

Among the many scholars who have had no doubts about the truth of Matthew's and Luke's claim that Jesus gave an extended prayer to the disciples that was something formally set out with an opening address to God and that was followed by a number of petitions to him are Adolf von Harnack, Professor of Church History at the University of Berlin, and perhaps the most learned theologian and Church Historian of the 19th century,¹ and Friedrich Spitta, Professor of New Testament and Practical Theology at the Kaiser Wilhelms University at Strasbourg and, later, Professor at the University of Göttingen.² But in their view, the number of petitions within this prayer was smaller than what Luke (and therefore also what Matthew and the *Didache*) tell us the prayer possessed, being limited to only four -- for bread, for forgiveness, for protection against "entering" πειρασμός, and for the "coming" not of "God's kingdom" but of his Spirit -- which were also worded differently from their counterparts in Matthew 6:9-13 and Lk. 11:2-4.³ That is to say, it read:

¹ On Harnack and his influence, see *Adolf von Harnack. Christentum, Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft*, Kurt Nowak et al., eds., (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 2003.

² On Spitta, see <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd119424568.html#ndbcontent>.

³ A. Harnack, "Die Ursprüngliche Gestalt des Vaterunsers", *Sitzungsberichte der Königlichen Academie der Wissenschaften*, Berlin, 1904; F. Spitta, "Die älteste Form des Vaterunsers" in *Monatschrift für Gottesdienst und kirchliche Kunst* 9 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1904) 333-345. One might think that Harnack came to change his mind on this matter given that four years after the publication of "Die Ursprüngliche Gestalt des Vaterunsers", he gives on p. 136 of his *The Sayings of Jesus*, (London: Williams & Norgate/New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908) what he believes to have been the source for what we find at Matt. 6:9-13/Lk. 11:2-4 as

(9) Πάτερ (11) τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον, (12) καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἠσυχώσαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν, (13) καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν.

But to see Harnack as here rejecting what he had said in his 1904 publication about the form and wording of the original text of the LP is to ignore several things: first, that

Πάτερ,
ἐλθέτω τὸ πνεῦμα σου τὸ ἅγιον ἐφ' ἡμᾶς καὶ καθαρисάτω ἡμᾶς
τὸν ἄρτον σου τὸν ἐπιούσιον δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν·
καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν,
καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν·
μὴ ἀφῆς ἡμᾶς εἰσενεχθῆναι πειρασμόν

They came to this conclusion on the basis of five beliefs:

1. that the two canonical versions of the Prayer depend upon a translation into Greek of an Aramaic exemplar;
2. that the earliest, and therefore the most trustworthy, witness to the form and wording of this translation is Marcion;
- 3.) that according to Marcion the translation read:

Πάτερ,
ἐλθέτω τὸ πνεῦμα σου τὸ ἅγιον ἐφ' ἡμᾶς καὶ καθαρисάτω ἡμᾶς
ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου,
τὸν ἄρτον [σου] τὸν ἐπιούσιον δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν·
καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν,
καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν·
μὴ ἀφῆς ἡμᾶς εἰσενεχθῆναι πειρασμόν

4. that the presence of the Kingdom petition in Marcion's version of the translation was a pre-Marcionite intrusion from Matthew into the text of the

Harnack was reconstructing the text of the Greek source that he thought Matthew and Luke drew upon independently of one another which itself was derived from a predecessor; second, that wording of this source was to be reconstructed *only* from *what is common to both* Matt. 6:9-13 and Lk. 11:2-4; and third, that Harnack believed that the particular MSS of Luke upon which text critics have determined what Luke wrote at Lk. 11:2b do not accurately attest to what Luke originally wrote. According to him, the appearance of the Kingdom and Name petitions within B P75, etc. is due the exemplars of these witnesses having come from the hands of scribes who had already assimilated Matt. 6:9c-10a to what Luke originally set out as following the Prayer's address to God and the petition for the coming of the Spirit (i.e., only the Bread, Forgiveness, and "Temptation" petitions).

