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GOD, THE FATHER, DOES FOR US THE GOOD***

Until Advent 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, there was a discussion in the Roman-Catholic Church about the understanding of the sixth supplication of the Lord's Prayer: What God is doing with us? In the French and in the Italian language they have changed the formulation away from God as tempting us to God as testing, as proving us. Also, the French speaking Lutheran congregation in Moscow did follow this decision. Therefore this paper goes the following way: we have to understand the difficult dimensions seeing God as Father and Mother (Pope John Paul I). This was done for a long time, what the personal names in the Bible show. One important story of the New Testament is that one of the «lost son» and his relation to his father (Luke 15). Against this background we have to question the formulation that God does not lead us into temptation. First we have to understand that God does not tempt us — see: James 1. And important is here the statement of the Apostle Paul in 1. Corinthians 10: «God is faithful». We as Lutherans have a very clear insight by Martin Luther in his Small Catechism: «God does not tempt anyone — but we're asking in that prayer that God may save us from all bad powers <...> that we may win and get the victory». Therefore, despite using the traditional formulation, the Lord's prayer can be understood in the reflected way: within our lifetime God does not tempt but does prove us.

*Key words:* Lord's Prayer, God as Father and Mother, sixth supplication, temptation, testing, proving, Pope Francis, Martin Luther, Small Catechism

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***ШЕСТОЕ ПРОШЕНИЕ МОЛИТВЫ «ОТЧЕ НАШ»:  
 БОГ-ОТЕЦ ДАЕТ НАМ БЛАГО***

До первого Адвента 2018 г. в римско-католической церкви шла дискуссия о понимании шестого прошения молитвы Господней: что Бог делает с нами? В молитве на французском и итальянском языках формулировка с Бога, искушающего нас, была заменена на Бога, испытывающего нас. Этому решению последовала и франкоязычная лютеранская община в Москве. Таким образом, в статье рассматривается этот вопрос, автор призывает понять Бога как Отца и Мать (по словам папы Иоанна Павла I). О таком видении свидетельствуют личные имена в Библии. Одна из важных притч Нового Завета — это история о блудном сыне и его отношениях с отцом (Лук. 15). Учитывая ее, мы должны уточнить формулировку о том, что Бог не вводит нас в искушение. Во-первых, мы должны принять, что Бог не искушает нас (Ин 1). И здесь важно утверждение апостола Павла в 1-м послании к коринфянам, 10-м стихе: «Бог верен». Мы, лютеране, можем следовать очень точному определению Мартина Лютера из Малого катехизиса: «Бог никого не искушает — но мы просим в этой молитве, чтобы Бог спас нас от всех злых сил <...> чтобы мы могли победить и одержать победу». Следовательно, несмотря на традиционную формулировку, молитву Господню можно понять и в том смысле, что в течение нашей жизни Бог не искушает, но испытывает нас.

*Ключевые слова:* Отче наш, Бог как Отец и Мать, шестое прошение, искушение, испытание, Папа Франциск, Мартин Лютер, Малый катехизис

## 1. A LANGUAGE PICTURE FOR GOD: «FATHER»

1.1. I think we may suppose that most Christians are praying the Lord's Prayer every day. Are they still surprised that they are addressing God as «father»?

1.1.1. This way to address God leads the praying person into the centre of the relation to the parents and also to the children: Does someone remember the parents together with conflicts or in a peaceful way? Do the children remember their parents together with conflicts or in a peaceful way? Have they become self-reliant? Or are they still in the feeling of being guided by their parents? Have the parents set their children free or do they still bind them to themselves and try to govern them in all questions? By reflecting about all of this we realize that the way to address God as «father» also may create problems.

1.1.2. I give two modern quotes by Popes — one positive, one explaining problems: On September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1978, Pope John Paul I said: «E' papa; più ancora è madre» — «God is father and even more he is mother»<sup>1</sup>. And in our days Pope Francis had said: «Today we have reached a point where our society has to be called as “a society without fathers”. In our western culture the figure of the father is more or less absent. <...> This creates wounds in the life of our children and youngsters. Their problems are also related to this missing <...> of nearness and good examples»<sup>2</sup>.

But, when I had given this lecture before, people also have criticized the evaluation by Pope Francis and said: Many fathers take their responsibility in a new and good way. This is also part of our time.

1.2. To address God as a «father» is not just an idea of us. Instead: In the history of religions the addressing of God as a «father» is nearly universal<sup>3</sup>! One example for this common practice we see in personal names in the Bible.

<sup>1</sup> Johannes Paul I. // URL: [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes\\_Paul\\_I](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Paul_I). (дата обращения: 13.06.2020).

