

## On the Rendering **“Daily Bread”** in the Lord's Prayer.

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IN Luke xi. 1 there is recorded one of the most wide-reaching and spiritual incidents of the Saviour's life. He had prayed—one of his many private prayers—and, His prayer ended, “one of His disciples,” whose name is hidden from men, but written, we doubt not, “in the Lamb's Book of Life,” said unto Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” From that request of that unknown disciple (whether before or after or simultaneous with the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, as recorded by St. Matthew, we need not, for present purposes, inquire) came the gracious answer which now for nearly two thousand years has uplifted the hearts of millions of Adam's children of every race and tongue to the One Eternal Father in heaven, and put words of reverential brevity and prevailing power into their mouths, as in days alike of joy and sorrow, life and death, they have prefaced all their utterances of want and thanksgiving to the Almighty God with the cry of “Abba, Father.” And, in passing, it is valuable to notice that this deliberate act of Christ in the “teaching” of prayer, in response to the infirmity and ignorance of man (for “we know not what prayer to make, τί προσευξόμεθα, as we ought,” Rom viii. 26), approved and confirmed the act of the Baptist in his “teaching” of prayer, and similarly by anticipation sanctioned the practice for all time.

The “form” of prayer taught by our Lord has naturally eclipsed that taught by His forerunner, and by all other teachers. “The Lord's Prayer” abides, the model of all Christian prayer now and to the end of the world. We might, therefore, naturally suppose that the meaning of all its clauses and phrases would be well understood by the Church, and have been uniformly known and handed down from the beginning. It is then, confessedly, a startling fact, and one little or not at all recognised by the large majority of Christians, that at least one clause, containing that one phrase which stands at the head of this note, has all along the centuries been involved in more or less obscurity, as far back as its interpretations can be traced, whether in version or in exposition. Christian men and women, and the Church at large, in the closet and in the sanctuary, in private prayer and in public Eucharist, in the original Aramaic and in divers tongues of the great human family, have daily used this model prayer, and daily prayed for “daily bread,” without any

certain, authorised, and generally accepted meaning attached to the words; and almost universally, as far as private individuals are concerned, without any consciousness of what is (let us at present simply say) most probably the true meaning and comprehensiveness of the phrase. It is my object in the present note to endeavour clearly to elucidate the expression, firmly to establish what I conceive to be its true signification, and to suggest accordingly for Christian use a better than the common and familiar rendering. In doing this I must ask leave to borrow to some extent from the fuller and more formal discussion in my volume on the Gospels;<sup>1</sup> and it may add to whatever help the present note can afford, if I remark that repeated consideration for more than ten years has only confirmed the line and main results of argument there previously advanced.

Now, at the outset, it might be thought at once that, as far as English-speaking Christians are concerned, the question is already really closed, inasmuch as the Revised Version has supported and retained the Authorised Version rendering. But this is not the case. The Revisers, in their retention of the phrase “daily bread,” were influenced by two main considerations—(1) the duty of not departing from familiar usage, especially in a case like the present, except on grounds of absolute certainty (a rule far too much neglected by them elsewhere); and (2) by the results of an examination of the phrase specially undertaken for them by the late learned and lamented Bishop of Durham (*On Rev. of N. T.*, app. i. pp. 195–234). With the deepest respect for whatever came from the pen of this eminent and finished scholar, it must be said that, with his wide research and almost unequalled talent for investigations of this character, it is most surprising that his efforts demonstrably fail, as I shall show, to accomplish the objects which he proposed for his task, and that his conclusions are directly contrary to the very evidence which he himself adduces. His argument, however, unsatisfactory and unsound as it undoubtedly is, will always deserve and repay careful study. It has the great merit of giving clear prominence to the testimony of the ancient versions and the tenor of tradition; and, as a whole, is successful against various interpretations grounded on false etymology.

<sup>1</sup> *The New Test.: A New Trans. from a Revised Greek Text., with Harmony of the Gospels, Notes and Dissertations, etc.* Vol. i. *The Four Gospels.* 1875. Macmillan.

