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## As in heaven... Reading the Lord's Prayer with a view to constructing a sermon<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The Lord's Prayer is an important ecumenical symbol. It is the main prayer of the Christian Church and is prayed collectively in almost every worship service in churches over the world. In this, the first of three articles, the prayer is discussed with a view to eventually construct a sermon in which poetic material, hymns and songs are incorporated to form not only a part of the liturgy, but an integral part of the sermon itself. In this article the origin and setting, as well as the address and the you-petitions of the prayer are examined. In a second article the we-petitions and the doxology are explored and in a third all these aspects come into play for a concept sermon, incorporating hymnic and poetic material from ecumenical resources.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Lord's Prayer is the main prayer of the Christian Church and is prayed collectively in almost every worship service. In this, the first of three articles, the prayer is discussed with a view to eventually construct a sermon in which poetic material, hymns and songs are incorporated to form not only a part of the liturgy, but an integral part of the sermon itself. In this article the origin and setting, as well as the address and the you-petitions of the prayer are examined. In a second article the we-petitions and the doxology are explored and in a third these aspects come into play for a concept sermon, incorporating hymnic and poetic material from ecumenical resources.

### 2. THE ECUMENICAL MEANING OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer is an important ecumenical symbol. Not only is it prayed collectively in almost every worship service in churches over the world, it also has an important role in catechesis, in personal piety and in forming the spirituality of Christian groups and therefore is a constitutive symbol in the formation of the Christian identity. Over centuries philosophers, writers and theologians, as diverse as Augustine<sup>2</sup> and Dante, Thomas of Aquin (in KKK1993), Luther (2011, 1998), Calvin (see Busch 2005:53-66), Karl Barth (1951), Simone Weil (1951), Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1987), Leonardo Boff (1986) and Joseph Ratzinger/ Benedikt XVI (2007:161-203) have reflected on the Lord's Prayer. New scholarly books appear regularly, such as the more recent studies by Klaus Haacke (2010) and the American scholar, Dominic Crossan (2011). Gerhard Ebeling (1979) began his encompassing work in dogmatics with a exposition on prayer and the Lord's Prayer as the foundation for a systematic description of the Christian

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1. This article is a re-worked version of a paper that was delivered at the Bi-annual Conference of Societas Homiletica in Wittenberg, Germany, in August 2012.

2. See Ayo (1992:253-258) for a bibliography of Patristic Commentary on the Lord's Prayer and books on the Lord's Prayer in English from 1850 -1990.

belief, thereby indicating that the prayer holds the most important collective content of the Christian faith and therefore also could function as the core from which ecumenical consensus could best be reached.

Praying the Lord's Prayer and reflecting on it through sermons, writings, poetry and music could help spanning borders between churches, confessions and even nations. It is meaningful indeed that Muslims and Christians prayed the Lord's Prayer together in a worship service on 17 June 2012 in the *Friedenskirche* of the Evangelisch-Freikirchlichen Gemeinde (Baptists) in Kamp-Lintfort.<sup>3</sup> After being elected on 13 March 2013, Francis, the new Bishop of Rome, asked to pray for Benedikt, the pope emeritus, and started praying the Lord's Prayer. Thousands of people joined in and the prayer sounded over the whole world.

### 3. PREACHING ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

Constructing a sermon requires a comprehensive hermeneutical process in which many aspects come into play – aspects such as the origins of the text, the author(s), the original language, the first readers or hearers, the world of the text, the historical milieu, the underlying social and political problems, world views, ideologies, the setting of the text within a broader text and context, the scope of the text, the communicative strategy of the author(s), the intention of the text, the possible meaning for the original hearers, the tradition of interpretation or *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the text, as well as the possible meaning for contemporary readers of hearers – people living in their histories in a particular place and time in the present, facing the future. Ebeling (1954:8) correctly observed that the spectrum of history nowhere comes more vividly into play than in preaching.

