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## The Lord's Prayer, the Pastor's Prayer

### Opening Words

Since the address *Father* is found in both Gospel records (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2), we begin our meditation at the word *Father*.

On that exceeding high mountain, Jesus repulsed Satan by means of the weapon: "Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." When He teaches His disciples to worship and to pray, He consistently leads them to the one true God. Therefore we are sure that the one true God is He whom Jesus wants us to address. We are to call Him our Father. Therefore we are further assured that the one true God is our Father and that our Father is the one true God.

God and the Father are the identical Person. In the Epistles the two terms are joined frequently with reference to the First Person of the Trinity, except in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the combination does not seem to appear at all. Note the forms of the combination when it pertains to the relation between God and His children: God, the Father (Phil. 2:11; 1 Pet. 1:2; etc.); God, our Father (2 Thess. 1:1, 2; Phil. 1:2; etc.); God and the Father (Col. 3:17; Eph. 5:20); our God and Father (Eph. 4:6); God and our Father (Gal. 1:4; etc.). My readers will graciously permit an interruption to add also the combinations of the terms *God and Father* when they pertain to the relation between the Father and the Son: God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 11:31); the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3); God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 1:3); God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3). But the relation of the Father and the Son and the trinitarian relation, while it certainly stands as the basis of the Lord's Prayer and is essential to all our prayers, does not enter at this moment of our study. The issue at hand is that "to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him" (1 Cor. 8:6), and that we address in the Lord's Prayer the one true God, "who to us in love hath the right of children given."

When we truly realize whom Jesus wants us to address as Father, we will appreciate the rich meaning and full significance of the combinations of terms mentioned above, as they recur with or without the article, with or without the pronoun, in idiomatic Greek. In his book *The Minister and His Greek New Testament*, A. T. Robertson cites on page 62 the "sound and scientific principle laid down by Granville Sharp": "When the copulative *καί* connects two nouns of the same case, if the article *ὁ*, or any of its

cases, precedes the first of the said nouns or participles and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle: i. e., it denotes a farther description of the first named person." On page 63 Robertson mentions as a common idiom *the God and Father* and adds a number of references. The application of Sharp's rule to the word *Father* joined to God fills our hearts with joy, for there is nothing else to do than to apply the ascription *Father* to the one and only true and eternal God.

"No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Through Jesus the Father reveals Himself to babes (Matt. 11:25-27). God grant that all of us may ever long to be as wise and prudent in secular and spiritual knowledge as Paul and Luther and as strong and courageous as Abraham and Gideon, and yet remain pious babes to whom the Son reveals the Father.

No one of us wants to continue in the sacred office, no, not for one hour, unless he can tell his congregation: God is your Father. Our ministry is cruelty to body and soul if we cannot truthfully proclaim to our flock: God is your Father. We pastors are found false witnesses of God, and our preaching is hypocrisy and vain except for the message of Christ: God is your Father. Christ wants us to address God as our Father.

This name of God leads us into the heart of God. A better understanding of its significance means a greater knowledge of God and a wider comprehension of our prayer; it means increased joy and affectionate devotion. There is no other ascription so endearing, delightful, and powerful. Even the term God can attract us only when associated with the name Father. For what else is God to us than the unapproachable Being unless the fact of His fatherhood is joined to Him? The fatherhood of God does not signify His lofty majesty and exalted sovereignty over the created universe. It signifies the intimate relation and fond fellowship which God in His divine love bestows upon and grants to His own. With this name is associated fatherly love, solicitous care, ample provision, reliable protection, compassionate patience, nurture and admonition, wise counsel and correction, friendship, guidance. Our Father is glorious. He is perfect in all His attributes. His works are marvelous. His name is holy; His kingdom has no end; His will is supreme in righteousness and grace. He is the Ruler of the universe, of all nations. His arms enfold the orphans; His eye protects the sparrow. His thoughts toward us are thoughts of peace and forgiveness. Of His fullness have we received His Son, life, righteousness. He is our unfailing Friend and wise Counselor. His Word is the truth, His Gospel the

power of salvation and true comfort. He is the almighty Deliverer. His testament bequeaths to us eternal glory in heaven. His house and home is filled with light, joy, music, song, riches, beauty. According to the Petitions He is the holy, royal, benevolent, giving, forgiving, protecting, saving Father.

