

"UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST STATEMENT OF FAITH  
IN THE FORM OF A DOXOLOGY"

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BETTER:

A DOXOLOGY BASED ON THE UCC STATEMENT OF FAITH

A twinge of conscience struck me after writing #2575, "Doxological Living." Not about \$1-\$6, which lays out (1) its subject & (2) our Christian doxological **lexicon**, the biblical expressions we use in praising God. Rather, the twinge was from stomping on the ignorantly-named, reductionist-heretical thing now current under the title appearing in quotes atop this Thinksheet. An inner voice said, "Willis, don't stop with saying somebody did it wrong; you try to do it *right*!" Here goes, after a few introductory comments:

1 The first title (above) is logically false: if a statement of faith is cast into the form of a doxology, it's a doxology (& no longer a statement of faith). The garbled title has only the virtue that it reflects the garbled contents, viz that the product is a statment of faith parading itself as a doxology. Thus my "better": A DOXOLOGY BASED ON THE UCC STATEMENT OF FAITH.

The distinction is elemental:

A **statement of faith** is a personal ("I believe...") or corporate ("We believe...") public affirmation (to persons or groups in church or world). The address is horizontal. As we are to "pray without ceasing," it's natural for the soul to offer the affirmation also to God (as I often do in my daily recitation of the S. of F.). This vertical motion transforms from statement to prayer, a prayer based on the S. of F. (not, please, the "S. of F. in the form of a prayer"), eg the falsely-so-called "doxology," which begins "We believe in you, O God,...."....Something else about the so-called doxology is false, viz its primary motivation, which was not (positively) to praise God but (negatively) to avoid the gendered 3rd person ("he-she-it") by switching to the generic 2nd person ("you"), thus neatly evading masculine references to God. The motive sticks out in the evasion also of the Bible's primary masculine references to God, viz "Father," "Lord," & "King" (in "kingdom," which becomes "realm").

On the other hand, a **doxology** is no statement of faith & need not be a prayer. It may be a (2nd-person) prayer of praise (as the Te Deum Laudamus, "We praise you, O God,...."), or it may be an invitation to praise (as the utterance called "The Doxology" in Protestant churches, viz "Praise God from whom all blessings flow,...."--now damped down in many of our churches because of the babble of differences when the congregation gets to "Praise *him...him...Father, Son*"—a tragic intrusion of gender into worship. Even if a particular congregation has settled on some (literally) emasculated version, the people are praising some heretical trinity, destroying the intricately developed & wisely balanced classic trinitarian doctrine....NOTE: The implied "you" of invitational doxologies is horizontal 2nd-person; God as object is 3rd-person, with all the dreadful (?) generic ("him-his") consequences....A doxology may use both 2nd & 3rd person, as mine (below) does.

2 Whether prayer or invitation, **praise** is the essence of doxology. The Psalter is full of prayers & invitations to "set the Lord ever before" you, but its Hebrew title is TEHILLIM ("Praises," or "Hymns of Praise"), not TEPHILLIM ("Prayers"). Each of its five sections (on the pattern of Torah proper, ie "Moses") ends with a doxology, & the last psalm is pure doxology, signally what the whole collection is all about (in its 6vv., the "praise" root *hll* 13 times!). The Psalms will remain the supreme hymnody of synagogue & church, its songs Midas-touching all life's sorrowful & joyful experiences into the gold of praise. Even death: Mother Teresa is a walking Psalter, hers a profoundly doxological life: "Even death shall praise You." For praise is the soul's death-transcending energy. And Gehenna, the Qur'an says scores of times, is for ingrates who fail to praise (for, as the Qur'an first clause has it, "Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all Being").....The 3 Ts: Out of experience, the cry (Tephillah, the praying that infuses all to come); out of the cry, Todah (thanksgiving); out of thanksgiving, joy (the feeling); out of joy, praise (Tehillah, life's central action).

3 We need add only one word to our praise lexicon, viz the first word in the Semitic dyad "bless/curse." We bless our food, but "saying grace" is at heart our blessing-thanking-praising God for & through our food. The synagogue's "18 Benedictions" are *beruch<sup>hot</sup>*, "blessings." Jesus' "Hallowed be Your Name" is a *baruch<sup>h</sup>* of the holy Name, ie of God. And Jesus knew the table grace I translate as "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of time & space, for causing the food to spring forth from the ground, & our hearts to abound with joy in your Presence [& in the presence of each other].". . . . Often "bless" & "glory" occur together, as GP368: "Blessed is His glorious kingdom [lit., "Blessed Name glory kingdom-His"]!" School spirit is aroused by cheering, synagogue-church spirit by blessing-praising, honoring, venerating, lauding (classical *δοξολογία doxologia*) God.

#### A DOXOLOGY based on the UCC Statement of Faith

BLESSED are you, O God, Eternal Spirit, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father!

We PRAISE you for your mighty deeds, and rejoice in witnessing to them:

You call the worlds into being. Creating humanity in your own image, you set before us the ways of life and death.

GLORY be to the One who seeks in holy love to save us all from sin and death!

HONOR be to the Judge who through prophets and apostles declares his righteous will!

We HALLOW your Name that in Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, you have come to us, sharing our common lot, conquering sin and death, reconciling the world to yourself.

We THANK you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

MAGNIFY the Name of the Lord, who calls us into the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be his servants in caring for humanity and the good earth, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory!

We REJOICE in your promises to all who trust you:

forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your Presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your kingdom which has no end.

BLESSING and HONOR, GLORY and POWER be unto you! Amen.