

What Prayer Are We Praying When We Pray the “Lord’s Prayer”?

I begin this study with a question to which the answer is seemingly as simple as it is obvious, namely, What prayer are we praying when we pray the “Lord’s Prayer”?

I say “seemingly” because in point of fact the question is more complex than it appears at first glance. And it does not have one answer. It has four. Moreover, unless one has a wide acquaintance not only with the way the prayer is actually prayed in all of the contexts in which people presently “make bold to say” it but also with the results of scholarly investigation of the prayer, these four answers are by no means obvious ones.

The first answer is this: the prayer “we” are praying varies depending on who one means by “we.” The second is: we are praying a prayer that has been misnamed. The third is that we are praying a prayer whose English (and other modern-language) prayer texts are based on and derived from one of two primary and, in

substance and wording, divergent versions of the prayer;¹ moreover, even at that, most of these modern prayer texts do not faithfully reproduce the original form and wording of their source. And fourth, we are praying a prayer whose substance and wording, it has been argued, owe more to an early Christian author/redactor than to Jesus, even if it does originally come from him (see below). Let us examine each of these answers in more detail.

Versions of the Prayer among Different Christian Groups?

Whether it is in private or within the context of public ceremony, all Christians are in the habit of reciting, sometimes daily if not more frequently, a scriptural text that has been named and known from antiquity as “the Lord’s Prayer.”² But the particular text of this prayer recited at any given time by any given Christian or Christian group is not necessarily the same as that recited by another.

Look at table 1.1 and compare the various ways the prayer is recited by British members of the Church of England, whose

1. The so-called Lord’s Prayer comes down to us not only from two different places in the New Testament—from the section of Matthew’s Gospel known as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) and from the section of Luke’s Gospel known as the Travel Narrative (Luke 9:51–18:14)—but also in a longer (Matt. 6:9–13) and a shorter form (Lk. 11:1–2), between which there are verbal disagreements even at the places at which one has thematic counterparts with the other (on these, see below). It is also attested in a (most likely) early second-century-CE noncanonical Christian document known as the *Didache*, or *The teaching of the Twelve Apostles*: see *Didache* 8.2. On the date of the *Didache*, which some scholars have claimed is as early as 60 CE, see Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary on the Didache* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 57.
2. The origin of the title “the Lord’s Prayer” lies, so far as we know, with the early Western church father Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus (Cyprian), a bishop of the North African city of Carthage between c. 246 and 258, who used its Latin form (*oratio dominica*) in the name of a short treatise on the prayer (*De dominica oratione*) that he composed in 252 CE. It does not seem to have been used in England before the Reformation, no doubt because, as Herbert Thurston has noted, from the Middle Ages until and even after the Reformation, the prayer was always said in Latin, even by the uneducated, who would have referred to it, as is still done today in France and elsewhere (especially within the Catholic tradition), by what they knew to be the first few words of the Latin text they recited during the Mass—i.e., *Pater Noster* (“The Lord’s Prayer,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* [New York: Robert Appleton, 1910], 9:356, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09356a.htm>).

liturgical and private prayer life is formed and guided by the 1662 Book of Common Prayer; by Presbyterians, Lutherans, Baptists, and Methodists; by modern Episcopalians, using the text offered in Rite Two of the revised (1979) Book of Common Prayer; by English-speaking Catholics, who utter the prayer both privately and within the public context of the Mass in words set out according to the *Novus Ordo Missae*; and finally, by members of the English-speaking Eastern Orthodox communion.

1662 Book of Common Prayer	Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, and Methodist prayer books	1979 Book of Common Prayer (Episcopal Church USA)	English- speaking Catholic prayer books	English- speaking Eastern Orthodox prayer books
Our Father,	Our Father	Our Father	Our Father,	Our Father,
which art in heaven,	who art in heaven,	in heaven,	<i>who art</i> in heaven,	who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.	hallowed be thy name.	hallowed be your Name,	hallowed be <i>thy</i> name;	hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come.	Thy kingdom come,	your kingdom come,	<i>thy</i> kingdom come;	thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done in earth	thy will be done, on earth	your will be done, on earth as	<i>thy</i> will be done on earth	thy will be done on earth
As it is in heaven.	as it is in heaven.	in heaven.	as it is in heaven.	as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.	Give us this day our daily bread;	Give us today our daily bread.	Give us <i>this</i> <i>day</i> our daily bread;	Give us this day our daily bread;