Sermons on the Lord's Prayer are abundant – often also printed in books and on the web. Referring to Fuchs' view (1959:106) that God seeks to speak to us through the spoken word and not in writing, Ebeling (1963, *Vorwort*) acknowledges the problematic character of printed sermons, but nevertheless argues that a printed sermon allows the reader to measure a preacher's theology and that a sermon therefore forms the criterion of a person's theology. A sermon on the Lord's Prayer could be problematic, because the prayer is so well-known – according to Ayo (1992:ix) the average Christian can repeat it on "automatic pilot" (!). For Luther the prayer could be the biggest martyr on earth as it is said too often and is often "blabbered without attention" (in Jung 2011:42). This is, however, exactly where the challenge lies to open it up theologically, meditatively and personally, in order to promote the honest praying and understanding of the prayer so the transformative appeal is also heard.

A sermon could be on the prayer as a whole, or on a group of petitions, or could depart from a single petition at a time. Styles functioning on an argumentative, narrative, poetic and metaphorical level could be used. In this article the origin and setting of the prayer, the address, and the you-petitions are discussed. In another article the we-petitions and the doxology comes under scrutiny, and in a third these insights come into play in constructing a concept sermon and liturgy where hymns, songs, text and poems on the theme of the Lord's Prayer are incorporated to form not only a part of the liturgy, but also an essential part of the sermon itself.

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3. It was accompanied by singing and reading texts from the Bible and the Koran. The service was broadcast on the ZDF-Television Channel. Source: *idea* (18.06.2012)

#### 4. THE ORIGIN AND SETTING OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

An Aramaic *Urform* is accepted (Schwier 2005:893). In an Aramaic version, reconstructed by scholars, the richness in sound can be heard (in Lohse 2010:13-14). The version also contains end rhyme, which would have made it easy to be memorised. Scholars such as Haacker (2010:257-263) accept that the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic stems from Jesus, whereas others such as Dominic Crossan are rather convinced that a rich tradition of prayers and versions of the Lord's Prayer existed in an oral tradition, was handed down and later written down and edited into a more fixed form as the "Lord's Prayer". It would therefore be impossible to determine the exact words of Jesus. Existing Jewish prayers that probably had an influence on the formation of the Lord's Prayer are the petitions from the eighteen benedictions and the Kaddish of the Jewish synagogue liturgy (Lohse 2010:16-27, 103). Schwier (2005:894) also points at the clear presence of Jewish motives, but argues that methodically a direct dependency, or a conscious rectifying of Jewish models by Jesus or the editors, could not be proved.

In the New Testament a version is found in Matthew 6:9-13 and another in Luke 11:2-4. They are preceded by Q, a translation in Greek (Schwier 2005:894). In both Luke and Matthew the prayer is built up by an address and six petitions (three *you*-prayers and three *we*-prayers.) The version in Matthew is longer. It has a doxology added at the end and has expansions in the address, the third *you*-petition (10b) and the 'deliver us'-petition in the third *we*-petition (13b). The shorter text in Luke is regarded as the older of the two. A version which corresponds largely to that of Matthew is found in the *Didache* 8,2, a second century manual of church practice. These versions of the prayer were used for community worship in different Christian localities (Lohse 2010:12, 101). The longer text in the Gospel of Matthew, with the added doxology, has prevailed as the version mostly used in the liturgy of churches.

Luke wrote for a gentile audience within a Greek context. His prayer language therefore is less ornate and his writing style in general less Jewish than that of Matthew, who probably had a Jewish-Christian audience and a Hebrew context (Ayo 1992:10, 22; Lohse 2010:98-101). Luke set the Lord's Prayer within the framework of a separate scene in which one of the disciples makes the request: *Lord, teach us to pray* (Lk 11:2-4). In Matthew the prayer forms the centre of the Sermon on the Mount (Luz 1997:185). Inserted as an example and model of prayer, it comes immediately after two preliminary remarks – one saying that the prayer of the disciples of Jesus should not be a display for the approval of this world, as hypocrites do, and another saying that it should not be a repetition of words as the pagans do. The pagans are pointed to as a warning, not because they don't pray, but because they think they will be heard when they use a lot of words – therefore making God ubiquitous. In parts directly surrounding the prayer and in other parts of the gospel there are themes related to some of the petitions, and others expanding on the petitions.