exemplar that Marcion used;⁴

5. that the phrases such as ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου and ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου, the absence of the petition for the coming of the Spirit, and the variant readings of the forgiveness and "temptation" clauses that are attested in later witnesses to the wording of the LP as belonging to the Matthean and Lucan versions of the Prayer are additions to, and transformations of, the original Greek translation of its Aramaic form that were made to that text in the course of its transmission to its later witnesses either by tradents/copyists or by the evangelist Matthew himself who, under the "dominating influence of the Synagogue" and the solemn congregational prayers, e.g., the *Kaddish* and the *Amidah* that they knew were said there, wanted to make the original Greek text of the LP resemble them.⁵

But how valid is this conclusion? The answer would seem to be "not at all" since the two principal beliefs upon which it rests, and which must be true for the contention to be valid, i.e., that Marcion's witness to the original form and wording of the source from which Matthew and Luke depended for their versions of the LP is a trustworthy one, and that the liturgy of the Synagogue was the source from which tradents, including Matthew, took the elements in the canonical versions of the Prayer that Harnack and Spitta viewed as accretions and additions to its original form and wording, are highly dubious.

The first belief is grounded in two question begging assumptions: (1) that Marcion's text is a relatively faithful reproduction of the form and wording of whatever exemplar he relied upon; and (2) that even if it is reasonably faithful to the form and wording of what Marcion read in the exemplar of his text, his exemplar was not itself the product of scribal emendation of a fuller text. But given Marcion's noted tendency to

⁴ At least so Harnack, "Der ursprüngliche Text," 28.

⁵ *Sayings of Jesus*, 64-66

purge from his exemplar of Luke texts that did not agree with his theology, his [Marcion's] witness to what Luke wrote at Lk. 11:2-4 may be anything but a faithful representation of it. Indeed, this is what Tertullian alleges when in his *Against Marcion* he notes that Marcion's text of Lk. 11:2-4 is a misrepresentation of it. And there is reason to believe that early second century scribes truncated as well as emended texts they were intent to copy and transmit to others.⁶ So the idea that the exemplar of the text of Lk. 11:2-4 that Marcion relied upon and reproduced in his Gospel was not what Luke had originally written cannot be ruled out of consideration. Moreover, as Harnack's colleague at Berlin, H. F. von Soden, noted almost as soon as Harnack had made his claims about the originality of Marcion's witness to the text of Lk. 11:2-4, the testimony of 2nd century Patristic commentators on the text of Lk. 11:2-4, shows no awareness that Luke's version was originally absent of the Name and Kingdom petitions,⁷ let alone that it contained the petition for the coming of the Spirit.⁸

True, Harnack and Spitta tried to counter this last point by noting that Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, and the scribes of MSS 700 and 160 believed that that the petition for the Spirit was something Luke had included in his version of the LP.⁹

⁶ As Harnack himself notes when he states, as I have noted above that he does, that the Kingdom petition was something that was added to Marcion's exemplar (or perhaps the exemplar of Marcion's exemplar) by a scribe who was influenced by what he read in Matt. 6:9c.

⁷ "Die ursprüngliche Gestalt des Vaterunsers," *Christliche Welt* 10 (1904) 218 ff..

⁸ Note, for instance, that in his *De Oratione*, the second century Church Father Tertullian, does not mention the variant. It seems odd that he did not do so if he knew that it had actually been a part of the Lukan text of the LP given the fact that he had a vital interest in texts pertaining to the Holy Spirit.

⁹ Cf. Gregory's remark "The Evangelist Luke interprets this meaning more clearly for us. He who prays for the coming of the Kingdom invokes the alliance of the Holy Spirit.

How, they wondered, could Gregory, Maximus and the scribes of 700 and 162 have added the petition to the text of the LP that came to them unless they felt free to do so? And how could they have felt free to do so if the Name and Kingdom petitions already stood in the text of the LP that was the exemplar for their versions of it?