THE DISCIPLES' PRAYER

And forgive us our trespasses,	and forgive us our debts,	Forgive us our sins	and forgive us our <i>trespasses</i>	and forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive them that trespass against us.	as we forgive our debtors;	as we forgive those who sin against us.	as we forgive those who <i>trespass</i> against us;	as we forgive those who trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation,	and lead us not into temptation,	Save us from the time of trial,	<i>and lead us not into temptation,</i>	and lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.	but deliver us from evil.	and deliver us from evil.	but deliver us from evil.	but deliver us from <i>the evil one.</i>

For thine is the
kingdom,
The power, and
the glory,
Amen.

Table 1.1

As we can see, among English speakers who pray the prayer known as “the Lord’s Prayer,” there is no universally agreed way of doing so. Nor, I might add, does there seem to be hope that such agreement will ever be reached. Members of the English Language Liturgical Consultation, a group of ecumenical liturgists in the English-speaking world whose mission is to develop liturgical texts for common use, standardized the text of the prayer, but the text they developed has been rejected by the very communions from whom members of the commission were drawn and for whom it was drawn up.³

3. See the entry for the Lord’s Prayer in the English Language Liturgical Commission, “Survey of Use,” 2015, <http://englishtexts.org.dnnmax.com/ASurveyofUseandVariation/tabid/915/Default.aspx#thelordsprayer>.

The Name of the Prayer

To state things boldly, the title conventionally used for the prayer texts outlined above is as inaccurate as it is without warrant—at least insofar as it is taken to be an indication that the prayer(s) known as “the Lord’s Prayer” is *the Lord’s* prayer, that is, a prayer that Jesus himself prayed. For although it is true (to paraphrase Heb. 5:7) that “in the days of his flesh,” Jesus frequently “offered up prayers and supplications” to God, there is no evidence whatsoever that the address to God that we know as the Lord’s Prayer or anything closely resembling it was, so far as we can tell from the Gospel record, ever one of the prayers that Jesus himself uttered. The evangelists place eight prayers on Jesus’ lips (see table 1.2).

Matt. 11:25–26 // Luke 10:21

<p>At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.” (Matt. 11:25–26)</p>	<p>At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.” (Luke 10:21)</p>
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Mark 14:35–36 // Matt. 26:39

<p>And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.” (Mark 14:35–36)</p>	<p>And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” (Matt 26:39)</p>
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Luke 23:34

Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

Mark 15:34

At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

THE DISCIPLES' PRAYER

Luke 23:46

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.

John 11:41-42

And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me."

John 12:27-28

Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—"Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.

John 17:1-26

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

"I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

“Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

Table 1.2

It is true that two or three of these eight prayers look and sound as if they are snippets, or more accurately, echoes, of the words and substance of the “Lord’s Prayer,” especially, though somewhat ironically,⁴ the prayers of Jesus found at John 12:27–28 and John 17:15. But these hardly count as evidence that Jesus himself prayed “the Lord’s Prayer.” What might be adduced as *sure* echoes of the prayer (i.e., the use of “Father” in his invocations of God, and the expressions “glorify your name” and “protect them from [the] evil [one],” John 11:41–43; 17:1–26) are both Old Testament formulations as well as forms of address and expressions typical of many ancient Jewish prayers. For instance, “our Father” appears in Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Tob. 13:4; and in several of the petitions of an important (though probably post-70–CE) Jewish daily prayer known as the *Shemoneh Esreh* or *The Eighteen Benedictions*, whose text we will explore in more detail below. The expression “Our Father in (the) heaven(s)”

4. I say “somewhat ironically” because it has been maintained, usually, as J. T. Robinson demonstrated (“A New Look on the Fourth Gospel,” in *Twelve New Testament Studies* [London: SCM, 1962], 94–106), on the basis of the claim that the author of the Gospel of John, knew and used the Synoptic Gospels, that the sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John have less of a claim to representing what Jesus actually said than those we find in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. For a contrary assessment, see P. W. Ensor, “The Johannine Sayings of Jesus and the Question of Authenticity,” in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John*, ed. John Lierman (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 14–33.