Crossan (2011) discusses the prayer throughout his book against the backdrop of an agrarian society, the issues of the Sabbath and Jubilee, and the social and political influence the Roman rulers had on this society. He chooses for the concept of *distributive justice*, which should be seen within the vision of a well-run household where God is the *Householder of the world house* and where everything is justly administered and distributed fairly. He argues that the two halves of the Lord's Prayer – as in Matthew 6:9-10, which talks about the Father's name, kingdom and will, and Matthew 6:11-13, which mentions bread, debts and temptation – are in deliberate parallelism with each other: they need to be read as the two sides of a coin. Karl Barth (1951:115) argues in the same vein: "Die drei letzten Bitten des unser Vaters sind die Umkehrung und Konsequenz der drei ersten."

## 5. THE LORD'S PRAYER IN MATTHEW 6:9-10

### 5.1 Address

#### 5.1.1 Address: *Our Father...*

Whereas Luke's version begins simply with *Father*, Matthew has *Our* (father) and *in heaven* or *who art in heaven*. At the root of the address lies the Aramaic *abba*, which was also taken over in Greek-speaking communities, as can be seen from three other texts – Galatians 4:6 and Romans 8:15 (probably written in the mid-50's) and Mark 14:36 (probably written in the early 70's). *Abba*, *father* is meant as an invocation which at the same time means: My Father, our Father (Ebeling 1966:53-56). Ebeling (1966), as well as Jeremias (1966) and Crossan (2011:22) argue that the Aramaic word *abba*, is like a child's word for father, thus nearer to *dad*, denoting nearness, affection, love. Schwier (2005:894) however, speaks against the concept of child language (*Kindersprache*), as well as the possibility of depicting an exclusive understanding of God, but argues that the address should be understood within the frame of Jewish traditions as a prominent but not exceptional address or title for God.

Ebeling (1966:53-54) indicates that Father for God is already found in Judaism and is so widespread in the realm of pagan religions, that it has become a kind of religious root word, but that Jesus uses it to denote the *nearness* of God. Ayo (1992:26) refers to Gregory of Nyssa saying the Fatherhood of God suggests accessibility and intimacy with God. Schwier (2013:239; 2005:894) expands on the concept of God's nearness, indicating that it functions first on an individual level: as God's helpful and healing nearness, his care and compassion, and then on a structural level: his reign and authority, his liberating action. The certainty of being heard is connected with God being father. Schwier (2013:239) further emphasizes that the metaphorical way of speaking to God as father does not legitimize patriarchal or paternalistic concepts. It is not theologically founded in creation (*schöpfungs-theologisch begründet*) but christologically centred that we could speak to God as the father of Jesus Christ – he shows us the Father. Through him an unknown father steps into our lives (Theißen 2012:188) a father whom we know only from the stories of others and who remains the other (*ein Gegenüber*), contrary to a mother of whom we had been a part (Schneider-Harpprecht 2013:175, in a sermon on the *Vaterunser*). In Jesus Christ, however, God turns to us, become our father. Praying, we share in his relationship with the Father. But, as Schneider-Harpprecht also argues, God is and remains the totally other, the hidden God, the God in heaven. The compassionate, loving father is the creator of the universe, nothing less. Referring to these views of God as the totally other God, Schwier (2013:239) accordingly warns against addressing God too hastily as both our Father and our Mother, seeing it a dead-end on an important road to find female images for God.

Ayo (1992:25, with reference to Mangan 1984) also discusses the problems presented from one-sided views of the metaphor of father and the concerns that it may appear to validate a patriarchal God. He argues that Jesus does not *describe* God as Father, but that he *calls* God *Abba*, *Father*. Jesus therefore uses Father as a proper name for the hidden God, thus far "only known with that ineffable name no one could utter" (YHWH). As a text which undercuts patriarchy, Ayo recalls the text in Matthew 23:9: "Call no one on earth your father; you have but one father in heaven." Ayo discusses a few possible alternatives to the metaphor *father*, such as *Our Mother in heaven*, or *Our Creator in heaven*, but argues that even if one were to suggest an acceptable alternative, the problem of *usage* and *acceptable change* is not easily resolved. He questions the reason to undo the word, "which of all the words attributed to Jesus

in the gospels, may be the one authentic word that Jesus himself actually spoke" (Ayo 1992:23) and suggests that we should rather reclaim the meaning of the word for the contemporary Christian. Referring also to the possibility that in prayer one should avoid concrete metaphor as far as possible, Ayo (1992:23) argues that abstract words for God indeed exclude no one, but that abstract words in praying to God (such as *our parent*) seem to distance God.<sup>4</sup>