But as another of Harnack's and Spitta's contemporaries, the textual critic and New Testament theologian Ernst von Dobschütz, pointed out, there are a number of grave difficulties with this thesis.¹⁰ Leaving aside the question, echoed down the years since von Dobschütz wrote, of why we should prefer such witnesses' testimony to the text of Lk. 11:2 over that of the majority of extant MS and Patristic attestation to what Luke wrote,¹¹ there is the fact that in Marcion's Gospel this sentence stands in the place where the Name (if not also the Kingdom) petition stands in the text-critically established text of Lk. 11:2, whereas according to Gregory, Maximus, and the scribes of 700 and 162, who also have it in the place that ἐλθάτω ἡ βασιλεία σου occupies in the majority of witnesses to the text of Lk. 11:2, it was preceded by the Name

For in that Gospel, instead of "Thy Kingdom come," it is written, "Thy Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us."

¹⁰ Von Dobschütz, 293-321, esp. 295-298.

¹¹ Note, for instance, that in his *De Oratione*, the second century Church Father Tertullian, who had a vital interest in texts pertaining to the Holy Spirit, does not mention the variant. It seems odd that he did not do so if he knew that it had actually been a part of the Lukan text of the LP. Indeed, he seems to say that it was not when in his Treatise *Against Marcion* he notes how Marcion's text of the Prayer is not what Luke had originally given.

Even more importantly, there is the testimony of Origen who was certainly is aware of what Marcion's text of Lk. 11:2-4 read (cf. Origen, Fr.), but rejects it as a sound witness to what Luke wrote, which, according to him is what we find in

Petition.¹² How, Von Dubschutz asks, do we account for this variation in placement if they are reproducing the same text?¹³ And how, moreover, as others have asked, do we account for the fact that Gregory, Maximus, and ms 162 indicate, quite contrary to what should be the case if ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου was not originally in Luke's text, that the Name petition actually was? Is there not, they note, a simpler explanation for the fact that Gregory, Maximus, and both mss 700 and ms 162 know the variant, namely, that an early copyist of Luke substituted it for what he found in Lk. 11:2c – perhaps to make the text of the LP suitable for celebrating the rite of baptism or the laying on of hands,¹⁴ and that his MS became the exemplar for the text of Luke that Marcion, Gregory, and Maximus read and took to be authentic, and that mss 162 and 700 were ultimately based upon?

Of course one could argue that Harnack's and Spitta's claim about the original text of the LP being a "something" that was shorter in form and worded differently from what we find in the canonical version of Lk. 11:2-4 is buttressed by the fact that it bears all the hallmarks of the type of First Century Jewish Prayer known as a "short prayer" (which consisted of an address to God followed by requests that often centered in the pray-er's personal needs).¹⁵ Moreover, its themes seem, at least at first glance, to be

¹² Cf., e.g, Gregory's remark "The Evangelist Luke interprets this meaning more clearly for us. He who prays for the coming of the Kingdom invokes the alliance of the Holy Spirit. For in that Gospel, instead of "Thy Kingdom come," it is written, "Thy Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us."

¹³ "The Lord's Prayer", 295.

¹⁴ So B.A. Metzger, *A Text Critical Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1975) 17. See, too, Green, *Matthew: Poet of the Beatitudes*, 295-296.

¹⁵ On the form and contents of the Jewish "Short Prayer", see J. Heineman, *Prayer in*

those characteristic of Jesus' teaching found elsewhere in the Synoptic tradition. But each of these things could be (and have been, and quite correctly) said about what we find in the canonical versions of the Prayer. So the facts that the version of the Prayer that Harnack and Spitta attribute to Jesus resembles Jewish short prayers and that it seems to tally with the teaching of Jesus set out elsewhere in the Synoptic tradition, are hardly good buttresses for the claim that what they see as the original version of the Prayer is actually more original than either of the versions of the Prayer given to us by Matthew and Luke.

