

It may now be left to the judgment of the reader whether the evidence of this book is, as Dr. Roberts contends, absolutely decisive on the question at issue. Let it be repeated that this question is not whether Greek was very commonly understood, and used in intercourse with foreigners. It is whether it was the fitting language of popular address, and therefore that *usually* employed by Christ in His recorded discourses, as well as by His Apostles. I have of necessity only examined a small portion of the series of arguments on which Dr. Roberts bases his conclusions; but it is a portion which he regards as absolutely decisive. I venture to submit that it falls very far short of this; and that if his thesis cannot be otherwise established, it certainly will not be proved from the Acts of the Apostles.

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CRITICAL NOTES ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

THE object of the following notes is to submit to the consideration of Biblical students certain facts, which, so far as I know, have not hitherto received much attention. I have endeavoured to avoid all those extraneous questions which so often mar and perplex exegesis, and I have written as briefly and simply as I could, because the subject is so interesting that I should regret if I had given any rhetorical "colour" to my arguments.

The Lord's Prayer is given in two places of Scripture, Matthew vi. 9-13 and Luke xi. 2-5, the version of Matthew being much fuller than that which the correct text of Luke presents. Apart from minor variations, the latter commences with the single word "Father," instead of "Our

Father which art in heaven," and omits entirely the words "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth," and "but deliver us from evil."

It is common to explain the variations by ranking the Lord's prayer among utterances of our Lord which were *bis repetita*. Apart, however, from the general objections which may be raised against this theory, there are special difficulties in the application of it to the present case.

Firstly, such an explanation ignores the fact that Luke obviously considers that he is recording the original delivery of the Prayer. What writer—above all a writer who lays special claim to accuracy of arrangement—being aware that this great exemplar of prayer had already been delivered on another occasion and in a fuller form, could relate the history of its second delivery without giving any hint that it had been delivered before? What writer would without comment and without surprise describe the disciples as asking to be taught how to pray, when he knew that they had already been so taught?

Secondly, assuming the previous delivery of the Prayer to be historically certain, and that Luke is either ignorant of or ignores it, is it possible that, after a form of prayer had already been enjoined by Jesus with strong personal emphasis (*οὕτως οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς*, Matt. vi. 9), the disciples should have specially asked to be taught a form of prayer, or that Jesus should have replied, without remarking on their forgetfulness, by simply repeating a portion of His former words?

Thirdly, it will be observed that the "repetition" theory, even if admitted, only explains the *fact* of the existence of two varying versions, and does not attempt to give any *reason* for the variation between them. We are merely left face to face with a great and striking divergency entirely unexplained and apparently causeless. It is of course impossible to write entirely without prejudice, where so

many associations cluster around each word, but it certainly does seem that the version of Luke is, compared with that of Matthew, a maimed and mutilated version. Such a view, however, supposing that the two versions were actually delivered on two separate occasions by Jesus Himself in the present form, seems hardly compatible with reverence, and we find ourselves in the strange position of possessing two forms of prayer so like and yet so unlike that they provoke comparison, and yet each of such high authority that all comparison seems presumptuous.

These difficulties have induced the great majority of critics, including such temperate and weighty writers as Weiss (in the seventh edition of Meyer's *Kommentar*) and Oosterzee (in Lange's *Bibelwerk*), to discard the theory of repetition as untenable. They recognise, as all criticism must, that there is a human element in the composition of the Gospels, that the writers exercised to some extent their own judgment in the selection and arrangement of their materials, and that, even in relating the same event or discourse, the natural imperfection or variation of the tradition with which they were acquainted may reasonably account for variations in their narrative.

In this way a single prayer delivered by Jesus to His disciples may be related by two historians in two different shapes and as delivered under different circumstances; and criticism in the exercise of its legitimate functions may, or rather must, endeavour to discriminate between the two writers and determine which of the two more closely reproduces the absolute historical fact.