Crossan (2011:32; 34) questions whether we could dare to replace metaphors without knowing their original meaning and content and warns that we should be "very, very careful about our transcendental metaphors." From various Biblical passages referring to father, Crossan (2011:40) deduces that, despite its male-oriented prejudice, the biblical term father is simply a "shorthand term" for *father and mother*, and that, unless context demand exclusive male emphasis, it is usually wiser to presume an inclusive intention. He does not see *father* as a proper name, but describes it as follows: "The well-run household is a microcosm, a miniature of the macrocosm, a well-run world. To call God *Father in Heaven* is to call God *Householder of Earth*. And that is why Jesus addresses God as *Abba* in the Lord's Prayer" (Crossan 2011:41). He therefore chooses to translate *Abba* as "the Father", rather than "*our Father*" (Crossan 2011:21-22).

For Ayo (1992:21) praying *our* (father) indicates that a vertical relationship between the believer and God is established. As such a horizontal bond is also formed among the members of the praying community: they have in common a father in heaven and therefore are brothers and sisters to each other on earth. "The sisterhood of man is based upon the fatherhood of God. ... The communion of Saints is based on the fatherhood of God in which we all share and the brotherhood with Jesus, which is particularly realized when we are gathered as one to pray the *Our Father*" (Ayo 1992:21,22).

### 5.1.2 Address... in heaven / who art in heaven

In Matthew *Our* (Father), and *in heaven* or *who art in heaven* are later additions. Ebeling (1966:53) argues that it is a matter of indifference whether *in heaven* is an addition, except if it is understood as an expression of the *distance* of God.<sup>5</sup> "For the kingdom of heaven is come near. It is not where heaven is, there is God, but rather where God is, there is heaven. *Our Father which art in heaven* means nothing else than *Our Father who art present here on earth*" (Ebeling 1966:55). The view some people have of a God somewhere in heaven and thus distant from our world, is satirized by Robert Browning in his poem *Pippa Passes*, where a strong twist of irony is embedded in the girl's naïve view of the beauty of the day and God in (his!) heaven:

The year's at the spring,

And day's at the morn;

Morning's at seven;

The hill-side's dew-pearled;

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4. An inclusive example (for variation, not as replacement) could be deducted from Springhart (2012:166) describing the direction, the addressee of our prayers: "Das Gebet geht nicht ins Leere, es steigt nicht in die vagen Wolken, sondern es ist an Gott gerichtet. An den, *der unser Vater ist und uns tröstet wie eine Mutter.*" Therefore a possibility: *Our Father in heaven*, who comforts us like a mother.

5. The popular song "God is watching us from a distance" (sung by Bette Middler and others) may sound quite pious, but it presents the view of God keeping at a distance, just observing us...

The lark's on the wing;

The snail's on the thorn;

God's in His heaven –

All's right with the world!

Schneider-Harpprecht (2013:175) argues that God is and remains the totally other, the God in heaven, and that heaven is an image for what can not be fathomed: the full greatness of God, his power and his encompassing presence. For Ayo (1992:31) "Our Father who art in heaven" is a reminder that "our God is both near and far, both Many and One, both immanent and intimate as a *Father*, and transcendent and utterly other *in heaven*."