appears in Jewish prayers found in the Mishnah, the oldest authoritative postbiblical collection and codification of Jewish oral laws, collected and compiled by rabbis known as the tannaim (“repeaters”) over a period of about two centuries.⁵

What we are praying is actually a prayer that, according to the evangelists who handed it down to us, Jesus taught his disciples (see Matt. 6:5–9a [cf. Matt. 5:2] and Luke 11:1–2a) and instructed *them* to pray (or to model their prayers on) in order, as Luke tells us (11:1–2a) and as Matthew implies, that they might specifically identify themselves, and be recognized, as his disciples. Accordingly, as such scholars as G. R. Beasley Murray, Donald T. Williams, Peter Doble, and Brad Young, have noted,⁶ the true name of the prayer—or at least a more historically accurate and befitting title for it—might be “the Disciples’ Prayer.”⁷ Consequently, throughout the rest of this book, except within my quotations of scholars who use the traditional designation, I shall refer to the prayer by this title.

The Source of Our Versions of the Prayer

It may come as a surprise, especially in the light of the importance that the Disciples’ Prayer has had within Christianity, to discover that the prayer is given little prominence in the writings of the New Testament. It is not set out in any of the epistles attributed to Paul or Peter or James or Jude or John, let alone in the book of Acts or the Apocalypse of John. And although there is some evidence that

5. M. Sotah 9:15 and M. Yoma 8:9. On the Mishnah itself, see Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933).

6. Beasley Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 147; D. T. Williams, *The Disciples’ Prayer: An Intimate Phrase by Phrase Journey through the Lord’s Prayer* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005); Peter Doble, *The Disciples’ Prayer: A Study Guide to the Lord’s Prayer* (Peterborough: Foundery Press, 2000); and Brad Young, “The Lord’s Prayer,” in *The Jewish Background to the Lord’s Prayer* (Austin, TX: Center for Judaic Studies Publications, 1984).

7. Indeed, Young goes so far as to remark that “the first barrier to a proper understanding of the prayer is the traditional title” (“Lord’s Prayer”, 1).

the authors of the Gospels of Mark and of John knew the Disciples' Prayer,⁸ neither of them reproduce it in part or in full—a fact we will come back to later on when discussing the important issue of whether the prayer as we have set it out originates with Jesus. The Disciples' Prayer appears in only two places in the New Testament: at Matt. 6:9b-13, in the section of Matthew's Gospel known, thanks to Augustine of Hippo, as the Sermon on the Mount,⁹ and at Luke 11:2b-4, in the section of Luke's Gospel known to Lukan scholars as the "Travel Narrative." Moreover, what we find at Matt. 6:9-13 differs in a number of ways from what we find at Luke 11:2-4. To see this, we need to set the texts of these two canonical attestations to the prayer side by side¹⁰ (see table 1.3; note that the underlining of certain words in the Greek texts of the prayer indicates where the language of these texts differs in notable ways).

8. Cf. Mark 11:25 with Matt. 6:12 // Luke 11:4; Mark 13:38 with Matt. 6:13 // Luke 11:4; John 17 with Matt. 6:10 // Luke 11:2.

9. See book 1.1 of his exposition of Matthew 5-7, *On the Sermon on the Mount*, trans. William Findlay, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 1, vol. 6, rev. and ed. Kevin Knight (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1888), <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1601.htm>.

10. In reproducing and translating the Lukan text of the Disciples' Prayer, I have included an interesting variant of Luke 11:2, which speaks of a desired coming of God's Spirit rather than of the hallowing of God's name. According to such noteworthy scholars as Adolf von Harnack and B. H. Streeter, the variant stems from Luke himself and may have been an original part of the Disciples' Prayer. On this, see the important article by Robert Leaney, "The Lucan Text of the Lord's Prayer (Lk XI 2-4)," *Novum Testamentum* 1 (1956): 103-11. But not all agree. See, e.g., the arguments of E. F. Scott (*The Lord's Prayer: Its Character, Purpose, and Interpretation* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951], 26-27) against the variant's originality.