Now in the case before us there is an almost unanimous *consensus* of opinion that the position of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew is due to Matthew's desire to group these words of Jesus with other sayings to which they are akin, whereas Luke leaves them enshrined in their genuine historical setting. That being so, this question naturally presents

itself: if Luke is more accurate in relating the historical circumstances under which the Lord's Prayer was delivered, then is it not probable that the words of the Prayer, as given by him, are also more accurate and historically true? Though such a supposition would undoubtedly be received by most persons with regret, yet certainly there is *à priori* considerable probability in favour of it. It is my object, however, looking at the question as far as possible without prejudice and in a purely critical spirit, to refer to certain facts which point to an opposite conclusion.

In Matthew we have τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον; whereas in Luke, the last three words are replaced by δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν. Now there are three very curious points about these few words. The first is that the word ἐπιούσιος occurs here and here only in literature, and this fact seems to preclude the supposition (on other grounds most improbable) that the variation of the two writers is due to natural variation in translating from a common Aramaic original, for it seems almost impossible that two independent translators should have hit upon the same exceedingly curious word. It remains therefore to assume that the tradition—whether written or oral—which the writers employed was, as regards these particular words, expressed in Greek. That being so, the second point becomes important. The phrase τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν occurs only three times in the New Testament, namely here and Luke xix. 47, Acts xvii. 11; so that it is certainly Luke's own (*nicht Lukanisch*, Weiss), and therefore the σήμερον of Matthew is much more likely to be original. Thirdly, if this is so, then δίδου is clearly an alteration of Luke's: instead of "to-day" he writes "daily," and having done so he is compelled to substitute for the aorist δός the present δίδου. Moreover δίδου bears in itself the sign of being an alteration, for the use of a present in this petition is inconsistent with the use of an aorist in *all* the others.

Again, where Matthew has ἀφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα, Luke writes ἀφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας. Now Winer (*Grammatik*, sixth edition, pp. 31, 32) describes ὀφειλήματα ἀφιέναι as a phrase simply translated from Hebrew, and as one of those expressions which would "either convey no meaning or a wrong meaning to a born Greek"; and in fact as a Greek expression it means "to remit debts," it is only as a Hebraism that it can mean "to forgive sins." Here, therefore, we seem to have in Luke purer Greek, in Matthew a more accurate reproduction of the original. Moreover the sense makes it clear that Luke's version is the less accurate, for in Matthew the meaning of ὀφειλήματα in the first half of the petition, being fixed and known, determines and defines the meaning of ὀφειλέταις in the second half; that is, since ὀφειλήματα must be used metaphorically, ὀφειλέταις is marked as used metaphorically also ("trespasses . . . them that trespass"). Matthew's version is perfectly clear, and the two clauses of the petition are in perfect balance: Luke, on the other hand, by altering ὀφειλήματα to ἁμαρτίας, leaves the meaning of πάντι ὀφείλουσι at any rate uncertain ("sins . . . every one that is indebted," A.V.). Lastly, the aorist ἀφήκαμεν of Matthew, though more beautiful when thoughtfully considered than the present ἀφίομεν of Luke, is on the other hand certainly less obvious, and therefore on the well-known principle of preferring the more difficult is more likely to be original.

So far I have only alluded to purely critical grounds, and though to some these may appear slight, yet to me it seems that, considering the brevity and simplicity of the words compared, there would have been *à priori* an improbability of their yielding any evidence at all, and that the evidence which they actually yield may fairly be regarded as strong and indeed remarkable. The presumption which it affords in favour of Matthew's version may however be supported by reference to certain points, which are not purely critical

but rather involve questions of taste and feeling, and which therefore, though unfitted to be the foundation of a critical argument, may fitly be used to reinforce such an argument when already partially established.

The words *δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον* are even more beautiful than *δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν*, for they exhibit a deeper trustfulness and are more in accordance with that essentially Christian teaching which bids us "take no thought for the morrow."