Moreover, as von Dobschütz observed, the correspondence between the theme of the petition for the coming of the Spirit and the teaching of Jesus is more apparent than real. To see this, it is worth quoting von Dobschütz at length:

In Luke's Gospel, to be sure, a petition for the Holy Spirit seems admirably to suit Luke's fondness for referring to the Holy Spirit. It is not necessary to adduce the instances from Acts, for they are well known; but we may note the fact that Luke 11 is the chapter of the Holy Spirit, where he is mentioned oftener than in any chapter of the Synoptic Gospels. In Lk. 11 13 for 'give good things ' the evangelist glosses, 'give the Holy Spirit ' ; in 11 20 ..., where Matthew has, 'If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons,' Luke, probably following an exorcistic tradition, changes this into 'by the finger of God'; in 12 1a he gives the comforting assurance that 'the Holy Spirit will teach you in that hour what you must say.' It is obvious that the petition for the Spirit fits in well here; but the argument can be turned in the opposite direction, for it may be said that the very fact that the Holy Spirit is so often mentioned in these chapters led someone to introduce this petition here. *Besides, the petition as a whole does not agree with the Lukan style of diction and of thought* (emphasis mine). In its form with two verbs it corresponds neither to the first nor to the third (Lukan) petition. Luke uses 'cleanse' only for outward levitical cleanness (4 27, 17 14, 17, of leprosy; 11 39, Acts 10 15, 11 9, of vessels and food) -- except in Acts 15 9, where the word is used in a figurative sense of hearts cleansed by faith; while in this petition the idea is neither purely levitical nor figurative, but sacramental. Moreover, and this is the main point, Luke never thinks of the Spirit as cleansing; the Spirit is a divine energy, imparting the gift of tongues and other miraculous endowments, never the cleansing power. That conception belongs to the sacramental view, seen in the mysteries, which became common among later Christian theologians

and is already found in the thought of the gnostics.¹⁶

So this belief seems groundless.

The second belief rests upon the assumption not only that the synagogue was a place of communal prayer in the first century CE, but that the *Amidah* and the *Kaddish* were among the particular prayers that were regularly recited communally there.

It is to be noted that there is indeed a rough similarity between the wording of the Name and Kingdom clauses of the canonical versions of the LP with the wording of the Jewish prayer known as the *Kaddish*, a doxology that, according to J. Petuchowski and M. Brookes, was recited (with congregational responses) at the close of the prayers in the synagogue from the second or third century CE onwards, and is now frequently done so after Scripture readings and religious discourses that take place in schoolhouse or synagogue.¹⁷

Exalted and sanctified is God's great name
in the world which He has created according to His will
and may He establish His kingdom
in your lifetime and your days
and in the lifetimes of all the House of Israel
speedily and soon.
May His great name be blessed
forever and to all eternity.
Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted
extolled and honored, elevated and lauded.

There is also a certain linguistic similarity between the LP's Name and Kingdom petitions and the wording of the 11th petition of the prayer that many Jews call *The*

¹⁶ Lord's Prayer", 297-298. See, too J. Noland, *Luke 9:21-18:34* (Dallas: Word, 2002) who adds to von Dobshütz's observations by noting that the presence of the petition in Luke would have made the recitation of prayer moot after Pentecost (600).

¹⁷ On this, see Petuchowski's and Brooke's introduction to B. Gebraud's "The Kaddish Prayer" on pages 59-61 in their *The Lord's Prayer and the Jewish Liturgy*.

Prayer, i.e., the *Amidah* (which is also known as the *Shemoneh Esreh* or *The 18 Benedictions*) that was believed by many in Harnack's day (and still in our own) to have been the primary prayer of both public and private Jewish worship

Restore our judges as at first
and our counselors as in the beginning,
 (and remove from us sorrow and sighing)
and you yourself reign over us, you alone.
 (with loving kindness and compassion),
 and clear us in judgment.
 (Blessed are you, O Lord, the King
 who loves righteousness and justice)
 Blessed are you, Lord, who loves justice.

