

On St. Luke ix. 18.—Almost every intelligent reader of the Gospels in the English version must have felt a little startled at the seeming self-contradiction in St. Luke ix. 18, "When He was alone praying, His disciples were with Him." It is true that in the original the contradiction is less direct; the phrase rendered "alone" is *κατὰ μόνας*, which might be glossed "in private" or "in a solitary place"; though the Revisers of 1881 have not thought it worth while to make any material alteration in the old version. And retaining that version, of course the sense is tolerably clear, if we read it without captiousness. The Lord was in private, not with the multitude: perhaps, though "His disciples were with Him," His prayer was still solitary, not shared even by them. But it is worth while to notice that there is a reading, very respectably attested, that would remove the difficulty, such as it is, altogether.

In Westcott and Hort's edition, side by side with the common text CYNHCAN *αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταί*, there is given in the margin the reading CYNHNTHCAN *αὐτῷ κ.τ.λ.*, which implies (Introduction, § 377), that that reading has, in the judgment of one or both of the Editors, "a reasonable chance of being right." As in the Appendix the passage is not mentioned, we cannot say how much weight was given to internal, how much to documentary evidence, in this favourable judgment of the reading; but the documentary evidence is somewhat stronger than (it may be supposed) the Editors were aware of.

Its main strength is, that it is undoubtedly the reading of the first hand of Cod. B., though an early hand (possibly, Tischendorf thought, the original scribe himself, or if not, the contemporary corrector) replaced it by the received text.¹ Besides this, there is cited for the reading only one not remarkably excellent cursive (245, one of Matthæi's Moscow MSS., from Mount Athos), the Old Latin *f*, and virtually one lectionary (*συνήχθησαν*). But in fact, a fresh collation of Cod. 157—usually considered the second best cursive MS. of the Gospels—shows that this also reads *συνήνησαν*, without any hesitation or ambiguity.

¹ He cancelled the three superfluous letters with dots only: the later hand, who blacked over the letters, did not put his letters exactly over those which he retained; and so the original reading, though plain to a skilled palæographer, is somewhat concealed by the later writing, and had not been observed before Tischendorf. To an unskilled observer it looks not unlike CTNNHNCAN—a *διπτογραφία* of a type not unusual in Cod. B.

If we adopt this reading, the sense would be transparently clear. The Lord was in the strictest sense "alone praying," when His "disciples met Him" or "fell in with Him"—came upon the place where He was standing or kneeling in prayer, or perhaps walking like Isaac. Then, His prayer being interrupted by their coming, He asked the question which the Evangelist proceeds to tell us of.

Of course, it does not follow that this clearness of sense proves, or even makes it probable, that the reading is the true one. It is at least as conceivable, that it is an early conjecture—that in the age when the Evangelical text was most of all in a state of flux, some transcriber of the Gospel felt the obvious difficulty of the common text, and saw that three additional letters would remove it. But, while the antiquity of the reading is vouched for by its presence in Cod. B. and the Latin version, it is worth knowing that it was transmitted from early times along more than one line, and along at least one line of high repute for purity.

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