## 5.2 The three you-petitions

In the history of exegesis the understanding of the petitions sways between emphasizing the ethical dimension on the one hand, and the eschatological dimension, on the other. Over time the petitions were seen as prayers for God's will to be fulfilled *through the people*, therefore praying as response to God's word and God's work, and *participating* in the work of God for the redemption of the world. Referring to Lohmeyer (1962), Jeremias (1966), Philonenko (2002) and Wilckens (2002), Schwier (2005:894) indicates, however, that in the exegesis of the twentieth century there came a turn to an eschatological understanding, according to which it was about praying constantly for God's action, which should bring about the turn of the end of time. In the older Q-version the you-petitions were probably understood as eschatological and the we-petitions as paranetic (also Theißen and Merz 1997:239-241), but Matthew strengthens both moments through their reciprocal limitations: the limitation of the ethical character in the you-petitions through the third petition and the eschatological accent in the we-petitions through the prayer for triumph over evil at the end of times.

### 5.2.1 The first You-Petition: *Hallowed be your Name*

"Knowing the name of someone creates privileges and obligations. Only those who are intimate with us know our name in a way that exceeds its usefulness as a label to distinguish us from someone else. Only friends are given access to the inner thoughts of another that allow them to say the name with a profound communion behind it" (Ayo 1992:34).

The you-petitions strengthens the theocentric focus of the prayer: "Es geht hier allein um die Durchsetzung Gottes in der Welt und zwar des Gottes, dessen Name auch ohne das Gebet schon heilig und dessen Herrschaft in Jesus bereits Gegenwart ist" (Schlink 1983:452). Schwier (2013) argues that God's name is God himself. The hallowing of God's Name, the coming of his Kingdom and that his will happens is God's deed. The hallowing of the name, however, is also done by the angels, and we participate with them in prayer and praise – as in the Sanctus<sup>6</sup> (Schwier 2013:239). God's name is hallowed by the whole of creation, where all that is created comes "*zum Einklang*" in the loving work and loving answer of all that was created (Schlink 1983:452). To hallow God's name is to recognise and praise the great deeds of God in the creation of the world and its ongoing providence. The name of the Father is hallowed "not

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6. An important indicator for incorporating the *Sanctus* into the liturgy to be constructed on the Lord's Prayer.

because we wish for God that he be hallowed by our prayers, but because we seek from the Lord that his name be hallowed in us" (Cyprian, in Ayo 1992:35). The hallowing of the name therefore means that God *happens*. God steps out of his anonymity and we too, are brought out of our anonymity. God happens in us. We receive the *freedom* to respond. To call upon the name of God is to enter into the mystery of God (Ebeling 1966:61; 62). To dare to address God is a privilege.

Crossan (2011:53-71) argues that the infinite God is beyond the limitation of any verbal name and that when God tells Moses at the burning bush: "*I am who I am*" send you (Ex 3:13-14) that God makes it clear that his being is unbounded and his name ineffable. He was to be known however, as the Deliverer of the oppressed: *I have observed the misery of my people ... I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them... This is my name forever, and this is my title for all generations* (Exodus 3:7-8; 15). From these passages in Exodus 3 and from Leviticus 19, Crossan deduces that the holiness of God was mirrored in the holiness of God's people – and that both types of holiness meant deliverance of the oppressed and the impoverished. Crossan also deduces from Genesis 1 that the holiness of the Sabbath day – the justice of an equal rest for all – came from creation itself: a challenge of distributive justice for the whole world. "Hallowed be Thy Name" is as much to say: Holy One, become holy; God, become God – in time, *in the reality of this world, in history*" (Crossan 2011:71). We glorify God in the praise embodied in *works of justice and love*. In waiting on God and praying to God we therefore also *participate in God*. Human freedom is enlisted in the unfolding of God's sovereign providence. We become *part of him* and his work. Doxology and moral demand, sovereign providence and human freedom are reconciled. "*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name* invites our Father to finish what the Father has already begun. ... Be our Father, hallowed in name" (Ayo 1992:37, 38).

According to Ebeling (1966) Jesus presented God to humankind and humankind to God in becoming human, and in dying. Jesus therefore *lived this petition*. In waiting on God, Jesus gave himself to humankind, and this giving meant the coming of God – thus the hallowing of God's name already fulfilled: "That is how God really became God in time, in history, in the reality of this world. This petition is the first and greatest petition – it can be prayed even when in doubt whether our prayers are heard, it can be prayed in the knowledge that it has been fulfilled already" (Ebeling 1966:63).