THE DISCIPLES' PRAYER

Matt. 6:9b-13	Luke 11:2b-4
Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς	Πάτερ
ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου	ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου
ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου	ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου
γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου	[ἐλθέτω τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα σου ἔφ' ἡμᾶς καὶ καθαρίσατω ἡμᾶς]
ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς	
τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον	<u>τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον</u>
<u>δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον</u>	<u>δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν</u>
καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα	καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν
ἡμῖν	
<u>ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς</u>	καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν
<u>ὀφειλέταις ἡμῖν</u>	
καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς	καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν.
πειρασμόν	
<u>ἀλλ' ἄρῃσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ</u>	
<u>πονηροῦ.</u>	

Table 1.3

Now, as can be seen from table 1.3, Matthew presents the prayer as beginning with an invocation of the God of Israel both as “our Father” (Πάτερ ἡμῶν, *Pater hēmōn*) and as “in (the) heaven(s)” (ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, *ho en tois ouranois*) and then continues with seven petitions concerning, respectively, God’s name, his kingdom, his will, his provision of the disciples’ “bread,” his contingent forgiveness of the disciples’ “debts,” the disciples’ involvement with “testing” (πειρασμός, *peirasmos*), and their deliverance “from (the) evil (one)” (ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ, *apo tou ponērou*).¹¹

11. The reason I have written “(the) evil (one)” here is that the Greek expression τοῦ πονηροῦ is ambiguous, possibly representing either the neuter or masculine form of the noun. It is unclear whether Matthew here (or John above) is speaking about “evil” in the sense of (1) “evil acts”; or (2) “that which harms”; or (3) an evil person, meaning someone who is wicked and is intent to perpetrate wickedness; or (4) “the Evil One,” i.e., the figure who Matthew tells us put Jesus

Luke also presents the prayer as beginning with an invocation to God. But in his version this consists of only one word (“Father”). His follow-up to the invocation is a series of five petitions, the concerns of which are, respectively, God’s name, his kingdom (or his Spirit/empowering presence), the disciples’ “bread,” the forgiveness of their sins, and their involvement with “testing,” which sometimes differ substantially in form and in wording from their Matthean counterparts. For instance, Luke’s representation of what Jesus told his disciples to ask God with respect to their “daily bread” is that God should “Go/keep on giving [it] to us day after day” (a translation that highlights the fact that here Luke uses the present tense imperative form of the verb δίδωμι, *didōmi*), whereas Matthew’s is that God should “give [it to] us today” (a translation that brings out the force of the fact that Matthew’s δός (*dos*) is the aorist imperative form of δίδωμι). Luke’s representation of what Jesus told his disciples to pray with respect to receiving God’s forgiveness is “And forgive us our *sins*, for we ourselves *are forgiving* everyone who is indebted to us,” whereas Matthew’s is “And forgive us our *debts* as/since we also *have forgiven* our *debtors*.”

As should be evident, Christians who pray “the Lord’s Prayer” in any of its contemporary liturgical forms pray a text that is primarily derived from Matt. 6:9-13, not Luke 11:2-4. In this, they are doing nothing new. They are, in fact, participating in a widespread and unified liturgical tradition that goes back to at least the early second century, if not before, and that is grounded in two things: First, the preference in the early church was for using Matthew’s Gospel over Luke’s as the source from which Jesus’ teaching on any subject

“to the test” after Jesus was baptized and then driven by the Spirit of God into the wilderness (see Matt. 4:1-11). On this see the entry “πεινῆρός,” in BDAG (= Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, eds., *The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996]), 851.

was drawn; and second, the Matthean text is more symmetrical in its arrangement of its petitions than that of Luke, and therefore lends itself more readily to liturgical use than Luke's does. Note, for instance, both the balance in Matthew of the number of "us" petitions with the number of "you" petitions and the sonority of such words and phrases peculiar to his version as "Our Father" and "the one in the heavens" and "as in heaven, so also on earth."