<sup>2</sup> Papst Franziskus. Vaterunser. Das Gebet Jesu neu gelesen. München, 2018. S. 18–20 (the translation into English was made by myself).

<sup>3</sup> See: Neu R. Vatername Gottes, I. Religionsgeschichtlich // Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Bd 8. 2005. Sp. 889.

1.2.1. Now we have to realize that all biblical names are sentences. They show what the parents wanted to say about their children or what the parents are ordered how to give the child a name. I remind one important example: «И наречешь Ему имя: Иисус; ибо Он спасет людей Своих от грехов их» / «And you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins» (Мф. 1:21 / Mt. 1:21). Why this could be said? What the name «Иисус» has to do with the possibility of saving the people? We only understand this when we know what «Иисус» means in Hebrew: יֵשׁוּעַ — Jeschu<sup>c</sup>ah, in a long form: יהוֹשׁוּעַ — J<sup>e</sup>hoschu<sup>c</sup>ah. This term means: «Jahwe / God is the savior»! Therefore the quoted sentence could have been written in the Gospel according to Matthew.

1.2.2. And two names are of special interest: אַבִּי־יָהּ and אַבִּי־יָהוּ — 'Abijjah and 'Abijjahu — the first means: «My father is Jah», the second means: «My father is Jahu» («Jah» and «Jahu» are short forms of the name of God: «Jahwe»). I refer to the king Abija of Judah, who governed during the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, maybe until 908 before Christ (cf. III Цар. 15 / I Ki. 15). This name shows: There was already in very old times the possibility to call the God of Israel and of Judah as father of a man — may be especially by a name of a king. But generally we could say: There we have the belief that this God might be the «father» of us humankind. See also the two prophetic words in the book of Isaiah:

«Только Ты — Отец наш <...>; Ты, Господи — Отец наш, от века имя Твое: “Искупитель наш”» / «For thou art our Father <...>; thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer from of old is thy name» (Ис. 63:16 / Is. 63:16).

«Но ныне, Господи, Ты — Отец наш; мы <...> дело руки Твоей» / «Yet, O Lord, thou art our Father; <...> we are all the work of thy hand» (Ис. 64:8 / Is. 64:8).

The authors of these words in the Book of Isaiah speak of God as their «father» and express the insight that they are his work, express the faith that he has created them.

1.3.1. This conviction has become fundamental and really basic in the Christian relation to God. The reason was the relation to God which Jesus has had, which he has expressed, which he has proclaimed in his deeds and in his preaching. There I remember only

the story of the «lost son» in the Gospel of Luke (15:11–32): There the «father» is a symbol and a picture of God, and the «two sons» are symbols and pictures of us, of the humankind. May I ask: Is it clear who really the «lost son» was? Many years ago during my time as student in Jena we had a guest lecture by Prof. Dr. Eduard Schweizer from Switzerland. He has given a lecture about this important text. And I never forget what I learned on this day: The «lost son» is not that one, we normally call the «lost son». The real «lost son» is that one, who stayed always at home. To him the «father» / God is going and begging — «Отец же его вышел звал его» (стих 28) / «His father came out and entreated him» (verse 28). But this son rejected to follow the father and participate in the festivity with his brother who was away for years. So: In that moment this other son was lost in the eyes of the «father», in the eyes of God!

1.3.2. The special way to express this unique relation from Jesus to God is the term he used for God: «father» — אבא — «Abba». During the study-time I have learned that this word should be a kind of children's language: «Daddy». But I never believed that really. It's interesting that the parallel word for «Abba» is אמה — «Imma» — «the mother». And then we understand: The Hebrew term for «mother» is אִמָּה — 'em. But «Imma» and «Abba» is not Hebrew. «Abba» is the Aramaic word for «the father». In Hebrew the article is a «he» which we have to put before a word, and in Aramaic the article is an «alaf» which we have to put after a word. «the father» in Hebrew would sound: «hā'ab», and in Aramaic it sounds «Abba».

1.4. The main challenge is: Christians may realize the privilege they have. They may address God as their «father». Through this word they express their belief that he is the person who is offering them all necessary things, who has created them. When someone has a problematic feeling toward his own parents — then he, then she can believe: I'm created by God, my true and always loving «father» — and «mother», like we learned from Pope John Paul I.

## 2. MY MAIN QUESTION: DOES LEAD GOD INTO TEMPTATION?

2.1. And now this conviction that someone can call God as his or her «father» has the consequence to reflect about the sixth supplication of the Lord's Prayer: «καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς

πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ» — «И не введи нас в искушение, но избавь нас от лукавого» / «And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil».