### 5.2.2 The second You-Petition: Your kingdom come

At the most literal level the request for God's kingdom to come is interpreted as a reference to the belief that a Messiah figure would bring about a kingdom of God – not a human achievement but a divine gift to be prayed for. Scholars such as Ebeling and Crossan speak against a one-sided view of God acting on his own and argue that God incorporates human action. Crossan (2011:77) refers to the term "kingdom" as "rather outmoded" and asks whether it would not be better to use another concept and to speak of the "community of God", "the kingship of God", or "household of God" – the latter a description he uses throughout to describe what Jesus' teaching was about. He argues for retaining "kingdom" but in qualifying it as divine, as a way of showing that it clearly, directly, and explicitly opposes all earthly imperial kingdoms. "Our English word 'kingdom' translates the Hebrew *malkuth* and the Aramaic *malkutha*. Both those words emphasize *process* over person and *style of rule* over area of control." He suggest that when one reads kingdom of God, that one should think *reigning of God* or *ruling style of God* (Crossan 2011:78). Schwier argues in the same vein that the political use of metaphor is

not about God as King, but about God's reign, God's *Königsherrschaft*. In this way the kingship of God is connected to God being the father as in Matthew 6:32, 7:21 and other passages (Schwier 2013:240; Crossan 2011:78).

Crossan also emphasizes that *eschaton* is not about the end of the world, but that it refers to the end of this age, period, or time of evil, war, violence, injustice and oppression (as Matthew uses the term): "The eschaton is not about the destruction of the world, but about its transformation into a place of justice and nonviolence. It is not about the annihilation of the earth, but about its *transformation* into a location of freedom and peace" (Crossan 2011:79). Ebeling declares that we should "forbid ourselves all dreams about the future and instead make our *thankful affirmation* of the kingdom of God which *has come*" (Ebeling 1966:68-69). He argues that God and time has been separated in that God has been put beyond time as the Eternal to keep time well clear of God as being something "limited, earthly, human. But with this kind of piety we make God unreal and reality godless. And thus we lose both reality and God" (Ebeling 1966:72). He argues that we should rather refer to the "time of God" rather than the "kingdom of God", in order to avoid the concept of a state or condition which is static and which "corrupts the present kingdom of God into the absent kingdom of God" (Ebeling 1966:70).

Fulfilled time is the time God bestows on us "by having time for us, making time for us, drawing us out of our own time and into his time, ... so that we too, have time for God and allow our time to be determined by him. ... That is God's kingdom: the sovereignty of God not beyond time, but *in the time* which God by his coming has made his time" (Ebeling 1966:72). Ebeling argues that this concept of time makes our concept of time controversial. For him the question is rather whether it is time that is empty, hopeless, void of future, or whether it is time that is fulfilled, hopeful, loaded with future. He therefore beautifully argues that the true measure of time is not the clock, but that the true measure of time is hope (Ebeling 1966:72, 73). "We have understood that correctly when we can also say: the true measure of time is love. For love has time, and love makes time, and love bestows time. Love is the essence of the time of God. Love is the fullness of the sovereignty of God" (Ebeling 1966:74). People with faith look to a future "which fulfils the present and lets man live wholly in the present as one who, like God, has time" (Ebeling 1966:73).

It is this way of announcing the time that encourages us to pray for the coming of the kingdom of God. Praying for the kingdom of God is not contradicting the fact that it is here, in our midst. "It is here only in that it *comes*. It is here only in that it is announced, published and proclaimed by our thus announcing the time of God" (Ebeling 1966:74). For Ebeling the proclamation of Jesus Christ (also through our actions) is the kingdom of God in action. "Participation in the kingdom of God takes place only through faith that effects love; but because it is through faith, it is also by constant asking and constant receiving and so also in constant thanksgiving (Ebeling 1966:74). To have faith in what Jesus has given is to have part in the kingdom of God. "Each petition has to be prayed as one that is already fulfilled, as a prayer that is grounded in gratitude and asks for the abiding continuance of what has already begun" (Ebeling 1966:69). "For to pray in the name of Jesus for the coming of God's kingdom is to pray not for the absent but for the present kingdom of God, not for a kingdom whose time is not yet come, but for the kingdom whose time has long ago been proclaimed and, if we would only listen, is proclaimed in every sermon and every testimony to Jesus Christ" (Ebeling 1966:70).