But, nevertheless, its conclusions in favour of the English word "daily" as a fair representation of the original, and in accordance with the oldest tradition, is opposed alike to the acknowledged signification of the English word, and to "the traditional sense" on which it relies. It is still, therefore, a matter of high importance, even for English-speaking Christians, and especially for all teachers and preachers, *not* to consider the question in this way closed, but to submit it for themselves to a fresh, impartial, and thorough examination.

Without entering into any reason for the shorter exhibition of the Lord's Prayer in St. Luke (*i.e.* in certain MSS. of St. Luke, as the case may be), I will, for clearness' sake, take the words as they occur in the full form given by St. Matthew (vi. 9-13), and consider them in the light (1) of *tradition*; (2) of *etymology*; and (3) of their *setting and context*.

The Greek words of the phrase are τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον. The difficulty lies in ἐπιούσιον, *epiousion*, a word which, as Origen (Cent. iii.) observed, "is never even mentioned in any of the Greek philosophical writers, nor used in the everyday language of the common people, but seems to have been coined by the evangelists" (*De Orat.* 27). This remarkable fact at once suggests, of and by itself, that so simple a rendering as the English "daily," for which common Greek words existed and were at the service of the evangelists (*e.g.* τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς actually occurs in Jas. ii. 15),<sup>1</sup> cannot be the right explanation, but that we have here, in cryptogram as it were, something of a *mystery*. I lay great stress upon this point, and I ask my readers to do so also, though I must not now dwell upon it: it will reappear in the sequel. In great measure, however, from this fact of the word being a new and isolated word in the Greek, has sprung the multiplicity of renderings by divines and scholars which astonishes and perplexes all who hear of them. They may be examined to some extent in Meyer's *Comm. in loc.* and similar works, and especially in Bishop Lightfoot's treatise and Suicer's *Thesaurus*, *s.v.*, which, for the old interpretations, is still the best storehouse.

I. Taking, then, our first branch of inquiry, *viz.* that of *tradition*, and giving the principal views and leading supporters, we may conveniently arrange the interpretations after the Aramaic vernacular and oldest versions (which are prior to all extant expositions) as follows:—

(1) After the ARAMAIC VERNACULAR, or GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE HEBREWS<sup>2</sup> (Cent. i. or ii.). Jerome, who (Cent. iv.) translated this Gospel, expressly testifies that he found there for ἐπιούσιον

the word *mahar* (Heb. מָחָר, Aram. מָחָר, Syr.

ܡܚܪܝܢ), "which," says he, "is in Latin *crastinum*, belonging to *to-morrow*; so that the sense is, *our to-morrow's bread*, *i.e.* *our future bread*." In Heb. the word signifies *to-morrow*, but is constantly used in Old Test., not only of the literal *to-morrow*, but also of all *time to come*; and, as derived from מָחָר *hinder, following*, answers in great measure to the Greek τὸ μέλλον, *the future*. This interpretation of *to-morrow, future*, must be specially marked. It is the earliest, and, as such, very weighty evidence; the evidence of the Aramaic vernacular, for which Bishop Lightfoot rightly claimed the highest value. And it will be found to confirm, and be confirmed by, much of the evidence that follows. On the side of this interpretation will be deservedly found an imposing array of great modern scholars, as Suicer, Scaliger, the older Lightfoot (*Horæ Hebr.*), Wetstein, Bengel, Meyer, Winer, Bretschneider, and Grimm. With this agree the early Coptic or Egyptian Versions (Cent. iii.), both testifying to an original מָחָר or מָחָר; the Thebaic rendering being equivalent to *panem advenientem, coming bread*; and the Memphitic, to *panem crastinum, bread of to-morrow*. (See Lightfoot, *l.c.*)