But it also should be evident that what Christians pray under the title "the Lord's Prayer" does not, in any of the official ways it is prayed, faithfully reproduce the original form and wording of its source.

Most of this "unfaithfulness" in translation (if that is not too strong a description) is minor: for example, the reversal of the order of phrases in which Matthew renders the "bread" petition; the transformation of his use of the past tense in the forgiveness petition ("as we also have forgiven our debtors") into a present-tense formulation ("as we [presently] forgive . . ."); or the use in that petition of the word "trespass"—an expression that to us connotes encroaching without permission onto and violating someone's space, or even an actionable wrong committed against the person or property of another, as a proper translation of Matthew's ὀφειλήματα (*opheilēmata*), which, as we will see, denotes "owing something to someone."

But one such "infidelity" is major. That is the attribution to Matthew of a desire to end his version of the prayer with a particular doxology (a hymn of praise to God) that runs, "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the Glory, forever and ever. Amen." The doxology appears in all but the Catholic and Eastern orthodox versions of the prayer. True, the practice of adding this doxology to the prayer is also ancient. It appears to be first instanced in the late first- or early second-century-CE handbook on liturgy known

as the *Didache*, or *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, whose author presents a version of the Disciple's Prayer very close in form and wording to Matt. 6:9-13 yet ends, "For yours is the power and the glory forever. Amen" (see Did. 8.2).¹² As early as the third century, the addition was included in manuscripts of the Gospel of Matthew itself, as in a Syriac translation of the New Testament known as the *Curatorian Manuscript*, though here Matt. 6:9-13 is represented as concluding "For yours is the kingdom and the glory" (i.e., the expressions "and the glory" and "Amen" are absent). We also find the ascription to Matthew of a doxology in a sermon given by John Chrysostom, a fourth-century church father and bishop of Constantinople. To buttress a claim he makes about the majesty of God and the duties of obedience that Christians owe him, he adduces not only Matt 6:9-13 but also the specific words, "For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory" as its scriptural warrant.

But the antiquity of the practice does nothing to mitigate the fact that the practice itself is an act of "unfaithfulness"—however piously intended!—in reproducing what Matthew presented as the text of the ending of the Disciples' Prayer. For, as many text critics have

12. Here is the text of *Didache* 8.2:

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς
 ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου
 ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου
 γεννηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου
 ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς
 τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον
 δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον
 καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὴν ὀφειλὴν ἡμῶν
 ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφίεμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν
 καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς
 εἰς πειρασμόν
 ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ
 ὅτι σοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα
 εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.

On the relationship between Matt. 6:9-13 and the version of the Disciples' Prayer found at the *Didache* 8.2, see below, 26-27.

noted, citing our earliest manuscript witnesses to the text of Matthew (i.e., the fourth-century-CE manuscripts known as Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, and most of the Old Latin MSS, which lack the doxology), as well the lack of discussion of a doxology of any kind in our earliest written commentaries on the Matthean text of the prayer (such as that of the second-century church fathers Tertullian and Origen, and the third-century father Cyprian), it is certain that Matthew's version of the prayer originally ended with, "But rescue [or preserve] us from [the] evil [one]." In other words, the doxology was added to the original ending of Matthew's version of the prayer sometime after Matthew wrote, most likely, as many text critics and commentators have noted, to adapt the prayer for liturgical use in the early church.¹³

Anyone, then, who recites the doxology when reciting the Disciples' Prayer, thinking it is an original part of the prayer, is not reciting what Matthew originally wrote.

Did Matthew Get It Right?

What I mean by the question Did Matthew get it right? is this: Except for the doxology just discussed, has Matthew avoided doing what various liturgical texts do in their reproduction of Matthew's text of the prayer? That is, is what we find at Matt. 6:9-13 a reliable transcript of the words Jesus taught his disciples to use as the model for their prayers?

Many have doubted that this is so. One reason advanced for not taking Matthew's version of the prayer as a faithful reproduction of Jesus' own words is grounded in the widely held and reasonable belief that Jesus taught, and prayed, in Aramaic (or Hebrew), and not Greek.¹⁴ This being so, would it not be inevitable, given that translation of texts into a target language are rarely exact

13. On this see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 16-17.