

## THE LORD'S PRAYER.

BY THE EDITOR.

**P**RAYER is commonly regarded, and perhaps rightly so, as one of the most important religious exercises, and every religion has its own characteristic prayer.

The early Christians used the prayer which was known to them as the Lord's Prayer. It is very brief and we have two reports of it, one in Matthew, vi. 9-15, and the other in Luke, xi. 1-4. These two passages do not quite agree in their details, but they are sufficiently similar to warrant their having been derived from a common source. The briefer form of the prayer is given in Luke, and since it is not probable that any copyist would have omitted part of the prayer, which as a Christian he knew by heart, this form in Luke is commonly supposed to contain the older and more original form. According to the tradition of both Matthew and Luke, it was Jesus himself who taught his disciples to pray, and there is no reason why we should doubt the statement. The former report is inserted in the famous Sermon on the Mount, which contains, as it were, the whole programme of the new doctrine, and the latter is given in a direct response to the disciples' request of having a prayer taught them. The passage in Matthew reads as follows :

"And when thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are : for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do : for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

"Be not ye therefore like unto them : for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

"After this manner therefore pray ye : Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

"Give us this day our daily bread.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil : For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you :

"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

This is the report as it stands in our present Bible translations, but it contains some later additions which are not found in the oldest and best codices ; especially the clause "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen," is a liturgic conclusion which naturally slipped in through the pens of careless copyists who knew the Lord's Prayer in the form in which it was used in church services. It is obvious that the abrupt ending of the original Lord's Prayer seemed to require a summary, which was given it in the Doxology, viz., the praise given to God, and this conclusion is not redundant, for it gives an artistic unity to the prayer and adds not a little to its acceptability as an integral part of the church service.

Let us now look at the passage in Luke, which, quoting from one of the best sources, reads in the original Greek as follows :<sup>1</sup>

*Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ εἶναι αὐτὸν ἐν τόπῳ τινὶ προσευχόμενον, ὡς ἐπαύσατο, εἶπεν τις τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν, Κύριε, διδάξον ἡμᾶς προσεύχεσθαι, καθὼς καὶ Ἰωάννης ἐδίδαξεν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ· εἶπεν δὲ αὐτοῖς "Ὅταν προσεύχησθε, λέγετε, Πάτερ, ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου· ἐλθάτω ἡ βασιλεία σου· τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν· καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν· καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν·"*

A translation of the passage, using as much as possible the revised version, reads as follows :

"And it came to pass as he [Jesus] was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him : Lord teach us to pray, as also John taught his disciples. And he said unto them : When ye pray say, Father, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, our needful<sup>2</sup> bread give us this day, and forgive us our faults as we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us, and lead us not into temptation."

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the Tischendorff edition. The edition of Westcott and Hort, Cambridge and London, Macmillan and Co., adopts throughout the same reading.

<sup>2</sup> Here the authorised version translates "daily." The whole sentence reads "Give us day by day our daily bread."

Prayers for daily use of this kind were customary among the religious sects of Palestine. St. John taught his disciples a prayer, and so did Rabbi Eliezer who recommended the words: "Thy will be done in Heaven above as it is on earth," as the briefest and most comprehensive oration. When Jesus taught his disciples the Lord's prayer he apparently followed a well-established Jewish tradition.

The Lord's prayer has been prayed by Christians since the foundation of Christianity and deserves a careful inspection and analysis.

It will be noticed that first the original address is simply "Father," and not "Our Father," nor with the addition of "which art in heaven"; secondly, the third prayer, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven," is missing, and so is the seventh prayer, "Deliver us from evil." There are five prayers only, not seven. The probability is (as says Professor Holtzmann in his *Handcommentar zum N. T.*, p. 114) that the original prayer was intended to be prayed with the assistance of the five fingers of one hand, which serve as natural beads and which even the poorest people had at their command.

