

# The Lord's Prayer: 3

On a walk 69 years ago I came upon a tabernacle much like this, only falling down. Its foundation was 20 sq.-cut stones, each with "GLORY!" painted on all four sides. And I thought "This is how Jesus saw the temple--founded on the glory of God but falling down. The foundation was as sound as the day it was set, there was nothing wrong with it, & a sound building could again be built upon it. Sisters & brothers, be of good cheer, never lose heart: there is nothing wrong with the foundation, the glory of God, the joyful witness & celebration that the Glory has come upon us as the incarnate Son of the heaven Father, & "no other foundation can be laid" (1Cor.3.11). It should then not surprise us that the Lord's Prayer begins, "Heaven Father, glory be to you!" (In Aramaic & Hebrew, the root of kavod-glory means "heavy," & so "weighty, important"; & the Greek doxa-glory has as its basic meaning "opinion" & so "reputation" [in her 1st column this mo., Molly Ivans said "Don't drag God into partisan politics, you'll ruin His reputation in no time"].)

In biblical religion, the root sin (visible from the snake story [Gn.3] on throughout) is amnesia, whether lazy "wanderings of mind" or intentional (e.g., the present secularist efforts to drive from the public square, & civil life, including public education, all religious words & symbols); & the root righteousness is to "remember the Lord your God." To fight off spiritual amnesia & glorify-magnify the divine Name, we Christians pray the LP "semper ubique ab omnibus" (all of us daily everywhere). It alone has that attentional eminence. In it, we come closest to hearing the living voice ("ipssima verba") of the Lord Jesus. The whole NT may be said to be a commentary upon it. In euchological (prayer) form, it contains, in old words, Jesus' manifesto of his new message. As a summary of prayer, it parallels the Bible's summaries of law (the Decalog: Ex.20; Deut.5) & of love (Mt.22.37-40 & parallels). It's the key to Jesus' teaching, our best guide into his mind & thus as diagnostic tool to discern WWJT (what would Jesus think) about us & about issues of the common life & of church & state. And because of the LP's addressee remembered in Aramaic (says Paul twice; Ro.8.15; Gal.4.6), the Spirit cries out in us "Abba"--Father (by being its first word, signaling [as in Jewish & Roman documents] the LP).

Now, are you worried that we're not going to get through the LP, seeing that more than an hour of our hour & a half is gone & we're still hung up on the first petition? Be not anxious! Our Lord said the Ten Commandments hang on two pegs, viz. love God & love your neighbor; & he said, in the LP, that tephillah-prayer hangs on one peg, viz. tehillah-praise (loving-adoring God, hallowing-honoring-magnifying-glorifying his Name-Shekina-Presence in thought-word-deed). Sisters & brothers, does not all else follow? Will not our very living be todah-thanksgiving? Will not "the child look through her birthday gift / at her dear father's smile" (will not everything contingent on our life, everything tangible & intangible, become transparent of "the Love that moves the spheres" (Dante)? Will we not know the joy of kingdom come in whatever-size deeds of love & mercy, & the peace that descends upon us when, resisting the temptation to do our will or the will of any other, we accept the gift of the courage to do God's will & pay "the cost of discipleship"? And will we not say grace, give thanks, that the gift of daily food enables our basar-body to be an earth-gift to Heaven, our physical means to the glory of God in tephillah-tehillah-todah concern for others in their physical needs--an assignment implicit in our prayer-gratitude for daily bread? And, knowing how humanity's inner-invisible lev-heart suffers from estrangement & hungers for community, will we not be partisans of reconciliation, God-forgiven as we forgive? And, aware of our own vulnerability, will we not set our ourselves, in all that we are & have, to "resist the powers of evil ...in the struggle for justice and peace"? If thus we live the LP, it will be for us "he euche he canonic" (the prayer by which all things we think/so/do are measured); God will be glorified as we "complete the sufferings of Christ" & sing his glory (as in Mt.'s doxological addition to the LP ["kingdom...power...GLORY"]); &, no matter how often or how deeply life's untowardnesses to us & others may flood our hearts with doubts, we shall have the faith & courage & power to swim through them toward shalom, knowing that with our Lord Jesus Christ we are "making all things new" (Rev.