There was a discussion going on in the Western Church, especially in the Roman-Catholic Church. I'm asking: What does mean «искушение» really? In my small Russian-German dictionary from 1929 are given the German terms: «Versuchung» and «Prüfung». When I could translate and understand with «Prüfung» — «to prove» — no problem would arise. But in the German-Russian dictionary, also from 1929, I find under «Versuchung» only «искушение», but under «Prüfung» I find «проверка» and «испытание» («экзамен» does not matter here) but not the term «искушение»!

And the verb is very important: «вводить» describes a real activity: «to lead into something»! Do we want to speak about God in such a direct way? Therefore I think my reflection will be important.

2.2. Now it's helpful to look first into a translation of the Lord's Prayer into modern Hebrew<sup>4</sup>. In the sixth supplication we find the term נִסְּוֹן — «nissajon». It comes from the verb נִסְּוֹן — «nissah», what means: «to prove» — «испытывать». But the dictionary for Biblical Hebrew also gives the meaning «to tempt» — «искушать»<sup>5</sup>. What would be correct?

2.2.1. There I have to go back into the past: In the winter semester 1990/91 at the Church Seminary in Leipzig I had to give a lecture on the book of Genesis, Книге Бытие, especially on the stories about the fathers and mothers from Genesis 12 on / Бытие 12 и далее. There I also have lectured the important story about Abraham and his son Isaac in Genesis 22 / Бытие 22. This theologically

<sup>4</sup> Cf.: Das Vaterunser. Das Grundgebet der Christenheit in 40 Sprachen. Stuttgart, 2006. P. 39.

<sup>5</sup> See the old dictionary: Wilhelm Gesenius. Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament / Hrsg. von H. Zimmern, W. Müller, M. O. Weber. Berlin, 1962. S. 507.

I can add: Personally I have an old New Testament in the Hebrew language from London, may be from the 19<sup>th</sup> century: «Sephār Habb<sup>e</sup>rit Hachadāschāh» — «Book of the New Covenant»: There in Matthew 6:13a / От Матфея 6:13a is written: לְמַסָּה — «l<sup>e</sup>massāh» — «temptation» — «искушение»! [возможно, вторая слева буква на иврите не распознана]

clearly constructed story starts with the following sentence: וַיִּבְרָח אַבְרָהָם מִן־כַּבְדֵּלָהּ מִן־כַּבְדֵּלָהּ מִן־כַּבְדֵּלָהּ — «Waj<sup>e</sup>hi 'achar hadd<sup>e</sup>barim ha'elläh w<sup>e</sup>ha'älohim nissah 'äth 'Abraham». What is said there? In this old time I even did not look into the German Luther-Bible. Because of theological reasons it was clear for me that there is said: «After these happenings God did prove Abraham». In the English Bible, Revised Standard Version, the same is written: «After these things God tested Abraham». God does not lead into temptation, but God does prove, does test.

2.2.2. One important source for possibilities in the German language is the translation of the Hebrew Bible by the two famous Jewish theologians Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig from the Twenties of the last century<sup>6</sup>. I checked all places where we have «nissah» with God as subject — as an activity of God against us<sup>7</sup> — and where we have «nissah» with the human being as subject — as an activity of humankind against God<sup>8</sup>. In our modern version of the Bible of Martin Luther — «Lutherbibel Revidiert 2017» — we generally have «versuchen» — «искушать». Only in three cases is given «prüfen» — «испытывать»<sup>9</sup>. But Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig always say «prüfen» or «proben» — «испытывать», never «versuchen» — «искушать»!

2.2.3. During my stay in Russia in August 2019 I have checked all these biblical places also in the Russian translation, in the Synodal Translation. And I've found a very interesting insight: The fathers of this translation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century have exercised also a typical system. When God is the subject only three times they have written «искушать» / «to tempt», but at the majority of the cases — seven times — they have written: «испытывать» or «испытать» / «to prove»! When we are the subject they have written always «искушать» or «искусить» / «to tempt»! So, these theologians have taught: If someone is bad and tries to guide another one

<sup>6</sup> Die Schrift. Das Buch Im Anfang / Verdeutsch von M. Buber gemeinsam mit F. Rosenzweig. Köln; Olten, 1954. S. 57.

<sup>7</sup> Gen. 22:1; Ex. 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2.16; 13:4; Judg. 2:22; Ps. 26:2; II Chr. 32:31.

<sup>8</sup> Ex. 17:2, 7; Num. 14:22; Deut. 6:16; 33:8; Is. 7:12; Ps. 78:18, 41, 56; 95:9; 106:14.