God's time has come. The reign of God is already eternal presence in heaven, praised as present

in worship and proclamation, while at the same time being prayed for on earth (Schwier 2005:894). The reign of God already limits and ends human reign, also that of the tyrants. It limits the power that people could exercise over others. When we pray this prayer, we are also compelled to work for a just society (Schneider-Harpprecht 2013:176).

### 5.2.3 *The third You-Petition: Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*

“The risen Jesus is the kingdom come now, the very beginning of a new heaven and earth. Therefore we pray ‘that the Father’s name be hallowed *in us*, that the kingdom come *in us*, and God’s will be done *in us*.”

(Cyril of Jerusalem, in Ayo 1992:42)

We pray that God’s will happens here and in us, as it is the reality already in heaven, but the kingdom come on earth depends upon the will of God being done on earth. Matthew therefore balances the eschatological character of the first two you-petitions with the ethical character of the third you-petition (Schwier 2013:238).

Saying that the challenge about God’s kingdom coming is not about the imminence of divine intervention, but about the empowerment of human collaboration, Crossan refers to the two African bishops who lived at either end of the continent: “Augustine of Hippo in 416 who said ‘God made you without you, but he doesn’t justify you without you’, and Desmond Tutu in 1999, who beautifully misquoted Augustine as saying, ‘God, without us, will not; as we, without God, cannot’” (Crossan 2010:93-94). To do the will of God is to *collaborate with the creator* in the cosmic work of love (in *Einklang*, see Schlinck above.) By doing the will of God, people give flesh and blood to the coming life of the kingdom. Who longs for the coming of the reign of God, works towards the realising of God’s will on earth. Doing the will of God therefore also has a political meaning (Haacker 2010:117). Crossan (2010:111) is convinced that Jesus had consummated God’s will through the political deed of resisting violence nonviolently as a revelation of God’s own character, and that he had gone as far as dying for it, making a “sacrifice”, and therefore making sacred both death and life – as God’s will.

From the parallelisms in the prayer, Crossan describes the petition *as in heaven so on earth* as the hinge of the prayer. It is the key phrase that insists on mutuality and reciprocity, on an interaction between the heavenly “Your” of God’s name, kingdom and will, and the earthly “our” of bread, debt and temptation. The you-prayer thus begins with calling on our Father in heaven, and finishes with the prayer that the Father’s will be done on earth as in heaven. The meaning in sum: That earth and heaven may be as one under God. Where God’s will is done it is as in *heaven*. Where God is, there is heaven (Ebeling 1966 above). God can be seen in our actions. We re-present God. Where we show care and love, God can be seen in us, and heaven and earth become one under God.

*Ubi caritas et amor deus ibi est* – where there is love and care, God is present.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In this reading of the Lord’s Prayer the eschatological and ethical dimension are both

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7. In this regard Crossan (2010:102-111) argues for *sacrifice* against the concept of *vicarious satisfaction* or *substitutionary atonement*.

emphasized. The focus should be on what God does with a view to the future, as well as what people should do to bring about the future of God. “The two parallel halves of the Lord’s Prayer – the divine triplet of name, kingdom and will, and the human triplet of bread, debts and temptation – are correlatives that must be seen as the two sides of the same eschatological coin: they come together or never come at all” (Crossan 2011:92-94). It is about God’s work in Jesus Christ, as well the co-operation of people into the work of God, bringing about the eschaton. These two aspects cannot be separated – they go together and are intrinsically connected and interdependent. This tension should be held together in a sermon and a liturgy on the Lord’s Prayer.

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#### KEY WORDS

Our Father  
The Lord's Prayer  
Hallowed be your name  
Kingdom come  
Will be done  
Ecumenical symbol

#### TREFWOORDE

Ons Vader  
Gebed van die Here  
Naam geheilig word  
Koninkryk kom  
Wil geskied  
Ekumeniese simbool

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