As to the briefer form, which is contained in the best codices of Luke, being the original text of the Lord's Prayer, there can be no doubt, not only for reasons of textual criticism but also because Origen (xxvi. 29) was not familiar with any version which contained the third and seventh prayer, and even Tertullian and Augustine verify only the briefer form of five prayers. The Itala codex, ff. 2, and also the codex *syr. cur.* omit the third prayer; the Vulgate and the Armenian version omit also the seventh prayer, while codex *α* has only the third and not the seventh prayer. All these omissions prove, as Holtzmann points out (*Ibid.*, p. 115) that the briefer form as found in the most reliable MSS. of Luke can alone be regarded as the original and well attested form. Holtzmann does not express here his own opinion, but simply sums up the general opinion of theological scholars. For instance, Delitzsch, than whom there is no greater authority among our theologians, is in perfect agreement with Holtzmann. Delitzsch says concerning the Lord's Prayer, as follows:

"In its briefest form, which is in Luke, xi. 2-4, the address according to the best codices reads: 'Father,' without any addition, and there are missing the third and seventh prayers. It consists of 2+1+2 prayers. Accordingly it contains all that which for God's sake we have to wish or to ask for: food, forgiveness, and preservation, although in this briefer form it is less developed than in the

seven prayers. The doxology 'For thine is the kingdom,' etc., is missing in Luke and also in several of the most important MSS. of Matthew; and not one of the exegetical fathers up to Chrysostom knows of it. The old Latin translation, the so-called Itala, and the translation by Jerome (Vulgate) do not contain it, which is the reason why Luther omitted it in his Catechism. They finish the seventh prayer at once with 'Amen,' serving, according to common usage, as a word of confirmation. The beautiful and impressive Doxology, together with the 'Amen' is an older liturgical addition. It interrupts, however, in the Sermon on the Mount, the context between the three briefer prayers and Matthew vi. 14."

As to the language of the Lord's Prayer Delitzsch continues :

"There can be no doubt about it that the Lord's Prayer in its original form as the Lord taught it was Hebrew, and there are none of the ingredients of the New Testament which so easily and so surely can be retranslated into its original language, for there is no word and no sentence which does not offer, in the Jewish Tal-



EGYPTIANS PRAYING. From the Monuments.

mudic literature, parallel passages in the very same words. Even the whole plan corresponds in a surprising way to the injunction of Rabbi Jehuda."

The Lord's Prayer was very popular among the early Christians, and we may fairly assume that it summed up the characteristic faith of the first disciples. As Jesus himself did not appear to be conscious of proclaiming a new religion, but insisted even on retaining the very letter of the law, including the very diacritical points, so this prayer does not yet contain any idea which deviates from the traditional Judaism. Indeed, we must assume that it existed in this very same form or in similar forms in the days of Jesus, and that he simply adopted it. All of the prayers can be traced in almost literally the same form to Jewish sources. First, God as Father is mentioned frequently in the Old Testament. Moses says in the song which he taught the People (Deut. xxxii. 6):

"Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not He thy father that hath bought thee? has He not made thee and established thee?"

In similar words the psalmists and prophets speak of God. Jeremiah makes the Lord proclaim :

"I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my son." (xxx. 9.)

And again :

"Thou shalt call me My Father, and shalt not turn away from me." (iii. 19.)

And Malachi says :

"Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us?" (ii. 10.)

The psalmist (ciii. 13) praising God's mercy, sings :

"Like as a father pitieth His children,  
So the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

And in the eighty-ninth Psalm David is taught to pray (verse 26) :

"Thou art my father my Lord, and the rock of my salvation."

In addition to the fact that the name of father is directly given to God, Israel is frequently spoken of as the son of God.<sup>1</sup>

During the pre-Christian Gnostic period which produced the Wisdom literature and the Apocrypha, this view of regarding God as the Father increased and became more and more typical of the religious faith of the people. Jesus Sirah addresses God :

"Lord God, father and master of my life."  
(xxiii. 1.)

And he says :

"I called on the Lord my father and ruler, that he should not leave me in distress." (li. 14.)

The books of wisdom speak of the righteous as "calling himself the child of God" (ii. 13), and "he maketh his boast that God is his father." (ii. 16.) Concerning the passage through the raging waves (an oriental simile reminding us of the stormy ocean of Samsara), the same book declares :

"But thy providence, O Father, governeth it."

Tobit says in his prayer (chapter xiii. 4) :

"He is our Lord and He is the Lord our father forever."

<sup>1</sup> In Exodus iv. 22. In Hosea xi. 1. Deuteronomy xiv. 1. Malachi. i. 6.



A PILLAR STATUE OF THE TEMPLE OF MADURA.

Showing the prayer attitude of the Hindus, both Brahmans and Buddhists.

In continuing this line of tradition Jesus calls himself the Son, omitting any further explanation, but implying the Sonship of God.

