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Daily Cross-Bearing Reconsidered

The Case of καθ' ἡμέραν in Luke 9:23

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Abstract

Does καθ' ἡμέραν belong to the call to bear one's cross in Luke 9:23? While many believe the case is closed, this short article proposes reconsidering it. While there is certainly a textual basis for καθ' ἡμέραν, the evidence, except P⁷⁵, is from the fourth century or later. However, recent research by Brent Nongbri has criticized the early dating of P⁷⁵ (175–225 CE), making a case that the fourth century might also be possible. This later date coheres with all other witnesses to the phrase, including the Latin and Coptic versions. That, together with the other Greek manuscripts, seems to suggest that καθ' ἡμέραν appeared in the late third century, provided that we follow Nongbri's suggestion. This study demonstrates the implications of how dating papyri can influence exegesis, as the concept of “daily cross-bearing” has had a profound impact on scholarship and the beliefs of Christians throughout the ages.

Keywords

P⁷⁵ – textual criticism – Luke – Origen – cross-bearing

1 Introduction*

In several places in the Gospels, Jesus's call to follow him is connected to "cross-bearing." Jesus calls his followers to bear their cross.¹ To put it even more strongly: "Whoever does not take up his cross and comes behind me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27).² This call to bear one's cross is part and parcel of the Christian tradition. It also appears in the Gospel of Thomas (logion 55).³

In the New Testament, we find two traditions—and we will not dive into questions of origin or whether they originated from one saying or were actually spoken by Jesus—in the form of a triple tradition found in Mark, Matthew, and Luke (Mark 8:34; Matt 16:24; Luke 9:23) and a double (or "Q") tradition in Matthew and Luke (Matt 10:38; Luke 14:27).⁴

Much is quite the same in the triple tradition, except for the Lukan "daily," which dramatically changes the possibilities for interpretation. Whereas in Mark and Matthew, one can argue for the context of actual death (martyrdom, as it was often interpreted in early Christianity), in Luke, the call to *die daily* introduces a figurative aspect—for death or martyrdom is a one-time event:

Ἔλεγεν δὲ πρὸς πάντας· εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἔρχεσθαι, ἀρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καθ' ἡμέραν καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι.

NA²⁸

* We thank B. Nongbri and J. Verheyden for commenting on an earlier draft of this article. We are also grateful for the feedback we received on 25 April 2025 at the Amsterdam New Testament Colloquium.

1 Mark 8:34 parr.; Matt 10:38/Luke 14:27; and, interestingly, also in the Majority Text of Mark 10:21, see R. van Wingerden, "Cross-bearing in the Story of the Rich Man (Mark 10,17–22)," *Bib* 102.2 (2021) 286–293. Meanings of the sayings are multivalent, but the practice seems to be rooted in history, see R. van Wingerden, "Carrying a patibulum: A Reassessment of Non-Christian Latin Sources," *NTS* 66 (2020) 433–453; R. van Wingerden, "Carrying a σταυρός. A Re-Assessment of the Non-Christian Greek Sources," *NTS* 67 (2021) 336–355. On the history of interpretation in Early Christianity, including the New Testament, up until the late third century, see R. van Wingerden, *Cross-bearing in Early Christianity* (WUNT 11/654; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2026).

2 ὅστις οὐ βαστάζει τὸν σταυρὸν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἔρχεται ὀπίσω μου, οὐ δύναται εἶναι μου μαθητῆς (NA²⁸).

3 See, e.g., B. Ehrman and Z. Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels. Texts and Translations* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 322: ἡϳϳει ἡπερςρος ἡταρε ϳναϳωπε αν εϳο ἡαζιου ναει.

4 See, e.g., J. Amon, S. Carruth, R.A. Derrenbacker, Jr., N. Kelsey, and D.A. Smith, *Q 14:26–27; 17:33; 14:34–35. Hating One's Family—Taking One's Cross, Finding or Losing One's Life, Insipid Salt* (ed., S.R. Johnson, *Documenta Q*; Leuven/Paris/Bristol: Peeters, 2024) 205–264.

