

## *The “Cosmic Our Father” and the Lord’s Prayer*

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On September 20, 1913, on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone for the first Goetheanum, Rudolf Steiner spoke of a fifth gospel, and gave “as a first revelation of the fifth gospel . . . the primeval macrocosmic world-prayer which is connected with the Moon and Jupiter, even as the four gospels are connected with the Earth.” The prayer sounds thus:

AUM, amen!  
The evils prevail,  
Witness of unleashing of ego-hood,  
Incurred through others, self-hood-guilt,  
Experience it in daily bread  
In which heaven’s will does not prevail  
Since man departed from your kingdom  
And forgot your names,  
You fathers in the heavens.

In lectures later that year Rudolf Steiner spoke further about this prayer. On October 5 and 6 in Oslo he told how these words were experienced by Jesus of Nazareth in an event some years before the baptism, spoken by a voice out of the spiritual world. Steiner told further how then later the Christ Jesus transformed these words into what we know as the Lord’s Prayer.

In what way can we imagine the words of this “macrocosmic Our Father” as a prayer? By far the greatest number of prayers to be found in the Bible are in the psalms of David. There are prayers of supplication, prayers of thanks, and also prayers of praise. Something of each of these is contained in the Cosmic Our Father, but in mirror form. The words do imply a supplication that is not fully expressed. Rather than thanks, we can hear the statement of a condition where all hope is lost. And praise is replaced by a sense of loss.

Whose voice can we imagine speaking the words? The situation that called them forth was described by Rudolf Steiner as arising from Jesus’s experience of compassion for the God-forsaken people in the neighborhood of Judea. He characterized the voice as “the transformed voice of the Bath-Kol”, that voice which was the last remnant of what had been the spiritual inspiration of the Hebrew prophets. But what we can understand further of the nature of the voice derives from the words themselves.

One of the most immediate experiences rising from the words of the Cosmic Our Father is the experience of extreme anguish. It was not only the people in the world but the whole earth that was God-forsaken, and that through the completion of a process that had begun with the Fall of Man. The prayer falls into two disconnected parts, in both of which cause and effect follow their course of necessity. In the first part, the situation on earth is set forth: how under the leadership of the prevailing evil human egotism has been set loose in the world, leading to the universal phenomena of the competitive struggle for existence and its manifestation right down to the approach to our daily bread. The second part, separated from the first through the word “not”, summarizes how humanity has lost connection with the spiritual world. Through loss of consciousness, through sundering from the kingdom of the spirit, humanity no longer brings about the will of the gods.

So we can imagine the voice crying out these words as a truly inclusive cosmic voice. It speaks the anguish of the gods who experience humanity and the earth fallen beyond their reach. It speaks the anguish of humanity, fallen into a world in which they can only experience the inevitability of an unredeeming death. But it also expresses the anguish of all other creatures of the earth and the spirits of the elements, who have fallen with humanity and who out of themselves cannot experience the possibility of redemption.

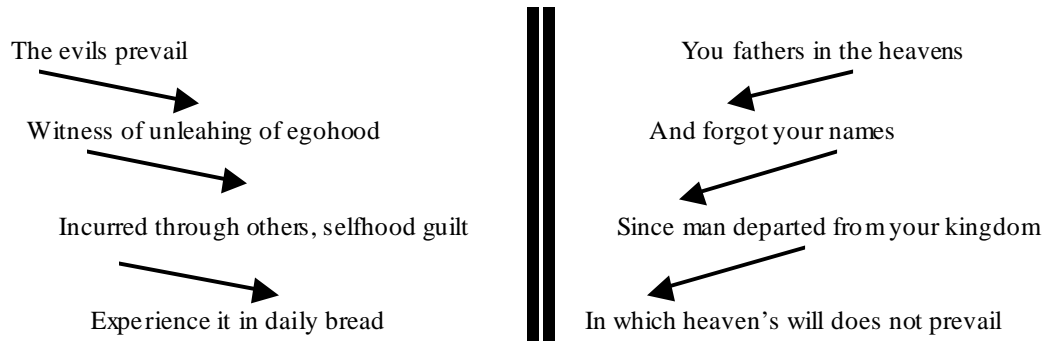
From the Cosmic Our Father to the Lord’s Prayer there is a reversal of order, and there is a correspondence sentence by sentence, with one exception which we shall take up later. In the lecture of October 6, 1913, Rudolf Steiner described the transformation which the Christ made. I shall do the equivalent, with a couple of small variants.