(2) After OLD (AFRICAN) LATIN Version (Cent. ii.): *quotidianum, daily*. This is justly a most remarkable rendering, being the parent of the familiar "daily" in all the Churches of the West to the present day. So, accordingly, following Tyndale, all the great English Protestant Versions, including the Authorised and Revised Versions: so also Luther, and in St. Luke (but not in St. Matthew), Jerome himself, the Vulgate, and the Roman Catholic Versions. Yet this Latin word *quotidianum* (and therefore the English "daily" taken from it) is not, and cannot be, and probably was never intended to be, an equivalent of the original ἐπιούσιον or מָחָר. One Latin Father, Victorinus (Cent. iv., *De Trin. c. Arium*, i. 31), though wrong in his own derivation of ἐπιούσιον, distinctly, and with great probability in his favour, attributes the Old Latin *quotidianum* to the *inability of the Latins [of Africa] to understand or express in the Latin tongue the Greek word*; and hence, he says, "they have merely put *quotidianum, daily*, not ἐπιούσιον." And another, St. Ambrose (Cent. iv., *De Sacr.* v. 4), says that "the Latins called this bread *quotidianum, daily*, which was called by the Greeks *advenientem, coming*, because the Greeks call the *coming day τὴν ἐπιούσαν ἡμέραν*."

(3) After PESHITO SYRIAC Version (Cent. ii.: revised, Cent. iv.): ܡܚܪܝܢ, *indigentia nostra*,

original Gospel in Aramaic, and that this prayer formed part of it. The Aramaic phrase *debts* in ver. 12 is an interesting point of evidence. But the present argument is independent of this question.

<sup>1</sup> So St. Chrysostom interprets here: τὸν ἐπιούσιον, τουτίστιον τὸν ἐφήμιον. Others are noticed in the sequel.

<sup>2</sup> I see no sufficient reason for doubting that St. Matthew himself, according to the testimony of Papias, wrote his

of our need, needful. This is also a most noteworthy rendering, both from its antiquity and the close kinship of the Syriac with the Aramaic; and it is followed by the learned Mede, Schleusner, Lange, Stier, Wordsworth, and Alford. Yet it is difficult to conceive that even this (though probably the second-best interpretation) is really a direct rendering of the original: it savours (possibly like *quotidianum*) of being an adaptation of expediency. For this idea the Greek language could have supplied the ἐπιτήδειον of Jas. ii. 16, or the δέον or ἀνάγκη of the LXX. version of Prov. xxx. 8 (Heb. כֶּחָם הַחֶמֶץ bread of portion, Vulg. *victui necessaria*; A.V. *food convenient*; R.V. *food that is needful*. Cf. Gen. xlvii. 22, where there is the same Hebrew word, "the priests did eat their portion"). And, indeed, Delitzsch, in his scholarly Hebrew Version of the New Testament for the British and Foreign Bible Society, does thus render this phrase of the Prayer, viz. חֶמֶץ הַחֶמֶץ, the bread of our portion.

(4) After JEROME'S LATIN Version (Cent. iv.): *supersubstantialem, supersubstantial*. So, accordingly, the Vulgate, and Wycliffe (*over other substance*) and the Roman Catholic Version. But this is in St. Matthew only. In St. Luke, popular prejudice against change proving too strong, Jerome retains the Old Latin familiar *quotidianum*. Yet he is evidently in great perplexity over the word. At other times, like even some of the Greek Fathers, he wrongly identifies it with the well-known *περιούσιον* of Old Testament (as if *περί* and *ἐπί* were interchangeable prepositions!), and, as in the phrase "*peculiar people*," gives it the interpretation of *præcipuum, egregium, peculiarem, special or peculiar* bread. But, again and later, in his comm. on Ezek. xviii. 7, he gives "*substantivum, size super-venturum*," adding, "so that what we are to receive *always hereafter*, we may receive *daily now*;" as if he finally preferred the sense of the old *crastinum, future*, of the Aramaic.

It is not necessary, or possible, to reproduce here at length the testimonies and expositions of the early Fathers in accordance with the above. They are fully given and commented upon in my "Gospels" above referred to. It will suffice here to point out that the African Latin Fathers, Tertullian and Cyprian, naturally follow the Old Latin *quotidianum*; as also St. Augustine, with the important explanation that *daily* means "as long as this temporal life lasts, and that after this life, the succession of days being over, we shall be so filled with spiritual food eternally, that it will no longer be *daily bread*" (*De Sermonibus Domini*, ii. 8). Origen of Alexandria (Greek, Cent. iii., *De Orat.* 27), though well aware of a derivation from ἐπιέναι (of which, below), and that the bread prayed for "was held by some in his day to be that which is *proper to the future age*, and granted