The manuscript attestation of this verse shows that many manuscripts contain καθ' ἡμέραν in Luke 9:23, most notably P⁷⁵ and S^{*.2} A B.⁵ In Codex Sinaiticus the phrase καθ' ἡμέραν was copied by the original hand (S^{*}), but later correctors repeatedly attempted to adjust the text around it. The sequence of corrections shows at least three different interventions. First, the initial scribe wrote the text with the phrase. A later corrector omitted καθ' ἡμέραν by putting dots above the line. Another corrector subsequently corrected this to the former, longer reading. The presence of multiple, contradictory corrections makes Sinaiticus one of the clearest witnesses that ancient scribes themselves were uncertain whether the phrase belonged to Luke 9:23. Even though other early manuscripts (such as P⁷⁵ and B) preserve καθ' ἡμέραν, the unstable correction history in S indicates that at least some early textual traditions regarded the phrase as questionable, and that its inclusion was not universally accepted.

The earliest manuscript evidence of the Gospel of Luke, including this very verse, is P⁷⁵, which, since its publication in the 1960's, has been dated to 175–225 CE or perhaps somewhat later in the third-century.⁶

On the other hand, some manuscripts do *not* contain καθ' ἡμέραν,⁷ and the *communis opinio* holds that καθ' ἡμέραν was dropped due to harmonization to Mark 8:34.⁸ For why would one add καθ' ἡμέραν to the text? Many scholars argue that καθ' ἡμέραν is firmly Lukan, as the phrase appears ten more times in Luke-Acts besides Luke 9:23,⁹ against once in Matthew and Mark.¹⁰

5 Also K L W Θ Ξ Ψ f¹¹³ 33. 700. 892. 2542 *al* aur f vg sy^{c.p.h**} sa^{ms} bo. The early papyri P⁴, P⁴⁵, P⁶⁹ do not contain this passage, so it is unfortunately impossible to know whether they support the presence of καθ' ἡμέραν.

6 E.g., <https://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/liste?docID=10075>. Accessed 28 May 2024. See also P. Orsini and W. Clarysse, “Early New Testament Manuscripts and Their Dates: A Critique of Theological Palaeography,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 88.4 (2012) 443–474, who date P⁷⁵ to 200–250 CE.

7 NA²⁸ shows some, but the ECM edition on the parallel pericopes is much more elaborate: H. Strutwolf, K. Wachtel, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graecum: Editio Critica Maior. Parallelperikopen: Sonderband zu den synoptischen Evangelien = Parallel Pericopes: Special Volume Regarding the Synoptic Gospels* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2011) 82–83, list 04V. 037. 28. 79T. 273. 427. 565. 740. 792. 827. 863. 954. 1009. 1093. 1253. 1337. 1424. 1446. 1457. 1593. 1661. 1675. 2193*. 2193C2. 2680. 2766. Byz [1331f. 1346C]; and there is a variant which is similar; it has ἀρνησάσθω instead of ἀπαρνησάσθω: 01C2a. 07. 579. 968. 1012. 2786.

8 See, e.g., B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1971) 147–148. Perhaps due to the acceptance of the argument, the passage is absent in the second edition of 1994.

9 Luke 11:3; 16:19; 19:47; 22:53; Acts 2:46, 47; 3:2; 16:5; 17:11; 19:9.

10 Matt 26:55; Mark 14:49.

Many would say that the case is closed, but, in this article, we aim to reopen the discussion of whether on this occasion καθ' ἡμέραν is indeed Lukan, based on a careful reconsideration of external evidence. The heavy reliance on P⁷⁵ has recently come under severe critique, and, adding this to other external evidence, the case for Luke 9:23 without καθ' ἡμέραν may be stronger than was previously recognized. Brent Nongbri proposes that a later date for P⁷⁵ could be considered, even as late as the fourth century. This later date helps explain the emergence of καθ' ἡμέραν in other fourth-century writings, eliminating what would otherwise be an inexplicable gap of several centuries between P⁷⁵ and the reappearance of the verse with the phrase in early Christian literature. In what follows, we first summarize Nongbri's argument and then map the evidence from early Christian writers, most notably the first secure dated occurrence of the verse without καθ' ἡμέραν in 235 CE (Origen's *Exhortatio*). Our observation is followed by reasoning for inserting καθ' ἡμέραν in the passage. Finally, a brief conclusion is given.

