opened every day with the Lord's Prayer (report 1.149), "the Universal Prayer" (one day by an ancestor of the UCC, Philip Schaff [1.138]). It's "universal" in the sense that it's dominical (meaning "of Jesus") only in its origin: as directly from Jesus, it's not, as all other Christian prayer should be, "in Jesus' name." Another sense of universal: PS was a father of the modern ecumenical movement, preaching as he did "evangelical catholicism," (p.7 of REFORMED AND CATHOLIC) "God...at work in the total history of the church and world."

16 Note in the Lord's Prayer that "'king'dom' is under control of "Father," whose daughters & sons we are as princes & princesses.

From Jesus we have no "sure words" model of prayer, but rather a "sure voice" model of praying. We call it "The Lord's Prayer" (Mt.6.9-13 & L.11.2-4--Luke's being the simpler and probably closer version, since without explanatory glosses). Implicit in it is our Biblical world-story, which it locates us and commissions us in. Here's one effort (1) to conflate the two versions (2) in a meditation write-in format. (CAPITALS are Luke, mainly TEV.)

**FATHER (Our Father in heaven),**

**Help us live worthily of you, honoring-HALLOWING YOUR NAME,**

**anticipating YOUR KINGDOM as in you we seek to do your will  
as it is done in heaven.**

**For this, we need food, restoration, and protection; so  
GIVE US DAY BY DAY--this day--THE FOOD WE NEED, and**

**FORGIVE US OUR SINS, the wrongs we have done,**

**as WE FORGIVE EVERYONE WHO HAS  
DONE US WRONG.**

**And don't make our TESTING too HARD for us,**

**but keep us safe from the Evil One.**