- From “you fathers in the heavens” Christ formed the new line: “Our Father, who art in the heavens.” We look to a single spiritual being, with whom we feel a direct personal connection. Also, we establish with the words “our Father” that this is a prayer to be prayed by human beings, on behalf of all humanity and the earth as a whole.
- From “and forgot your names”, the new line is “hallowed be thy name.” Perhaps the beginning of this hallowing is a recognition of the true significance of the words “I AM.”
- From “since man departed from your kingdom” the new line is “Thy kingdom come.” We do not strive to leave the place to which we have come, but to make possible that also this place can become part of our Father’s kingdom.
- From “in which heaven’s will does not prevail” the new line is “thy will be done”. All three of these sentences are not simply supplications but also resolutions — if they are to be fulfilled, it must be with the active participation of those who are praying.
- The line “as above in the heavens, so also on the earth” is actually something completely new. It is the focal point of the whole newly formed Lord’s Prayer, and we shall have to consider it more fully.
- From the line “experience it in daily bread” comes the new petition “give us this day our daily bread.” This is also a resolution as well as a petition: that we should receive our daily bread in such a way that it is the gift of God, and is not wrested from our fellow human beings.
- From the line “Incurring through others, selfhood guilt” comes the new petition “and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Here the active resolution is not merely implied; it is emphasized.
- From the line “witness of unleashing of egohood” comes the new petition “lead us not into temptation.” This is perhaps the hardest line to comprehend, as it creates the picture of the kind of protection we imagine ourselves to have outgrown. In forming such a picture we make the mistake of putting too much emphasis on the word “temptation” at the expense of the words “lead us”. When we accept the leadership of our Father in the heavens, we can know with confidence that we will not come to anything we cannot handle. If we think we cannot handle a situation under those circumstances, it is actually because we have accepted for the moment the leadership of a being other than our Father in the heavens.
- Finally, from the line “The evils prevail” comes the new petition “but deliver us from the evil.” This is the one true petition, which we offer in recognition of our powerlessness.

A significant contrast between the two prayers is that in the Lord’s Prayer the chain of cause and effect is broken. Each of the sentences can stand side by side with the others. There is a linkage, but it comes about in a totally different way. Here is where the words “as above in the heavens, so also on the earth” become crucial. Through these words the first, heavenly part of the prayer is linked to second, earthly part.

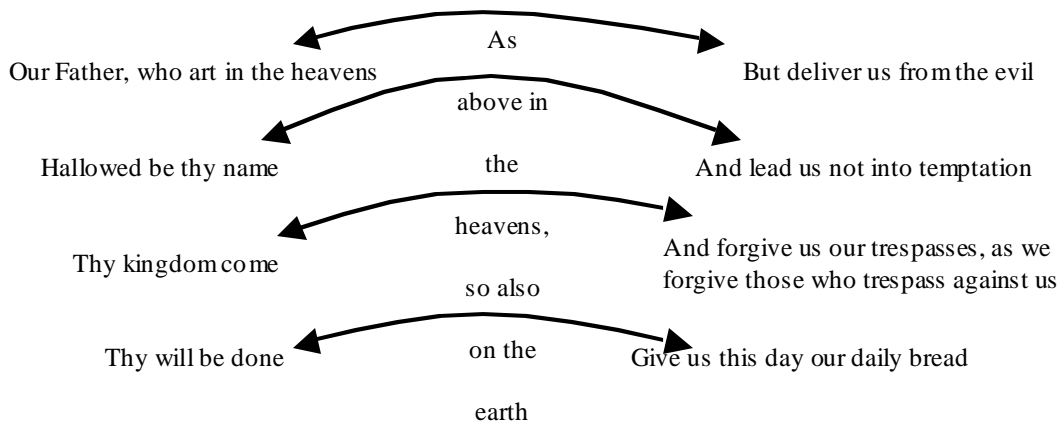
Thus, we can ask the question: what is the source of our daily bread? In all likelihood we will have to accept the fact that the source is at least partly still in the debts we have incurred towards others, but we can work with the goal that we may experience the will of God more and more in our daily bread. As for the trespasses that we commit against one another and against the earth, we go on to a large extent with our unleashed egohood, but we can strive to bring the kingdom of God more and more into this realm. The fundamental law of the kingdom of God is forgiveness. This one is so important that Jesus added an explanation after he gave the Lord’s Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. The next question is the question of temptation: if we allow ourselves to be led by the prevailing evil, we shall certainly be led into temptation; can we instead take the leadership from the realm of our Father’s hallowed name? And finally there is the issue of the evil itself: that we can address our Father in the heavens can form the beginning of our deliverance from the evil.

Thus there is a fundamental difference in structure between the two prayers. The Macrocosmic prayer may be represented as follows:



The arrows indicate the direction of cause to effect, and the two sides are cut off from each other.

The Lord's Prayer may be represented in this way:



The heavenly and the earthly parts of the prayer are joined together, and the arrows indicate paths of freedom rather than cause and effect.

Often, we repeat the Lord's Prayer with little consciousness of what we are saying. Each time the meaning is inscribed into our unconscious. This is needed by the earth, and helps in world evolution, but it does not bring us to full freedom. When we notice the significance of what we are saying, then we can make the free decision to participate in the progress of the world, and our thoughts can also reach out and help redeem the suffering that remains part of earth existence as long as the evils prevail in any part of the world.