2 Nongbri's Critique and Manuscript Evidence

Against the scholarly consensus, Nongbri challenges the traditionally accepted dating of P⁷⁵, suggesting that a fourth-century date is as plausible as the early third-century.¹¹ His argument is twofold, with evidence drawn from both paleography and codicology. First, Nongbri conducts a detailed comparison of the handwriting of P⁷⁵ with other manuscripts with more secure dating. He notes its similarities with manuscripts dated to the late third or early fourth century, suggesting that the handwriting style of P⁷⁵ could fit within this later timeframe. Secondly, Nongbri examines the shape of the codex page of P⁷⁵, referencing Eric G. Turner's proposal for dating codices based on their dimensions.¹² Nongbri points out that P⁷⁵ fits into Turner's "Group 8," charac-

11 In addition to the references above, for methodological reconsideration, see B. Nongbri, "Reconsidering the Place of Papyrus Bodmer XIV–XV (P⁷⁵) in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament," *JBL* 135 (2016) 405–437. For the context of the Bodmer Papyri, B. Nongbri, *God's Library: The Archaeology of the Earliest Christian Manuscripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 157–215. B. Nongbri, "Palaeographic Analysis of Codices from the Early Christian Period: A Point of Method," *JSNT* 42 (2019) 84–97. For the background of the scholarly finding of the papyrus, see D.B. Sharp and B. Nongbri, "The Bodmer Papyri and the Chester Beatty," in *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri at Ninety. Literature, Papyrology, Ethics* (eds. G.V. Allen, U.A.M. Gad, K.G. Rodenbiker, et al.; *Manuscripta Biblica* 10; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023) 37–50.

12 E.G. Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* (Haney Foundation Series; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977) 95.

terized by a page height that is roughly twice its width, a feature shared with some codices securely dated to the fourth century, such as those found in the Nag Hammadi library. To be clear, Nongbri does not claim that $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ *must* be dated to the fourth century but argues that this later dating (ca. 350 CE) is *as plausible* as the earlier one. His critique highlights the limitations of paleography in dating manuscripts and suggests that a wider range of possible dates should be considered.¹³ Consequently, if his approach is accepted, one can also propose a date 100–150 years later than the traditional dating of ca. 200–250 CE, resulting in a date in the first half of the fourth century.

Another factor at play is the apparent contradiction between the pieces of evidence concerning this variant reading. As mentioned above, in addition to $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$, A, and B, $\kappa\alpha\theta' \eta\mu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\nu$ appears in many other manuscripts, notably Families 1 and 13, as well as minuscule 33. The phrase is absent from a few majuscules (probably led by C) and quite some minuscules—including the Byzantine reading. The shorter reading attested in the Byzantine tradition is interesting, as it does not always conform to the typical patterns of the Byzantine tradition. An attempt at harmonization could explain this phenomenon, which could also be understood as preserving an old reading, as observed by Klaus Wachtel of several variants across the New Testament.¹⁴ Also intriguing is the fact that scribal corrections are evidently involved at this place. As we mentioned above, Codex Sinaiticus is a good example: although the original scribe produced the variant with $\kappa\alpha\theta' \eta\mu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\nu$, one of the correctors indicated a preference for the shorter reading, and yet another corrector disagreed with the correction.¹⁵ All in all, the diverse manuscript evidence suggests that this variant warrants more attention than it has previously received. Now we turn to a discussion of the occurrences of the phrase $\kappa\alpha\theta' \eta\mu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\nu$ in Luke 9:23, as found in patristic citations and versional evidence.

13 Note also the recent work by P. Orsini, “I papiri Bodmer: scritture e libri,” *Adam*. 21 (2015) 60–78; on page 77 Orsini dates the manuscript to the end of the third century or the beginning of the fourth century. This gives a later dating compared to the one he made together with Clarysse in 2012.