<sup>9</sup> Ex. 16:4; Judg. 2:22; Ps. 26:2.

on a wrong way — even God on a wrong way — then it is we — the humans!

2.2.4. And here I can add an observation from my German language: In this German language the term «versuchen» always has a bad connotation — it's a bad happening, it has a bad actor. Therefore I think that in German we should never use the term «versuchen» with God as subject, and also not in connection with us in direction to God. I'm very thankful to Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig that they never have translated the term «nissah» as «versuchen» — «искушать». There we see again how important it is to listen to our Jewish friends!

2.2.4.1. May I give an example: Under the biblical passages which explain a behavior of humankind in direction to God we have to read Deuteronomy 6:16a / Второзаконие 6:16a. It was selected in Herrnhut as the Watchword for March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019. In the booklet with the Watchwords and Doctrinal texts on that day is written without any content: «Не искушайте Господа, Бога вашего». By reading this in the morning of that day my really spontaneous reaction was: That's not possible! We cannot tempt God, we cannot lead him to a wrong way, we cannot tempt him in direction of a sin. For us humans that's all is impossible — as long God the Deity is! And for sure Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig translated: «Prüfet nicht IHN euern Got» / «Does not prove the Lord, your God» — and they continued: «wie ihr ihn prüftet bei Prüfe» / «like you have proven near Massah / near the place of prove, and diligently keep the commandments of the Lord, your God!» (verse 16a and b). This sentence makes the reference to Exodus 17:1-7 / Исход 17:1-7, to the story of proving of God by the Israelites where Moses stroke the rock that water came out of it. And, what I have to mention: The English translation has here: «You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah» — wonderful! Therefore I think: This difficult sentence from Deuteronomy 6:16 / Второзаконие 6:16 you cannot read and meditate without the content. It is bound to this old story. And to attach it to new situations is very dangerous.

But as Doctrinal text for March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the responsible persons in Herrnhut had added the third supplication of the Lord's



Prayer: «Да будет воля Твоя и на земле, как на небе!» / «Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven!» The idea of these persons in Herrnhut seems to be: In the case a person accepts the will of God within his or her life he or she will not tempt him, will not say: If you do this and that for me then I'm ready to believe you, then I will trust you, then I will offer you a candle and so on. But — might for us as Lutheran Christians such behavior worthwhile? Haven't we reached a fundamentally different behavior? The behavior: «I try to believe» — this means: «I try to understand my life as gift of God and keep this conviction even during difficult periods, even in times of suffering». Could humans try to deal still against such a background with God that he changes his behavior against them? I think we humans never can do this!

2.2.4.2. And into the same direction leads another example — now for God's deeds in direction to us humans: For July 15th, 2019, in Herrnhut the Watchword was selected from Deuteronomy / Второзаконие 13:4: «ибо чрез сие искушает вас Господь, Бог ваш, чтобы узнать, любите ли вы Господа, Бога вашего» / “For the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God” [in your Bible and in the English Bible: verse 3!]. But this again is impossible! Because as long God is helping us humans he never leads into temptation — but he proves, he is testing — like it is said in a correct way in the English translation!

2.3. Now I want to draw your attention to a very important statement Apostle Paul had made: In his first letter to the Corinthians he had written in chapter 10: «Вас постигло искушение не иное, как человеческое» / «No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man» (I Cor. 10:13a / I Кор. 10:13a). Here Paul is expressing very clearly that «искушение» / «temptation» does not originates from God or in God, but that «искушение» is always present, and God is active against it, is doing all what he can do to prevent from it. And at this place Paul is continuing: «И верен Бог, Который не попустит вам быть искушаемыми сверх сил» / «God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength» (verse 13b)!

2.3.1. In the beginning of December in the year 2017 a critique by Pope Francis was published who had criticized the traditional translation

of the sixth supplication of the Lord's Prayer<sup>10</sup>. The background was the revision of the biblical texts for the liturgy in France. In December 2017 the new versions have been adopted by the Vatican. The sixth supplication traditionally was formulated: «Et ne nous soumet pas à la tentation» — «lead us not into temptation» — «не введи нас в искушение». Now they pray: «Et ne nous laisse pas entrer en tentation» — «let us not fall into temptation» — «не дай нам впасть в искушение» — like Dr. Anton Tihomirov from the seminary in Novosaratovka near St. Petersburg had taught me!