God's fatherhood is not self-evident. Many think that it is, and they brazenly address God as Father in the words of the Lord's Prayer. How do they "get that way?" They are "that way" by nature. Satan has deceived some to despair when the thought of God strikes them. These do not dare to approach God as Father, nor can they until we have brought to them the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Or the sinner uses the concept of fatherhood as applied to God for a hope of escape from God's wrath and for a balm to his biting conscience. Fear, not love; despair, not devotion; terror, not trust, drive him to blaspheme the Most High by calling Him Father. Satan has deceived others to the arrogance and boldness to present themselves to the Father in their own righteousness. Their prayer is vain repetition, and it must offend God. It infuriates us, His children, when we hear the cursed (Matt. 25:41) belch forth in foul unbelief the dear Name to which we have exclusive right and when they invite God's children to pray "Our Father" with them, the cursed.

It is to be regretted that some theologians without proper explanation make the statement that God is the Father of all mankind and then allow the inevitable conclusion of a universal brotherhood of man. This concession mars the glory of the Father by dragging down His Fatherhood to embrace the children of the devil before their conversion, and it dims the bright luster of God's family and house by admitting Satan's brood. It yields a point which "the brethren according to the flesh" exploit until the day of doom. Often the injury done is not intentional; yet it requires the Father's forgiveness. The concession is unscriptural.

In pastoral and polemical situations it is easier to explain the truth that God is the Father only of the believers, and that therefore only the true believers have the privilege of the Lord's Prayer, than to uphold the assumption of the universal fatherhood of God; for it is always easier to remain within the Scriptures than to venture beside or beyond them. However, this is no argument unless we prove that according to the Scriptures the fatherhood of God extends only to the true Christians.

We reject, first of all, every attempt to build a doctrine on uncertain inferences. From His having created all men, people infer that God is the Father of all men. Is that tenable? Nowhere in the Bible is the supposed relation of this purported universal fatherhood of God resting in the relation between Creator and

creature advanced as a basis for the real and actual fatherhood of God, nor is it ever adduced as a cause of, or as being of consequence to, our salvation. Nor can it be held that the terms *Creator* and *Father* are absolutely identical in meaning. If what I have said is true, as I believe it is, great care must be employed by us in speaking of the fatherhood of God. This is especially true in these days of Modernism with its slogan of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

There is a text, I admit, which some expositors have cited to prove that there is Scripture warrant for the view that God's having created all men means that He is the Father of all men. This passage is Acts 17:26-29.

Let me introduce here Dr. Tseter (cf. ζῆτέω) and Dr. Nomitzer (cf. νομίζω). The former is an honest seeker, the latter a profound thinker. My readers have heard of them before. Although neither is a child of God by faith in Jesus, both yield to the compelling evidences observed by the natural knowledge of God. They admit that in God they live and move and are. They express their dependence on Him by attacking their day's work with sincere devotional prayer: with the convenient "Our Father who art in heaven." Just the other day they heard a Lutheran minister say in a funeral address to a mixed audience, in effect, that the devil is the father of most men, that God is the Father of the few, and that only those few have a right to God's throne and to the Lord's Prayer. This is nonsense, of course. So they thought. And they went home with the intention of peppering that parson with points of Scripture against him. For does not the Bible say somewhere that God is the Father of all because He created all? Therefore the Lord's Prayer must be the common property and privilege of all men!