14 See, e.g., K. Wachtel, “On the Relationship of the ‘Western Text’ and the Byzantine Tradition of Acts—A Plea Against the Text-Type Concept,” *Novum Testamentum Graecum. Editio Critica Maior. III. Acts of the Apostles. Part 3: Studies* (ed. H. Strutwolf et al.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2017) 137–48, here 147. See also K. Wachtel, *Der byzantinische Text der Katholischen Briefe* (ANTF 24; De Gruyter, 1995), esp. 73–134 on the characteristics of the Byzantine tradition.

15 F. 235r col. 3, ll. 43–44.

3 καθ' ἡμέραν in Early Christian Writings in Greek

The phrase “καθ' ἡμέραν” in Luke 9:23 does not appear in early Christian literature before Basil of Caesarea, a fourth-century Church Father.¹⁶ It is striking that when Origen explicitly cited Luke 9:23, he seems to have had no knowledge of the verse with καθ' ἡμέραν. Origen's *Martyrium*, which was written at the start of the reign of Maximinus Thrax, likely in 235,¹⁷ is transmitted in three manuscript traditions, but all contain the shorter reading in Luke.¹⁸ In *Mart.* 12, Origen posits that his readers must learn to live according to Jesus' teaching, and in support cites Matt 16:24, which is very early on connected to martyrdom, as well as the parallels in Mark and Luke. We then find the following text:

τὸ δὲ δεῖν ἀρνεῖσθαι ἑαυτὸν καὶ αἶρειν τὸν ἑαυτοῦ σταυρὸν καὶ τῷ Ἰησοῦ ἀκολουθεῖν οὐ μόνος Ματθαῖος, οὐδὲ τὴν λέξιν παρεθέμεθα, ἀνέγραψεν ἀλλὰ καὶ Λουκᾶς καὶ Μάρκος. ἄκουε γὰρ Λουκᾶ μὲν λέγοντος· ἔλεγε δὲ πρὸς πάντας· εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἔρχεσθαι, ἀρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι ...¹⁹

That one must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Jesus; we provide not only the text of Matthew but also Luke and Mark. For hear Luke when saying: He said to all: if one wants to come behind me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me ...

(Our translation)

Origen's citation of Luke 9:23 is the earliest secure evidence of this passage, and that is significant.

The earliest occurrence of the phrase καθ' ἡμέραν combined with cross-bearing is in Basil of Caesarea's (329–379) *De baptismo*, written around 366.²⁰ The occurrence can be found in book 2, but it is clearly not the phrasing from Luke 9:23, but of Matthew 10:38: “Ὁς οὐ λαμβάνει τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ” καθ'

16 Van Wingerden, *Cross-bearing in Early Christianity*.

17 M.-B. von Stritzky, ed., *Origenes. Aufforderung zum Martyrium* (Origenes Werke mit deutscher Übersetzung; Band 22; De Gruyter/Herder: Berlin/Freiburg, 2010) 9.

18 See for the discussion of the manuscripts: *Origenes Werke, Band 1: Die Schrift vom Martyrium, Buch 1–IV Gegen Celsus* (ed. P. Koetschau; GCS; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1899) xv–xxii and the textual apparatus of *Mart.* 12.12.

19 For the Greek: von Stritzky, *Aufforderung zum Martyrium* 46.

20 SC 357:24.

ἡμέραν, “καὶ ἀκολουθεῖ ὀπίσω μου, οὐκ ἔστι μου ἄξιος.”²¹ (We find a similar case in Jerome, who has *cotidie* in his citation of Luke 14:27.²²)

Second on the list is Didymus the Blind (ca. 313–398), who, in his commentary on Zechariah, refers multiple times to taking up the cross, in each instance without καθ’ ἡμέραν, but for one time, when discussing Zechariah 8, book 3.14.7: Εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἔλθειν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι καθ’ ἡμέραν. Interestingly, “daily” has been transferred to the back of the sentence, a phenomenon also observed in Luke 9:23 in minuscule 1342.