Concerning expressions in Hebrew literature which remind us of the Lord's Prayer, Delitzsch says :

“ ‘Our Father and King’ is the ancient New Year's call of the synagogue, and in the ten penitential days of the atonement-festival Rabbi Eliezar replied to the question, How must a prayer be which should be brief :



A COIN OF PERTINAX.  
Exhibiting a woman  
praying.

'Thy will be done in Heaven above as it is on earth.' (Tosefta Berachoth, iii.) And the Kaddish, which in the liturgy of the synagogue takes about the same place as our Lord's Prayer in the Church, begins : 'Glorified and hallowed be thy great name,' which contains the summary of the first three prayers. The Kaddish includes the sentiment of the address of the Lord's Prayer, for it also speaks of God as the Heavenly Father,' Other parallelisms to the sentiment, 'Thy will be done,' are found in the *Proverbs of the Fathers* (Aboth ii. 5 ; v. 23). The idea of representing sin as a debt in the sense of the Latin *debitum*, as it appears in

the Lord's Prayer, is a Jewish conception. (See Targum to Ezekiel xxxiii. 16.) The prayer 'Lead us not into temptation' is, according to the Berachoth lx, b, part of the daily morning prayer ; and so is the prayer 'deliver us from evil,' according to Berachoth xvi. b, which is a passage that is exegetically of great value to prove that the conception of evil has been narrowed down, against his original sense of the passage, to the idea of seeking salvation from the Evil One."



ANCHISES PRAY-  
ING.

From an illus-  
trated MS. of  
Livy.

The utilitarianism of praying for reward, which characterises post-exilic Judaism, generally appears transfigured in the report according to Matthew, but is not entirely overcome.

Delitzsch insists that the Lord's Prayer is not a typically New Testament prayer, and he adds, "Nor can it be so, for before His passing away the Lord said to His disciples (John xvi. 24), 'Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name. Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.'" Delitzsch continues :

"It is only the death of the Saviour that makes an end of the old covenant, and his resurrection makes a beginning of the New Testament days, and with His glorification the Lord's prayer is intensified and deepened in a typically New Testament sense. For now salvation and Messiah are no longer a matter of the future, for the Jew who prays the Kaddish they are so even to-day. Fatherhood, name, kingdom, God's will, all these words gain a new significance through the revelation of God in the only Son of God, which renders the new relation between God and man actual."

While the original Christian prayer as Jesus taught it to his

disciples must have had five prayers, we may fairly assume that the prayer of seven prayers was already in vogue among the Jews before the Christians or the Nazarenes adopted the five-prayered form ; for we know, as Delitzsch informs us, from Rabbi Jehuda, that among the Jews a seven-prayered oration was customary which contained the prayer for food in the middle prayer, i. e., in the fourth one. Rabbi Jehuda, as quoted by Delitzsch from Berachoth (xxxiv. e), says :

"A man should never pray for his necessities in the first three prayers and not in the last three prayers, but in the middle one ; for, as Rabbi Chanina says, in the first three prayers he must be like the servant and expatiate in praise of his Lord."



CHRISTIANS PRAYING. Decoration of the Catacombs.

Rabbi Jehuda apparently refers to a prayer which must have been the same as, or certainly very similar to, the seven-prayer version of the Lord's Prayer. Rabbi Jehuda lived some time after Christ, but it is not probable that the Jews after the origin of Christianity adopted prayers from the Christians. On the contrary, we must expect that they dropped the prayer as soon as the Lord's Prayer became a kind of shibboleth for the apostate sects of the Nazarenes and Ebionites, who soon began to be persecuted by the Jewish authorities.

Apparently the five-prayered oration as well as the seven-prayered one are originally Jewish, and Jesus was familiar with the briefer version which he taught his disciples. At the time when the gentile propaganda began, this briefer form of the Lord's prayer was alone used among the few Christians. But some of the Nazarenes must have known the enlarged form of seven prayers

and introduced it into church service, and we may fairly assume that it supplanted the other version first in the litany and then also in the Gospel account.