Diligent search leads them to Mal. 2:10. There the scholars find mention made of a fatherhood of God and also a brotherhood. However, as scholars they note that verse 9 refers to the prodigal Jews, who are distinguished from all the people, and this distinction occurs again in the last words of verse 10. They see that the brotherhood is limited to the Jews, and they are faced by the inevitable conclusion that therefore the fatherhood naturally must be limited to the Jews. Nevertheless, is not this one specific fatherhood founded on the creatorship of God? First the learned doctors observed the progression of thought in Hebrew poetry; but then they recognized in verse 10 two unrelated arguments, actually three arguments, for the return of prodigal Judah: *a maxima ad minima*, namely, first, the revealed knowledge of God, then, the natural knowledge of God, and lastly, the exclusive brotherhood of the Jews as the people of God. They agreed that

the passage does not teach a universal fatherhood of God based on, and in the sense of, His universal creatorship. For a moment silence marked their disappointment. Then Dr. Tseter found a reference to Job 31:15; but he noticed immediately that neither text nor context indicates a universal fatherhood.

Again Dr. Tseter turned the sacred pages, now to Is. 64:8, 9; but Dr. Nomitzer argued that the entire chapter refers only to the believers in the Messiah and that the same considerations apply here as with the Malachi passage. Their eyes happened to fall on Is. 63:16 of the preceding page, and they agreed that here, too, not a trace of a universal fatherhood, or a fatherhood by reason of God's creatorship, can be found. Dr. Tseter did more searching. His running to and fro led him to Ps. 100:3. His opinion was that its first part evidently taught a creation and its second part an ingathering of the Lord's sheep. Dr. Nomitzer suggested that the translation may be faulty and lacking in force and correctness. Their zeal provoked them to call by telephone Rabbi Goldgreifer. He accommodated them and translated: Know ye that Jehovah, He is God; He made us, and unto Him are we His people and the sheep of His pasture. The rabbi, otherwise most liberal, denied that any inference is logical and strong enough to deduce from the text a universal fatherhood. Their thoughts turned to the pastor's funeral address.

The next morning Dr. Tseter visited the university library. He knew that the Lutherans had placed a section there. He found the book called the *Concordia Triglotta*. Perhaps this would help him solve the problem one way or the other. It did, the one way. To his amazement he found no reference there to Mal. 2:10 nor to a universal fatherhood of God. As he closed the book, he saw Dr. Nomitzer, deeply engrossed in a volume. His first remark to him was the question: Did you pray "Our Father" this morning? Nomitzer had not prayed it. He was studying Eph. 3:15, and he admitted to his friend that the fatherhood taught here by inference can relate only to the believers in Christ. But he smiled triumphantly when he placed his finger on Acts 17:24-29. Both studied this passage avidly, also with a smacking of Greek, and having stressed γένος, that evening they prayed "Our Father."

But the learned doctors were not satisfied. They were uneasy and troubled in their mind. Especially Nomitzer, the thinker, was haunted by the word *offspring*. Anyway, the diminutive parson had done damage by wounding feelings and debasing the offspring by his musty oration. Gravely they went to reprimand him.

They said: We are not Christians, but we are the offspring of God. We are His stock and race. We belong to His family and nation. The poet Aratus says that; and the Apostle Paul admits

it and uses it as a basis and premise of his argumentation. Therefore we are God's children. Therefore He is our Father. Therefore we pray "Our Father." He performs upon us the functions of a father: He gives to us life, breath, and all things, and in Him we live, and move, and exist. But you say that the devil is our father, and you deny our right to pray "Our Father." We resent that. We represent, by self-appointment, all religions, sects, cults, lodges. For we all believe in one God, the Father of all, and we all pray "Our Father."

The polished pastor expressed his pleasure at their coming, and he said: Well, gentlemen, you refer to two Bible passages, to Acts 17 and John 8:44. Now do you wish to abide by these two only, or are you inclined to look at other passages also, such as: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"; or: "As many as received Jesus, to them gave He power to become the sons of God"?

They said: Paul's statement is enough. From it we have established that God is our Father by reason of the fact that He is our Creator. We are His offspring. He is our Preserver, who performs the functions of a father upon us. This one passage is satisfactory.

The pastor said: Is it? To reason from act to relation seems to me unscholarly as well as humiliating to us, the offspring. The fact that God numbers the very hairs of your head does not yet establish kinship. Are you willing to drop the proposition that God is our Father by reason of His creatorship and preservation? For He has created also the sparrow; and He performs the functions of a father also upon the flitting butterfly and on the agile squirrels and the *koulans*, the wild asses of Asia. You would not care to call us their brothers!