now by anticipation," was the first to propound or give weighty sanction to a derivation of the word from οὐσία, *substance*, as confirming the generally admitted reference to the Incarnate Word; and thus was the way prepared for Jerome's uncouth *supersubstantialem* in Cent. iv., and the polemical usage of the phrase in the great Arian Controversy. St. Athanasius, however, the Greek champion of the orthodox faith against the Arians, expressly declares that "in the Lord's Prayer the Lord calls the *Holy Spirit heavenly bread*, saying, Give us to-day our ἐπιούσιον bread: for in that prayer He taught us to ask in the present world for τὸν ἐπιούσιον, i.e. τὸν μέλλοντα, the *future bread*, a *first fruit* whereof we have in the present life, partaking of the flesh of the Lord, as John vi. 51, which is the life-giving Spirit" (Cent. iv., *De Incarn.* 16). The main and memorable fact connected with the various expositions of the Fathers is this—that they revolve in circles round two central points; one (a) the truth that Christians are bidden by the Lord not to be anxious, as others, for *bodily food* or for the *temporal morrow*, and may therefore only ask for *one day's food*, and that the one very *present* and not the *coming* day (Matt. vi. 25-34); and the other (b) that *Christ Himself* is the *Bread* of God's children, given in and by the Holy Spirit in the daily *Eucharist*.

II. Passing on to our second branch of inquiry, and seeking further light from this new quarter, the broad question is whether the word ἐπιούσιον is to be deemed to be (a) ἐπι-ούσιον, and derived (as by Origen, *supra*) from οὐσία, *essentia, substantia, essence, substance*; as, e.g., ἐν-ούσιος, ἐξ-ούσιος, ὁμο-ούσιος, and such like (examples of which may be readily seen in Dr. Sophocles' *Lex. Byz. s.v.*); or (b) ἐπι-ούσιον, and derived (as by St. Athanasius, *supra*) from ἐπιέναι, through the participle ἐπι-ών, ἐπι-ούσα (*subaud.* χρόνος, αἰών, ἡμέρα—for which see Lidd. and Scott, *Greek Lex. s.v. ἐπιέναι*), *on-coming, future, time, world, or day*; as ἐβελ-ούσιος from ἐβέλ-ων, ἐκ-ούσιος from ἐκ-ών, περι-ούσιος from περι-ών, etc. Now, with regard to (a), it is adverse that it was never dreamt of, or, at all events, never seriously entertained till Origen invented or patronised it in Cent. iii., more than two hundred years after the deliverance of the Prayer—a fact which alone suffices to overthrow it; but, yet further, it utterly fails to account for a parent vernacular (and *some* parent vernacular there must have been), and for the earlier versions, that is to say, for the *quotidianum* of the Latin, the *indigentia* of the Syriac, the *advenientem* of the Egyptian, and especially for the Aramaic *crastinum*, כֶּחָם. Still more: against it lies the formidable etymological objection, long since remarked by Scaliger (Suicer, i. 1170), that, according to the unswerving rule of Greek composition, the final *ι* in ἐπί (although not so in περί) would be elided before the initial vowel in -ούσιον,

and the combination result in ἐπ-ούσιον, not ἐπι-ούσιον,—just as in ἐπ-ουράνιος, and more impressively in ἐπ-ουσία, ἐπ-ουσίωσις, etc. (examples of these in Soph. *Lex. s.v.v.*). Bishop Lightfoot has conclusively pointed out that all apparently contradictory forms, such as ἐπι-εὐκίης, ἐπί-ορκος, are due to the original presence of the consonant *digamma* after the ἐπὶ in these words; whereas this letter was disused for centuries before Christ.

There is, of course, just the bare possibility that the word was *monstrously* formed by its unknown authors or introducers in ignorance of, or in violation of all Greek usage; but such a possibility is not supported by any evidence, nor has it the slightest probability in its favour. We are, therefore, brought to the irresistible conclusion, with all that the conclusion entails, that the word ἐπιούσιον is formed and has its origin from ἐπιών, ἐπιούσα, *on-coming, future, or to come*. It would thus be a not unnatural but appropriate rendering into Greek of the Aramaic vernacular ܦܪܘܫܝܘܢ, assuming (as we have above seen to be the case) that such existed, and would, like that vernacular, answer to the Latin *crastinum* or *advenientem*, and the English *morrow's* or *future*. The full meaning of the phrase would not hereby be determined; but we may not unreasonably discern in its employment some confirmation of the view above suggested by the uniqueness of the term, viz., that esoteric teaching was intended; and, at all events, cannot fail to recognise in the etymology another condemnation of the English rendering *daily*, and a confirmation of the reference to the *life which is to come*.