21.5; in Mel Gibson's "Passion" film, Jesus--with dust in his face after the cross he was carrying fell on him--said to Mother Mary, who was down in the dust with him, "Mother, I am making all things new": the utterly powerless spoke with the confidence of ultimate power; Karl Barth's dying words were "Es wirt: regiert" ["It will be: (He) rules."]). (This confidence appears, in our UCC icon, as the Christ the King crown atop the cross, which is atop & within the world.)

We have now arrived at the last word of the LP's 1st petition: "Hallowed by your name-tag (onoma)." What's on God's "onoma" tag? We're told at the end of the NT's 1st book (28.19): "onoma...Pater...Huios...Hagios Pneuma" (Fathersonholyspirit), the name invisibly put on our invisible baptismal nametags after the invisible words "Belonging to." When I said the word "God" at a medical-ethics meeting, an ethicist challenged me with "Which God do you mean?" & I said "The 1st item under 'God' in English dictionaries." Home, I thought "Better check that." In my big old Webster it's the Father/Son/HolySpirit "Trinity"; but in my big new Random House, the first example given is "the God of Islam"! And now, in everybody's ears five times a day, in a Michigan town, the name of a false god is sounded. Orson Welles' "War of the Worlds" hasn't happened, but the war of the gods is on the rise, & it's a poor time to be dropping "Onward, Christian soldiers" out of our hearts & hymnals. "Sound Teaching" includes getting the deity's name right, & one essential way to "Respond to God's Mighty Claim on our Whole Life" is to sound out God's name loud & clear (in the witness of our lips & lives, walking the talk & talking the walk, giving glory to the only true God). If ever one could, one cannot now--facing the mounting aggressiveness of our secularist & religious competitors--indulge the bonhomie of the live-&-let-live "inclusive" "pluralistic" spirit. The paradox & open mystery is that the "Maker of heaven and earth," to deliver us from the evils of idolatrous worship, demands exclusive devotion, &--taking our flesh upon him & dying for us--opens to us sinners the gates of new life. This is the Great Story, in comparison with which all competitors are empty fairy-tales; &, for the salvation of the world in the coming of the kingdom, let us, brothers & sisters, be narrow enough to preach it & live it.

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As we approach the end of these 3 one-half-hour Bible meditations, you may wonder why I've not gotten to the three petitions on which the 1st hangs. Because I consider UNSound any teaching about those three which does not hang on the 1st. The LP's diagnostic question to us as we pray for the 2nd wisdom (to know our part in what "should be changed") after the 1st (not to waste ourselves attacking what "cannot be changed") is this: *Here & now, what thought/word/deed can best give "glory"-kavod (i.e., call attention to the universal Shekinah-Presence) to God, the Holy Trinity?* "Purity of heart is to will one thing," & the one thing Jesus willed was qadosh/kavod (holy/glory), the 1st & last words of the control doxology (6.3) in his favorite book (Is.). (Think of "holy" as God's being & "kavod" as his body--as the Box [ark of the covenant, including tabernacle/temple/city/land], then the Book, then the Boy [the Holy incarnate], then the Body [of Christ--the Church].) Truly to sing glory is to commit ourselves to be kavod-glory, a daily reminder that God is & that God is holy. Three events 70 years ago: The Barmen Declaration reminded the world of where the true glory is; John Dewey's book A COMMON FAITH denied glory to God; & a Brooklyn rebbe daily so reminded his community of the Presence of God that children crossed the street lest his holiness strike them dead & adults nicknamed him "Sha'areb"-Gates because wherever he was, the gates of heaven were open. Chaim Stern (my best Jewish friend ever) grew up to put the rebbe's nickname on the cover of Reform Judaism's official prayerbook, "Sha'areb Tephillah," GATES OF PRAYER (which he edited; p662: "You dwell wherever we sing your glory"). How shall we so live that, as they did at Jesus' baptism, the gates of heaven fly open & God says "I am pleased" & Ezekiel's vision (36: "I will use you to show that I am holy") is fulfilled?... Darwin (1859, ORIGIN OF SPECIES) intended this glory. Eric Evans put the 1st printing in my hands & asked me to read the last ¶: "There is a grandeur in this view of life...originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms...." But the 2nd printing (now called the 1st edition!) dropped God. In the UCC Statement of Faith, all following hangs on "he calls the worlds into being, creates man in his own image" (the versions eliminating the pronouns). I'm for sticking with the 1st printing of Darwin & every printing of the Holybook & every praying of the LP.