Dr. Nomitzer, the thinker, said: Since they are of a different blood, we are not their brothers. The one blood makes all men brothers.

The pastor said: the one blood does not bring them into a relation to God. Man is not of God's blood or nature to claim His Fatherhood. But if you base that claim on the creation, you will have to admit that God is the Father of the dumb creature as well as He is the Father of *Homo sapiens*. Do you not see that you are actually inserting the concept of the fatherhood? Paul does not refer to it. He speaks of God as God, as the Creator, the Lord, the Preserver, the Governor; and he speaks of us as *homines ignorantes*, as subjects and dependents.

Dr. Nomitzer was quick to reply: As offspring.

But the pastor said: Yes, as offspring, and nothing more. The term offspring would be an argument in your favor except for

the fact that the entire context compels you to understand the term as designating merely the relation of the creature to the Creator, not paternal and filial kinship. That the term offspring indicates merely a relation which excludes kinship is clear from Paul's utterances regarding the worship of God, the ignorance of God's offspring, the divine concern in the spiritual condition of the offspring, and his introduction of the Creator and Preserver, mind you, as the righteous Judge. The thought of kinship did not enter the mind of Paul. By his reference to man's ignorance he proves the insufficiency of the natural knowledge of God. Where this ends, Paul begins to proclaim the revealed knowledge of God: the reason for, and the manner of, worshiping Him, the need of seeking Him, of feeling after Him, of finding Him, so that the ignorant offspring which as yet sustains only the relation of creature to the Creator may enter into the kinship of children to the Father. Dear friends, I beseech you to do what Paul preaches, that is, to believe in Jesus. Only then can you pray "Our Father."

Dr. Nomitzer objected: Paul does not say that he uses the word *offspring* in a different sense from that of the poets and the Greeks.

The pastor replied: Neither did the poets and the Greeks designate filial kinship to God by that word.

Dr. Tseter, the searcher, said: We admit that the word *offspring* is our only strength and argument. So we searched for its meaning, and we found that it is used to denote family relations, kinship, for instance, at . . .

With a smile the pastor interrupted: Doctor, you said before that this one passage is sufficient for you. I respected your wish. The word *offspring* is used only twice in the New Testament to denote a person's relation to God. The Greeks applied it to any species or class of things—goods, produce, materials, crops, heredity, parentage.

Dr. Nomitzer suggested: Parenthood! And I still say "Our Father."

The pastor said: The expositor must observe the general usage of a word until he is compelled to adopt a special usage. Paul determines the use of the word at this place. He had the true knowledge of God. The analogy of faith which Paul knew would not permit the use of the word offspring in the sense of, or as a synonym for, children. Note that he, as they, avoids the specific and endearing terms *Father* and *children*. In your entire passage neither term appears. Granted, however, that you trace the origin of the word *offspring*, as implying kinship, to mythological anthropomorphism, you will have found another reason why Paul could not stoop to kinship in a certain sense. Since he yields



to the use of the word *offspring* without further definition and explanation, it is clear that the Greeks did not connect with it the concept of kinship. He admits his blood relation, not kinship, to the ignorant and unbelieving Greeks, which is the universal brotherhood according to the blood, but not kinship with God nor a universal fatherhood of God. The fatherhood of God is revealed only in the inspired Word, and in one sense only, and the adoption of sons in one sense only, and this one and only sense extends the fatherhood of God to those only who believe in the God-Man Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, not to all whom you have chosen to represent and who claim the right of children on the fact of creation. The fatherhood of God is exclusive; it embraces the believers only.

Dr. Tseter remarked: You have narrowed it down to a very narrow doctrine. Is that what the Lutheran Church teaches?

The pastor answered: Yes. We agreed to refrain from the reference to other passages of Scripture, and therefore I am not introducing their support. But our confessional writings, presented in the *Concordia Triglotta*, are based upon, and drawn from, and state, the Word of God. There the words Almighty and Maker refer to the Creator and His creation, but the word *Father* to God's spiritual kinship to the believers. This distinction is observed also in the exposition of Luther's Small Catechism, used as a handbook in our schools and other classes. We teach all, and you, that God has given Himself to be our Father in Christ Jesus, that He regenerates us to become His children. This doctrine is broad and glorious and true. Do you intelligent men accept the universal doctrine that children of the devil have God as their Father?

