

A purple textured Bible cover is shown. A magnifying glass with a black handle is held over the word 'BIBLE' which is embossed in gold on the cover. The word 'Which' is written in white cursive above the magnifying glass. The Bible's pages are visible at the bottom.

Which

BIBLE

Can We Trust?

Compiled by Les Garrett

a 4th century document, and receives further support from Chrysostom (345-407)²⁴ who comments on it and quotes it frequently, and from Isidore of Pelusium (370-440),²⁵ who quotes it. But, in spite of this indisputable testimony in its favour, it is universally rejected by modern critics. Is this unanimous disapproval in accord with the evidence?

(b) Is the Conclusion of the Lord's Prayer a Jewish Formula?

Matt. 6:13b is usually regarded as a Jewish prayer-formula that the early Christians took up and used to provide a more fitting termination for the Lord's Prayer, which originally, it is said, ended abruptly with *but deliver us from evil*. According to W. Michaelis (1948), for example, "It (Matt. 6:13b) is obviously modelled after Jewish prayer-formulas, cf. 1 Chron 29:11."²⁶

This seems, however, a most improbable way to account for the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer. For if the early Christians had felt the need of something which would provide a smoother ending to this familiar prayer, would they deliberately have selected for that purpose a Jewish prayer-formula in which the name of Jesus does not appear? Even a slight study of the New Testament reveals the difficulty of this hypothesis, for if there was one thing in which the early Christians were united it was in their emphasis on the name of Jesus. Converts were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38); miracles were performed in this name (Acts 4:10); by this name alone was salvation possible (Acts 4:12); early Christians were known as those who "called upon this name" (Acts 9:21). Paul received his apostleship "for the sake of His name" (Rom. 1 5), and John wrote his Gospel in order that the readers "might have life through His name" (John 20:31). Is it probable then, (is it at all possible) that these primitive Christians, who on all other occasions were ever mindful of their Saviour's name, should have forgotten it so strangely when selecting a conclusion for a prayer which they regarded as having fallen from His lips? Can it be that they deliberately decided to end the Lord's Prayer with a Jewish formula which makes no mention of Christ?

It is a fact, however, that the Lord's Prayer concludes with a doxology in which the name of Christ is not mentioned. Can this surprising fact be explained? Not, we repeat, on the supposition that this conclusion is spurious. For if the early Christians had invented this doxology or had adopted it from contemporary non-Christian usage, they would surely have included in it or inserted into it their Saviour's name. There is therefore only one explanation of the absence of that adorable name from the concluding doxology of the Lord's Prayer, and this is that this doxology is not spurious but a genuine saying of Christ, uttered before He had revealed unto His disciples His deity and so containing

²³'Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum,' F.X. Funk, Paderborn, 1905, vol. 1, pp. 213, 410.

²⁴MPG, vol. 51, col. 48; vol. 57-58, cols. 282, 301.

²⁵MPG, vol. 78, col. 1076.

²⁶'Prophezei,' W. Michaelis, Zurich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1948, p. 331.

no mention of Himself. At the time He gave this model prayer He deemed it sufficient to direct the praises of His followers toward the Father, knowing that as they grew in their comprehension of the mysteries of their faith their enlightened minds would prompt them so to adore Him also. And the similarity of this doxology to 1 Chron. 29:11 is quite understandable. Might not the words which David used in praise of God be fittingly adapted to the same purpose by One who knew Himself to be the messianic Son of David?

(c) The Testimony of the Ancient Versions and of the Didache

The concluding doxology of the Lord's Prayer is not without considerable testimony in its favour of a very ancient sort. It is found in three Syriac versions, the Peshitta, the Harclean, and the Palestinian. Whether the doxology occurred in the Sinaitic Syriac also is not certain, for the last part of the Lord's Prayer is missing from this manuscript. It is found, however, in the Curetonian manuscript, the other representative of the Old Syriac in the following form, *Because Thine is the kingdom and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen*. The Sahidic also has the doxology of the Lord's Prayer, and so do some manuscripts of the slightly younger Bohairic. In the Sahidic it runs like this, *Because Thine is the power and the glory, unto the ages, Amen*. And in the Old Latin manuscript *k* (which is generally thought to contain the version in its oldest form) the Lord's Prayer ends thus, *Because to Thee is the power for ever and ever*. And the doxology is also found in its customary form in four other Old Latin manuscripts.

Thus the doxology of the Lord's Prayer occurs in five manuscripts of the Old Latin (including the best one), in the Sahidic, and in all the extant Syriac versions. Normally the agreement of three such groups of ancient witnesses from three separate regions would be regarded as an indication of the genuineness of the reading on which they thus agreed. Hort (1881),²⁷ however, endeavoured to escape the force of this evidence by suggesting that the doxologies found (1) in *k*, (2) in the Sahidic version, (3) in the Syriac versions and the vast majority of the Greek manuscripts were three independent developments which had no connection with each other. But by this suggestion Hort multiplied three-fold the difficulty mentioned above. If it is difficult to believe that the early Christians chose for their most familiar prayer a conclusion which made no mention of Christ, it is thrice as difficult to believe that they did thus three times independently in three separate regions. Surely it is easier to suppose that these three doxologies are all derived from an original doxology uttered by Christ and that the variations in wording are due to the liturgical use of the Lord's Prayer, which will be described presently.

The Didache (Teaching) of the Twelve Apostles, a work generally regarded as having been written in the first half of the 2nd century, also

²⁷'N.T. In The Original Greek,' vol. 2, Appendix, p.9.