But to conclude, as Harnack and as Spitta did, that these prayers were the *source* of the what they see as additions and accretions to the original text of the LP is extremely problematic. As I will argue at length below, these prayers *were unknown in Judaism* until at least after the Fall of Jerusalem and may not have been cast in the form and wording in which we now know them until much later. And if so, they could not have been the source for anything in, let alone alleged additions and accretions to, the prayer that Jesus gave his disciples. Moreover, even should they have been early and in the form and wording that Harnack thinks they possessed, they were not part of anything that went on during the first century in the Synagogue, since, as I will note in more detail below, synagogues at this time were "houses of study", not a place for the communal recitation of statutory prayers.¹⁸ This being the case, then there is no reason to believe that the appearance of such things in the canonical versions of the Lord's Prayer as the Kingdom and the name and the will and deliverance petitions are due to tradents, including Matthew, wishing to make a shorter version of the Prayer something that in

¹⁸ On this, see below.

form and wording resemble prayers said in the Synagogue, not to mention that they are secondary to the original text of the prayer.

So, to return to the matter at hand: Is there any validity in Harnack's and Spitta's reconstruction of the "something" that Jesus gave his disciples to pray (not to mention their view of the history of the development of the Prayer)? In the light of the considerations above, the answer has to be "no."¹⁹ Indeed, what is more likely to have been the case, given that it is unlikely that what is common to the canonical versions of

¹⁹ A position very similar to Harnack's and Spitta's – i.e., that the LP consisted of an address followed by the petitions about bread, forgiveness and protection against trials – has recently been advanced by Douglas A. Oakman in his "The Lord's Prayer in Social Perspective" (in B. Chilton and C.A. Evans [eds.] *Authenticating the Words of Jesus* [Leiden: Brill, 1998] 137-186, esp. 144-155) albeit with the small difference that Oakman believes that Matt. 6:13b, "Deliver us from (the) evil (one)", is also original to the Prayer. His claim rests on four assumptions: (1) that Jesus gave the prayer to Galilean villagers whose primary concerns were not only the satisfaction of hunger, debt relief, but also the threat of being brought, because of indebtedness, into rigged courts "where they thought it likely to be tried by judges who would more likely side with the wealthy than with the poor"; (2) that the bread, forgiveness, and deliverance petitions are, respectively, calls to God to supply actual bread, remittance of literal indebtedness, and protection against being tried in a court by an unjust judge; (3) that "... Jesus had little concern for priestly mediations of the divine, or purity in the priestly sense, and was paramountly concerned with the changing of material circumstances" ("The Lord's Prayer", 139); and (4) that Jesus' message was focused on speaking to the immediate needs of the poor in concrete terms. Consequently, any prayer for aid from God that he would give to villagers would have to be something that was grounded in, limited to, and directly addressed, their plight.

Now, as we will see (), while there are some grounds for reading the bread and forgiveness petitions in the way the Oakman reads them, there are no reasons at all to see the "deliverance" petitions as a call to God to deliver peasants from rigged courts and corrupt judges. Moreover, Oakman's overall claim is both question begging and circular. Were food, debt, and unjust judges the *only* concerns Galilean villagers had? More importantly, what evidence do we have that Jesus gave the Prayer to anyone other than the disciples, let alone that, as Oakman himself once denied (*Jesus and the Economic Questions of His Day*, 175-98) that Jesus was entirely limited in his own concerns, let alone within the LP, to peasant horizons, even assuming that securing bread and release from monetary indebtedness and protection from unjust judges were primary problems for them.

the Prayer -- the Name and Kingdom petitions -- would have been worded as identically as they are now, let alone placed in the particular order and location that they both are now if Matthew and Luke (or earlier tradents who were responsible for producing the versions that Matthew and Luke present to us) had been working independently of one another, even if they had known the *Kaddish* and the *Amida* and had the intention to shape the prayer into something more liturgical than it originally was -- is that some if not all of what Harnack and Spitta regarded as accretions and additions to the Prayer were actually an original part of it. And if this is so, then the question becomes "Is it Matthew's version of the Prayer or Luke's that best represents it?".