Dr. Nomitzer replied: The phrase *children of the devil* is only a figure of speech. It does not apply to us.

The pastor said: Then the phrase *fatherhood of God* is only a figure of speech and does not apply to you. When Jesus speaks of the fatherhood of God and of the fatherhood of the devil, He uses very simple, plain, and direct speech. If you will study with me also John 8, you will yield to the proper understanding of the word *offspring* in Acts 17. Your natural knowledge of God would be enlarged, and you would enter with me upon the sphere of the revealed knowledge which saves the offspring from the judgment of which Paul speaks to the Greeks and Christ to the Jews. You would come to the true faith and receive the bliss and blessing enjoyed by the exclusive family of God. Then you could pray "Our Father."

Dr. Nomitzer yielded: I admit that I condemned your argument as hairsplitting, petty wrangling. But I am impressed. It

splits humanity; it gives everything to the one part and leaves nothing to the other.

The pastor said: It leaves to you the encouragement to seek the Lord, to feel after Him, and to find Him.

And here this interview ended.

Have we lingered too long at the one word *Father*? With reference to the Apostles' Creed Luther says (Trigl., p. 681): "For the learned and those who are somewhat advanced in Scriptural knowledge, these three articles may well be expanded and divided into as many parts as there are words." Since my readers are learned men, they will not object to further expansion on the ascription *Our Father*. For now we observe that, while the term *Father* is applied to God and His relation to us more than 250 times in the New Testament, its infrequency in the Old Testament bewilders us. Was it awe and veneration or timidity and dread or estrangement which sealed the lips of the faithful of old from uttering the word *Our Father*? There is no record to tell us that Adam, Abraham, Job, or others before Moses, addressed God as Father. Once, only once, does Moses mention directly the relation of God as Father to Israel (Deut. 32:6), and before that only by inference (Ex. 4:22; Num. 11:11 f). In Ps. 89:26 the Messiah calls God His Father. In Ps. 103:13 we have only a comparison. In Ps. 68:5 God is called the Father of the fatherless. Isaiah calls the Messiah the everlasting Father (9:6), and when he prays: "Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer," he addresses the Messiah. Also in Is. 64:8 the Prophet sees the Father in the Messiah. We recall the prayer of Philip: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus answered: Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, then, Show us the Father?"

Why all the gloomy dimness over the fatherhood of God until finally Jesus encourages us to say "Our Father"? Do we find here an argument in favor of the assumed progressiveness of the Christian religion? No. The Christian religion is not subject to progressiveness, *Fortbildung*. The fatherhood of God always existed. Where do we find its first revelation? In Paradise (Gen. 3:15). By implication? No, by inclusion; for the Gospel of Jesus Christ envelops the fatherhood of God. It is the means by which the Father reveals Himself as Father, the means by which He begets us as His children, the means by which He keeps His children and heirs. Whenever this Gospel is proclaimed, God begets children and gives Himself to them as their Father in Christ. But whoever is still subject to the Law does not know God as the Father, only as the Creator and Judge, since God is Father only in

the specific sense of the Gospel. The fatherhood of God is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because the believers in the Old Testament had the Gospel of the Messiah, they moved in the light of the fatherhood of God. Neither can we allow a progression in the revelation of God's fatherhood; for the fatherhood of God is absolute. To the seeming problem we read the solution in Gal. 4:1-7. It is beautiful. It teaches us that there is no divine Father unless He is *Abba, Father*, — and in our prayer, "Our Father." It teaches us that as the Law recedes to give place to the Gospel, the fatherhood of God appears in all its overwhelming splendor and comfort. Christ was sent to glorify the Father, to reveal the Father, to lead to the Father, to keep us with the Father. Does He accomplish all this? Yes, by His word and by His work. In John 14 He reveals the trinitarian relation and the relation of God as Father to the believers. Thereafter the Holy Spirit came into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father." We note that the difference between the two covenants of God is not to be denied; but the revelation of the fatherhood of God is as absolute as the Gospel of Christ both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament is absolute. The Gospel promises had to be fulfilled before the fatherhood of God could be fully appreciated by the children.