The Greek author of Matthew apparently had before him a Hebrew text of the Gospel (perhaps the Gospel according to the Hebrews), and having the choice between the seven-prayered oration as he found it in the Hebrew and the five-prayered oration of Greek texts which he compared, naturally preferred the former. The reasons above quoted are sufficient evidence to prove that the

oldest MSS. of the Gospel of the Hebrews must have contained the five-prayered oration and that this was the form which Jesus, following an older tradition, taught his disciples; but if the more elaborate form of seven prayers already existed in Christ's time by the side of the briefer form, as we must assume on the testimony of Rabbi Jehuda's remark (quoted by Delitzsch), we can easily understand that some copyist added the third and the seventh prayers, and, once established, the seven-prayered oration alone seemed complete. While thus the five-prayered form was alone known during the first and second centuries among Gentile Christians, we are well assured that the introduction of seven-



A CAPTIVE GOTH PRAYING.  
From the Triumphal Column of Theodosius the Great.

prayered form dates back to the Nazarenes of Palestine and must there have taken place after the first attempts at Gospel writing, but before the author of our present Gospel according to Matthew wrote his Greek version of the Gospel.

When we go over the seven prayers we find that none of them is a prayer in the genuine sense of the word. There is not one begging for any favor of God; not one request that God should do our will, but on the contrary they indicate a submission to God's will, the spirit of which is well characterised in the prayer "Thy will be done." The three last prayers are apparently exhortations, the significance of which lies in the clause "Forgive us our debts *as we forgive our debtors.*" This prayer contains a promise that we will forgive our debtors and so hope to receive forgiveness for our-



selves. The sixth prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," is a suggestion to avoid temptation, which of course is the best method of preventing evil thoughts from rising within our souls.

There is only one prayer which is a real prayer actually praying for a gift from God: "Give us this day our daily bread," and here we must state that this prayer has always been a stumbling-block to the early Christians and to Christian preachers. The word *ἐπιούσιος*,<sup>1</sup> "daily," or, more literally, "needful," is a term which occurs nowhere else in Greek literature. The word etymologically means "for use" or "for our needs," and the original sense appears to be that we should pray not for luxuries, but only for that which is actually needful; and if we compare this prayer with other passages in the Sermon in the Mount, viz., "Take no thought for your life," (vi. 25), "Take no thought, saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink (vi. 31), and "Take no thought for the morrow" (vi. 34), we shall easily interpret this prayer, too, in the sense of an exhortation, the significance of which would be, "Let us be satisfied with our daily bread." Nevertheless we must grant that the fourth prayer is an actual prayer, and in this sense it has appeared offensive to the early Christians. It is on this account that the Vulgate translates "needful" by "supersubstantialis," interpreting the word to mean "What is above the daily necessities," and claiming that Jesus meant us to pray for the spiritual food of the soul. There are still great church authorities, especially in the Roman Catholic Church, who interpret the fourth prayer in this sense.

As to the ceremonies of praying, we know that in pagan religions as well as in the Old Testament, the habit prevailed of prostration. As conquered people prostrate themselves before the victor, or slaves before their master, so the religious devotee intended to show his entire submission to God by humiliation. This habit gradually changed into kneeling, which continued even in the Christian Church, and is still frequently practised. But we should remember that the early Christians insisted on the more dignified mode of praying in a standing posture, which was rigorously insisted on in their Sunday services. The attitude of stand-

<sup>1</sup> *ἐπιούσιος* is probably derived from *ἐπι* and *ούσία*. The latter word means "being, substance, especially one's own substance, property, use." *ούσία* is a derivative from *εἶναι*, to be. Others derive *ἐπιούσιος* (with a neglect of the *ι*) directly from *ἐπιεῖναι*, to come upon, which serves in Attic Greek as the future tense of *ἐπιέρχασθαι*, and interpret the term "coming upon" in the sense of "serviceable for a special time; sufficient for the moment." In either case the word is not a good Greek formation, but the meaning "needful; for present use; belonging to the necessities of life," appears sufficiently established.

ing expresses reverence without humiliation and was expressive of the idea that the Christian's relation to God is not that of a slave to his master, but of a child to his father.

The attitude of lifting or folding the hands is very old and is found to have prevailed in ancient Egypt, in India, in Greece, and Italy,<sup>1</sup> and among the Northern nations. It continued in Christianity, where the folding of hands remains especially popular among the Germans.

<sup>1</sup> The Romans called folded hands a comb or *pecten*, and regarded it as the sign of magic fetters. See for instance Ovid IX., III, 609 "*digitis inter se pectine junctis*" and Clin. 28, 59 "*digitis pectinatim inter se implexis*." Cf. also Lucan. III., 609. For further details see Böttger *Ilithya*, p. 38.