There are further references to Luke 9:23 that include καθ’ ἡμέραν in the Greek works traditionally ascribed to Macarius the Great (ca. 300–390) dated to the late fourth century:²³ the *Epistula Magna*²⁴ and Homilies 48.3.3/5,²⁵ 55.4.5.²⁶ We also find five references in the Greek works of Ephrem the Syrian (ca. 306–373), twice in his *De patientia*,²⁷ and once each in *De iudicio*,²⁸ *Institutio ad monachos*,²⁹ and *Paraenesis*.³⁰

21 Basilius, *De bapt.* 1.1.3; SC 357:94. Cp. Matt 10:38: καὶ ὃς οὐ λαμβάνει τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθεῖ ὀπίσω μου, οὐκ ἔστιν μου ἄξιος.

22 Jerome, *Ep.* 127; CSEL 56:150: *ni si quis tulerit crucem suam cotidie et secutus fuerit me, non potest meus esse discipulus.*

23 M. Plested, *The Macarian Legacy: The Place of Macarius-Symeon in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 12–16.

24 Greek: W. Jaeger, *Two Discovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 254, lines 18–19: τὸν σταυρὸν καθ’ ἡμέραν αἶροντες μετὰ χαρᾶς καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσεως καὶ ἀκολουθοῦντες αὐτῷ.

25 This homily appears in two different collections (B and H), but the Greek is the same: εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἔλθειν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καθ’ ἡμέραν χαίρων καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι.

26 Collection B: ἀλλ’ εὐχερῶς ὑπομένειν πᾶσαν τοῦ πονηροῦ ἐπανάστασιν, τὸν ὑπὲρ τοῦ κυρίου θάνατον πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν πάντοτε ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ ἔχωμεν καὶ καθὼς εἴρηται ὑπὸ τοῦ κυρίου καθ’ ἡμέραν τὸν σταυρὸν αἶροντες (ὃ ἐστὶ θάνατος) ἀκολουθῶμεν αὐτῷ ὀπίσω, καὶ οὕτως εὐχερῶς ὑπομένωμεν πᾶσαν θλίψιν ἣτοι κρυπτὴν ἢ τοι φανεράν.

27 K.G. Phrantzolas, *Ὁσίου Ἐφραίμ τοῦ Σύρου ἔργα*, vol. 3 (Thessalonica: To Perivoli tis Panagias, 1990) 307: Ὁφείλει οὖν ψυχὴ, ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ Κυρίου κατακολουθοῦσα, τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καθ’ ἡμέραν αἶρειν, ὡς γέγραπται and Κυρίου θάνατον ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ πάντοτε πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ἔχοντες, καὶ καθὼς εἴρηται ὑπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου, καθ’ ἡμέραν τὸν σταυρὸν αἶροντες, ὃ ἐστὶ θάνατος.

28 K.G. Phrantzolas, *Ὁσίου Ἐφραίμ τοῦ Σύρου ἔργα*, vol. 2, Thessalonica: To Perivoli tis Panagias, 1989) 401: Καὶ καθὼς εἴρηται ὑπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου, καθ’ ἡμέραν τὸν σταυρὸν αἶροντες, ὃ ἐστὶ θάνατος, καὶ ἀκολουθήσωμεν ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ.

29 K.G. Phrantzolas, *Ὁσίου Ἐφραίμ τοῦ Σύρου ἔργα*, vol. 5 (Thessalonica: To Perivoli tis Panagias, 1994): 326: παντὶ δὲ τρόπῳ καὶ παντὶ σθένει καὶ πάσῃ σπουδῇ ἑαυτοῦς εἰς τὸ ἀγαθὸν πάντοτε προθύμως ἐπιδιδόντες, καὶ κατὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ Κυρίου, μετὰ πάντων τῶν τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, ἔτι καὶ τὴν ἑαυτῶν ψυχὴν ἀρνούμενοι, τὸν σταυρὸν καθ’ ἡμέραν αἶροντες μετὰ ἀγαλλιᾶσεως καὶ ἀκολουθοῦντες αὐτῷ.

30 Phrantzolas, *Ὁσίου Ἐφραίμ τοῦ Σύρου ἔργα*, vol. 3, 366: Καὶ καθὼς εἴρηται ὑπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου, καθ’ ἡμέραν τὸν σταυρὸν αἶροντες, ὃ ἐστὶ θάνατος, ἀκολουθῶμεν αὐτῷ ὀπίσω.