It requires equal strength of faith to say *our Father* as to say *our Father*. The word *our* emphasizes our relation to God, already expressed by the word *Father*, in that it denotes the personal possession of that relation, the filial application of the fatherhood, the enjoyment of the happy state of sonship. The Father belongs to us because He has given Himself to us. Luther makes the correct conclusion that God invites us to believe that we are His true children. We can always reverse this reasoning from the state of sonship to the fatherhood of God according to the Gospel: God is our Father, therefore we are His children; we are God's children because (not therefore) He is our Father.

By fact of the common human blood the just Lot called the sinners of Sodom brethren. God calls our fellow men our brethren (Gen. 9:5). This is the universal brotherhood of men. But by the bond of faith the true believers form a spiritual and very real brotherhood with Jesus. Jesus acknowledges the believers His brethren (John 20:17). He calls those His brethren who do the will of His Father (Matt. 12:50). This is the exclusive spiritual brotherhood with Christ by His blood. Have you ever noticed the clear distinction which Jesus observes in John 20:17? "I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren, and say unto them: 'I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" When Jesus speaks of the relation between Himself and the Father, He never includes the brethren in that rela-

tion; when He speaks of the relation between the believers and the Father, He never includes Himself, but always all the believers, in the sonship by using the plural pronoun. The trinitarian relation demands the distinction. Jesus does not join with us in the prayer "Our Father." The reasons are obvious.

By using the plural pronoun *our*, Jesus wants us to acknowledge the spiritual brotherhood described in Ephesians 4 and to recognize those as our brethren whom He accepts as His brethren. Each successive pronoun in the Lord's Prayer referring to the petitioners is in the plural number. Those who pray as God's children should pray as brethren. But they must be true brethren. "All ye are brethren." "One is your Father." (Matt. 23:8, 9.)

We Christians did not choose our brethren. The Father made the choice. Is not His choice the best? We are glad. The sinners and publicans with whom Jesus sat at table are our brethren, and with them we pray "Our Father." The choice of God pleases us with reference to our own persons, for by His choice we are privileged to be brethren to the children of God. Until the congregation expels him from the brotherhood according to God's regulations, the offending brother is to be considered a brother still. If we are personally convinced, on account of his impenitence, that we can no longer pray "Our Father" with him, we are to tell the congregation.

The plural pronoun *our* prepares the pastor for the act of intercession for the brethren. The direct intercession begins with the Fourth Petition; in the first three it is rendered by implication. Since the ascription *Father* extends to the pastor the comfort of being the next of kin to God and since the pronoun *our* reminds him of the love and respect due to the brother, these two words qualify him, by framing his mind to the proper attitude, to comfort, exhort, admonish the brethren and sisters under his spiritual care. However, not by his act of praying, but by virtue of the word of God which he is privileged to pray, that state of mind is effected in him. The pastor will also remember that his brethren and sisters, God's children, include their pastor in their intercession when they pray with him "Our Father." Whatever the pastor finds to be their need, usually is his need, too; and none of his charges is less dependent on the Father than he.

Let us define such joint prayer as co-operative prayer prompted by co-operative faith. We have an example recorded in Matt. 9:2-7 and Mark 2:3-12, where we emphasize in the Matthew record verse 2, in the Mark record verse 5. It is clear that the act of carrying the sick man to Christ was the visible action of a joint desire, of a co-operating prayer active in joint effort. Each man had his task at his respective corner of the bed which he had to

hold and control by means of the cord attached. Jesus acknowledged their prayer, because He saw the source of it: their faith. *Faith* is in the singular, for there is only one faith acceptable to God. *Their* is the plural pronoun. The plural modifies the singular. In this instance therefore Jesus saw the personal faith of each co-operating friend, the *fides qua creditur*, the confidence and trust in the heart of each man. Therefore faith remains in the singular. But the same faith was held by the five friends; hence the pronoun is in the plural. Faith, then, is the *fides qua creditur*, while *their* refers to the *fides quae creditur*, that is, they all believed personally, each for himself, but each believed what the others believed. Co-operative faith is the confidence of the individual believer working together with the confidence of the other believers, in common interest, toward the attainment of the Father's blessings, and expressed by the same desire and visible in united effort. It is just this which Jesus proposes with the promise of great blessings, Matt. 18:19, without going to the trouble of analyzing each case.