The aorist *ἀφήκαμεν* when compared with the present *ἀφίόμεν* is singularly forcible; it involves the supposition that, before we venture to approach God in prayer for forgiveness, we have *already* forgiven; there is a grave warning in the word (cf. Matt. v. 24, "*first* be reconciled," etc.).

Further, the connection of the two clauses in Matthew (*ἄφες, . . . ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν*) seems clearer than that in Luke (*ἄφες, . . . καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίόμεν*). Matthew makes us ask for forgiveness only *in as far as* we have already forgiven, and *on condition that* we have forgiven; we do not rest the appeal on any act of ours, but we say that without certain preceding acts—and whether they have been done we leave God to judge—we have no claim to appeal at all; on the other hand the second clause in Luke is not only assertive in character—we assert that we forgive others—but the words in which the assertion is introduced (*καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ*) certainly seem to suggest a claim to receive forgiveness, as it were, "of congruity." I do not of course maintain that Luke's words are intended to bear this meaning, but that, being capable of bearing it, they are inherently inferior to those of Matthew. The emphasis of *πάντι ὀφείλοντι* as compared with *τοῖς ὀφειλήταις* also deserves notice.

Passing on to the final petition, Luke exhibits a degree of incompleteness. When we use such forms of petition

as "Remember not, Lord, our offences," or "Be not angry with us for ever," we distinctly contemplate the opposite possibility, namely, that God may "remember our offences," or "may be angry with us for ever." So when left by themselves, as in Luke, the words, "Lead us not into temptation," do distinctly suggest the idea that God may "lead into temptation"; and though, no doubt, explanations may be given which modify the hardness of such an expression, yet the best of them do not fully remove it. Directly, however, that the words "but deliver us from evil" are added, as in Matthew, then all becomes different. The sentence then becomes one of those sentences containing two antithetical or contrasted clauses, in which the emphasis is really on the second clause, and the first clause though co-ordinate in construction is really subordinate in thought, serving to bring out more clearly by contrast the force of the second, so that if separated from its connection and taken by itself the first clause may convey a false impression, as Luke's words may do here. As the point is of importance in Biblical criticism, I will refer to two instances which occur close together in Luke x. 20, 21. In the first the Seventy had just returned, and inform Jesus "with joy" that "even the devils are made subject" to them; Jesus replies by promising them confirmation of this power, and adds, *πλὴν ἐν τούτῳ μὴ χαίρετε ὅτι τὰ πνεύματα ὑμῶν ὑποτάσσεται χαίρετε δὲ ὅτι τὰ ὀνόματα ὑμῶν ἐν γέγραπται ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς*. Here the *Textus Receptus* reads *χαίρετε δὲ μᾶλλον*, and, though no doubt *μᾶλλον* is an explanatory gloss, still the explanation which it affords is a correct one; and certainly, if the words *μὴ χαίρετε . . . ὑποτάσσεται* are taken apart from their connection as an absolutely independent command, they convey a very different impression from that which they convey where they stand. In the second case the point is perhaps more delicate, the antithesis not being formally expressed as an

antithesis though it is none the less a real one. Rejoicing in the success of the Seventy, Jesus says, Ἐξομολογοῦμαι σοι, Πάτερ, . . . ὅτι ἀπέκρυψας ταῦτα ἀπὸ σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν καὶ ἀπεκάλυψας αὐτὰ νηπίοις. Here the two clauses are joined by καί, but the opposition between them is marked in the contrast of "the wise and understanding" with "babes," and still more marked in the highly antithetical assonance of ἀπέκρυψας and ἀπεκάλυψας. In this case I think that no one will say that taken by itself the first clause—"I thank Thee that Thou didst hide these things from the wise"—when taken alone yields even tolerable sense.

Lastly, considering the eager expectation of the second Advent which characterized the period, the supposition that the petition "Thy will be done, as in heaven also upon earth," is not original but *inserted* by Matthew after the petition "Thy kingdom come," is much less probable than the supposition that the words are original and *omitted* by Luke.

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