III. Our third branch of inquiry remains, the *setting* of the phrase. Let us see, therefore, what assistance is obtained from a consideration of its *position* in the Prayer, and the entire *context*. For this purpose let the Prayer be arranged after the order of the Greek, thus:—

*Our Father which art in Heaven,*  
Hallowed be — *Thy Name;*  
Come — *Thy Kingdom;*  
Done be — *Thy Will, as etc.;*  
*Our bread, the epiousion, give us to-day,*  
*And forgive us our debts,*  
*And bring us not into temptation, but, etc.*

In this way it is readily seen that the Lord's Prayer, like the grand record of creative work in Genesis i., has a perfect number of parts—*i.e.* six; and these six are composed of two triads. The first triad, or first three petitions, are for the greater glory of the Father in heaven; the second triad, or the second three petitions, are for certain mercies for the children on earth. Moreover, the first three are all sentences which commence (in the Greek, and unquestionably in the Aramaic

likewise) with *verbs*, and unconnected by the copula "*and*:" the second three, with *the striking and emphatic exception of the first* of them, also begin with *verbs*, but are all three linked together by the copula "*and*." All this is so alike in St. Matthew and in St. Luke; and the arrangement, there is no reason to doubt, is that given by our Lord Himself, and intended by Him to be significant. If this be so, there must exist some special reason for the fact that the clause under discussion is the only *emphatic* sentence in the Prayer, the objective noun "*bread*" being, by a sudden change of order, placed in the forefront before its governing clause "*give us to-day*" (δὸς σήμερον, as rendered by St. Matthew), or "*give us day by day*" (δίδου τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν, as rendered by St. Luke, significantly and properly changing the tense of the verb together with the change of the adverb). Moreover, just as *definiteness* is given to the Name, Kingdom, and Will of the Father, by the use of the *article* in the Greek (or the equivalent in the Aramaic), so is *definiteness* given to the bread of the children by the same use. And this *definiteness*, this *distinctive character*, is in the latter case further strengthened, and the general term *bread* narrowed in application by the epeexegetical repeated article and adjective following, *i.e.* τὸν ἐπιούσιον. *Bread* it is, yet not every one's bread (hypocrites', heathens', or others'), but already and definitely "*our*" bread; and not even *all* bread that is *ours*, but that particular bread of ours which is *epiousios*. Add to this, that in the context of St. Luke, by means of parables relating to ordinary bread and earthly fathers, our Lord distinctly illustrates and urges the truth that "*the Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.*"

And now, at this stage, I must say that I cannot understand how, when all these facts are considered, it can for one moment be deemed a possible or a reverent idea that here in this first emphatic petition for ourselves we are bid to pray each day for the morrow's perishing bread,—on Monday, *e.g.*, for Tuesday's bread,—or how it can be doubted by any one, that, in this clause, with its unique defining and limiting word, ἐπιούσιον, we are introduced to a petition relating to a *mystery*; in other words, that the *bread* for which we are taught to pray in the very first petition for ourselves, brought into special prominence immediately after the petition for the performance of God's will "*on earth, even as it is in heaven,*" and immediately preceding, and closely linked to, petitions for spiritual forgiveness of our past sins, and spiritual grace for the future, is in some sense or other the *spiritual bread*, the *Bread of Life*, the *Living Bread*, the bread which is emphatically "*our*" bread as God's children, and the bread which, from its own peculiar character, could find in the tongues of the nations no adequate term



for its exponent, and needed, as in Eucharistic symbol, some new vehicle for its tradition. The Ancient Fathers must have been right, who, whether they could trace the origin of the mysterious word or not, or grasp its literal meaning, could throw aside the external form and see underneath it the Living Christ, spiritually given and spiritually received by the spiritual children. "Evermore give us this bread," is the natural utterance to which, however, as St. John records (vi. 34), Christ mysteriously replies, "I, Myself, am the Bread of Life."