The amount of energy contributed — whether it be physical, financial, intellectual — need not be in equal portions or measure for co-operation so long as each co-operates according to ability. Thus faith need not be in equal measure to be able to co-operate in prayer. The weak can pray with the strong, the strong should pray with the weak. The diversity of gifts is not a disturbing but promoting factor in co-operative prayer. Disturbing factors proceed out of the sinful heart. Imagine ambitiousness, intolerance, jealousy, unionism, one at each of the four corners of the sick man's bed! Do they not spill the patient before they get to the Physician? We must have dependable, sure-footed, sober, united doctors and interns to bear the patient safely. The precious term *Our Father* demands, and urges toward, the unity of the faith, and so operates toward greater unification, not as a means of grace when it is being prayed, but as a divine doctrine which we believe.

The true children of God regard this term *Our Father* also as a confession. We have the duty to avoid those who do not continue in this word of Christ and who express by use of these sacred words their "magnanimous" unionism with the "Christless father-ites." This they call co-operation. We have not the choice of our brethren, and we should co-operate in prayer without respect of persons, yet always *intuitu fidei*, for we have the duty of testifying and confessing. Therefore we want confessors, not confessionalists.

Our Father is in the heavens. Luke omits the epithet *who is in the heavens* and thus emphasizes the kinship most impressively. In the Matthew record this divine name is most appropriate for promoting confidence and trust; for the agnomen conforms to the

preceding statement of Christ: "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him." Like the phrase itself, so its very frequency throughout Scripture proclaims the glory of God. Sometimes it appears as Law and makes the sinner tremble, as in Psalm 2: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." Sometimes it appears as the Gospel, as in the Lord's Prayer.

The Old Testament speaks of heaven in the plural number. Only twice have we found the singular, which is obsolete, namely in Deut. 10:14 and 1 Kings 8:27: "the heavens and heaven of heavens." In the New Testament the plural is not merely adopted from the Old. As in the Hebrew, so in the Greek, the plurals serve to describe the greatness and majesty of our Father. He is not a territorial god, of limited sovereignty, bound to a specific locality. He fills all things, the cosmos, and is greater than the cosmos; He is infinite. The Father, whom the heavens and heaven of heavens cannot contain, yet maintains a dwelling place (1 Kings 8:49), which is the height of His sanctuary (Ps. 102:19). It is His official seat of government. It is where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. It is the throne of power and the throne of grace. Jesus invites our soul to enter through infinite regions and the vast expanse of the invisible "into the holiest," into heaven itself, εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν.

As we pray to the Father, we are admitted into His place of habitation, into the presence of the Most High, to His very heart of mercy. We cannot behold the majesty of His glory. Nor can we always understand His government or measure His infinite grace in Christ. We pastors often sigh to know the secret of His ways, to understand His guidance and the course which He leads us and our fold. His ways are past finding out. Nor is a full knowledge of His government necessary. For we know that He knows us, sees us, hears us, loves us, for Jesus' sake. Let His grace be sufficient for us. We know that He looks from the heavens and beholds all the sons of men from the first Adam to the last. We know that the refreshing showers of His grace have their source in His heart. And we know that we shall see Him as He is, when we have passed, all-glorious, over the threshold of our home in the heavens. We never have an excuse for gloom, melancholy, dismay, for we remember and believe that our Father is in the heavens.

After consideration and study of each word of this Introduction to the petitions, Luther arrived at this explanation and application, which is still the best: "God would by these words tenderly invite us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that we may with all boldness and confidence ask Him as dear children ask their dear father."

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