During the work with this paper in 2019 in the Russian congregations I learned one very important detail by Propst Konstantin Subbotin: There are two contemporary, two modern translations of the New Testament (one of the Russian Bible Society), which offer the following possibilities: «Не дай нам поддаться искушению» and «не подвергай нас искушению». When I correctly understand, I would say in German: «Übergib uns nicht der Versuchung», and: «Setze uns nicht der Versuchung aus»; this may mean in English: «Do not transfer us under temptation», and: «Do not expose us to temptation».

2.3.2. After I had given this lecture in Moscow on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019, I could ask the pastor of the French speaking congregation, which gathers in the chapel just near the Lutheran Cathedral, what version they are using. And he answered: «The new one: “Et ne nous laisse pas entrer en tentation”» — «не дай нам впасть в искушение». And in Saransk Reverend Aleksey Stepanowitch Aljoschkin told us in front of his congregation of the «Resurrection», that in the translation of the New Testament into the Mordovian language a formulation is found which expresses precisely that form I was fighting for! But additionally I learned that the Roman-Catholic Bishops of Russia have made a visit to the Vatican and explained there that the traditional formulation is appropriate for the Russian province of the Roman-Catholic Church: «И не введи нас в искушение» / «And lead us not into temptation».

2.4. But now I want to give two interesting quotes which are in favor of my interpretation:

<sup>10</sup> Cf.: Radio Vatikan Franziskus bemängelt Vaterunser-Übersetzung [radiovaticana.va](http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/12/06/franziskus_bemängelt_vaterunserübersetzung/1353215) (6.12.2017) // [http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/12/06/franziskus\\_bemängelt\\_vaterunserübersetzung/1353215](http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/12/06/franziskus_bemängelt_vaterunserübersetzung/1353215) (дата обращения: 06.12.2017).

2.4.1. First the letter of James 1:13–14: «В искушении никто не говорит: “Бог меня искушает”: <...> и Сам не искушает никого, но каждый искушается, увлекаясь и обольщаясь собственною похотью» / «Let no one say when he is tempted: “I am tempted by God”; <...> and he himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire».

2.4.2. Secondly our teacher Martin Luther had written in his Small Catechism: «Хотя Бог и не искушает никого, но мы просим Его <...> охранять и оберегать нас, дабы диавол, мир и плоть наша не смущали нас <...> а также, если мы и подвергнемся таким искушениям, то дать нам в конце концов восторжествовать!» / «Gott versucht zwar niemand; aber wir bitten in diesem Gebet, daß uns Gott behüte und erhalte, damit uns der Teufel, die Welt und unser Fleisch nicht betrüge <...>; und wenn wir damit angefochten würden, daß wir doch endlich gewinnen»<sup>11</sup>! And — what we have to realize — he had quoted our passage of the letter of James!

2.4.3. Therefore, I would formulate the following thesis: The Roman-Catholic theologians, Bishops, Cardinals and Pope Francis, who struggled so seriously about the understanding of this crucial sixth supplication of the Lord’s Prayer could have just looked into this 490 years old text by our reformer — and all their problems, and all our problems would have been solved<sup>12</sup>!

2.4.4. Again I’m quoting Pope Francis from the year 2017: «I am the one who is falling. It’s not God who is pushing us into temptation to see whether I will be falling. A father does not do this. A father is rushing to help his stumbling child»<sup>13</sup>.

From Advent 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017, on not only in the worship services of the Roman-Catholic Church in France and in Italy but also in the worship services of the Reformed Church and of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in France the worshippers pray the new, the modified version of the Lord’s Prayer, like the French speaking colleague in Moscow said to me in August 2019. A small commentary from March 2018: «Last December God has stopped

<sup>11</sup> Martin Luther. Der Kleine Katechismus. Erlangen, 2005. S. 18–19.

<sup>12</sup> I had formulated this thesis very spontaneously in the meeting of the Hungarian pastors in Tarlungeni / Tatrang in Romania on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (see note 1).

<sup>13</sup> Papst Franziskus. Vaterunser. Das Gebet... S. 95 (also this translation was made by myself).

to set traps for the believers. In her sermon on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Advent Rev. Agnes von Kirchbach spoke the Lord's Prayer in French language first time in the modified way. <...> Now God does not lead into bad things but he prevents for them»<sup>14</sup>.

May I end with a personal confession: I'm still praying the Lord's Prayer with the old formulation: «Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung» — «И не введи нас в искушение». But I interpret this supplication against the background of these reflections. And I invite all readers to do this too: God does not tempt us. Он не вводит нас в искушение. Но необходимо молить Бога, чтобы Он не испытывал нас! / But it is necessary that we pray to God that he does not prove us!

*ИСТОЧНИКИ И ЛИТЕРАТУРА*

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