*Conclusion.* To sum up. A review of all the evidence, from *tradition*, from *etymology*, and from the *setting*, appears to me to establish beyond all reasonable doubt whatever, (a) that the original word used by our Lord was the Aramaic מָחָר, *to-morrow*, applied in its wide sense, and purposely used to convey important spiritual teaching as to the *abiding life*, and that bread which "*perisheth not*;" (b) that the Greek rendering of this word, which no evangelist or catechist ever presumed to alter, was from the first ἐπιούσιον, and adopted from the participial form of the verb ἐπιέναι, without any reference to οὐσία, *substance*; and (c) that the signification of this word, alike from the Aramaic original, the Greek etymology, and the oldest tradition, and in accordance with the remarkable emphasis of setting and context, is *of the morrow*—that is to say, *of the future day or future age*, in reference to the *spiritual life* and the *life which is to come*. On the other hand, it is now quite clear that the word "*daily*" neither suggests any probable Aramaic vernacular, nor answers to any etymology of the Greek rendering, nor adequately suits the circumstances of the petition. It fails in every direction, and the accuracy of the Revised Version in this, as in so many other particulars, fails with it.

Bishop Lightfoot, as above noted, set himself to prove (a) that the derivation from ἡ ἐπιούσα, as the temporal *coming day*, was supported by the oldest tradition; and (b) that "the familiar rendering '*daily*,' which has prevailed uninterruptedly in the Western Church from the beginning, is therefore a fairly adequate representation of the original." But the evidence incontestably establishes the *very reverse*, viz. (a) that (as Suicer rightly held) every exposition of the oldest tradition, without exception (those referring to οὐσία being, of course, out of the question), distinctly refers that tradition to the

*future age*, not to the single temporal *coming day*; and (b) that the Western familiar rendering '*daily*,' while itself either no rendering or a mis-rendering of the original Aramaic and Greek, has only prevailed even in the West in a sense *exactly opposite and repugnant* to that for which Bishop Lightfoot contended—that is to say, it prevailed only in its natural and proper English sense of *belonging to to-day*, the literal *present current day*, and *not* in Bishop Lightfoot's unnatural sense of the literal *coming day*; which latter sense, moreover, was expressly regarded by the Fathers as contrary to our Lord's command to "*have no anxious care for the morrow*."

As, then, "*to-day*" in scriptural language metaphorically refers to the whole of this *present life* (cf. also Heb. iii. 13), so does "*to-morrow*" metaphorically refer to the *life to come*. The first-fruits of the future blessings may be tasted and enjoyed now. In this petition, accordingly, we are taught by our Lord, as we have at length seen, to subordinate and forget the perishing things of earth and sense—the Father, unasked, will provide for them—and to uplift the heart to the heavenly and the spiritual, craving for the soul to feed only on her life-giving Saviour, till the dawn of "*the eternal morrow*," and the advent of the full fruition.

Fidelity to our Lord's own word and teaching compels us to abandon the familiar rendering of *daily*, however naturally dear and hallowed from old associations; and, though substitution be now difficult, even with a firm apprehension of the teaching, yet perhaps the best course to adopt is, after all, the simplest, viz. to retain, as from Christ's own lips, the word *to-morrow*, and with the deep spiritual meaning of the phrase ever before us, and devoutly impatient of delay, to pray

"Give us *to-day* our *morrow's* bread!"<sup>1</sup>

The petition, *thus* phrased, reverently follows close upon the preceding petitions for the Father's glory, and to it may reverently be linked the succeeding petitions for our own forgiveness of sins and preservation from temptation: and "the Lord's Prayer," from beginning to end, in every petition, thus glows with the fervour of the Eternal Spirit and the radiation of the future glory.

<sup>1</sup> If it is desired to retain the emphatic order of the original for the word "bread," then an accurate and suitable and not unrhythmical rendering would be, "Our bread of the world to come give us *to-day*."

## The Expository Times Guild of Bible Study.

THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for June will contain four examination papers, two on Genesis and two on Ephesians,

as already announced since December. In order to give time for the revival of the work prescribed, as well as to leave room for some very important articles which the June number will contain, expositions are not asked this month.