Palladius, in his early fifth-century *Historia Lausiaca* (written around 419–420), writes about the desert fathers: καὶ καθ' ὥραν καὶ καθ' ἡμέραν καὶ κατὰ νύκτα τὸν σταυρὸν βασιτάζων, καὶ ἀκολουθεῖ τῷ σωτήρι καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς.³¹

Cyrril of Alexandria (ca. 376–444) conflates the Lukan καθ' ἡμέραν in Matt 10:38, in his *De adoratione*, resulting in “Ὁς οὐ λαμβάνει,” φησὶ, “τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καθ' ἡμέραν, καὶ ἀκολουθεῖ ὀπίσω μου, οὐκ ἔστι μου ἄξιος.”³² However, he cites Matt 10:38 three more times, but then without καθ' ἡμέραν.³³

These writers are the first to mention the phrase καθ' ἡμέραν in combination with cross-bearing. It is striking that they all date back to the fourth century or later. The same holds for the Latin occurrences, as we will see below.

4 Luke 9:23 in Latin Translation³⁴

While Jerome (347–420) translates the Greek of Luke 9:23 for the Vulgate with *Dicebat autem ad omnes si quis vult post me venire abneget se ipsum et tollat*

31 *Vita* 14.5–5.

32 PG 68:1072.45–47. Only book 1 is available in a critical edition; the rest of the work is found in PG 68; see B. Villani, ed., *Kyrril von Alexandrien. De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate. Buch 1* (TU 190; Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2021).

33 Unfortunately, no critical edition is available; cf. PG 68:165.49; 964.48; 1045.50.

34 Very helpful in this regard is H.A.G. Houghton, *The Latin New Testament: A Guide to Its Early History, Texts, and Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). As for the Coptic witnesses for the inclusion of καθ' ἡμέραν, these MSS are dated to the fourth century and later (based on the dating given by the Virtual Manuscript Room). According to Horner's (outdated) critical editions, the Sahidic and Bohairic words for “daily” (ⲙⲙⲙⲙⲛⲉ and ⲙⲙⲙⲙⲛⲓ) appear in Luke 9:23 steadily; see G.W. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect* (2 Vols.; London: Clarendon Press, 1898) 2:126–127. Moreover, in the available Coptic MSS in the New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room (accessed 14 January 2025), we identified only MSS with ⲙⲙⲙⲙⲛⲉ: sa 1 (folio 730); sa 106 (folio 140); 116 (folio folio 200); sa 124 (folio 260); sa 145 (folio 150). The following Sahidic MSS were fragmentary in Luke 9:23, and could not be deciphered: sa 129, 135, 172. The Bohairic MSS contains ⲙⲙⲙⲙⲛⲓ: bo doc id 602009, page id 5850 (New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room, accessed 14 January 2025). According to NA²⁸, in the Syriac tradition, sy^{c-p,h**} have the additional phrase. The writing of the Curetonian Syriac (sy^c), one of the remaining pre-Peshitta manuscripts, is commonly dated to the fourth or the fifth century. The Peshitta (sy^p) is dated to the first half of the fifth century; the Harklensis version is dated to the sixth century, and its critical signs (sy^{h**}) do not originate from the Vorlage but from some Greek manuscripts for comparison. For an overview of the early Syriac versions, see P.J. Williams, “The Syriac Versions of the New Testament,” in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, 2nd ed. (eds. B.D. Ehrman and M.W. Holmes; NTS 42; Leiden: Brill, 2013) 143–166.

crucem suam cotidie et sequatur me, including *cotidie*, there are older traditions of the Latin Luke that lack the adverb. We have a group of consistent VL manuscripts of Luke,³⁵ in which all but VL 17 contain Luke 9:23 without *cotidie*. There are also several fragments of Luke in Old Latin, but 9:23 does not appear there.³⁶ Some manuscripts contain a mixed form of Old Latin and the Vulgate. Those witnesses containing *cotidie* reflect the Vulgate tradition.³⁷ Furthermore, some lectionaries on Luke preserve Old Latin traditions, but Luke 9:23 does not appear therein.³⁸

Earlier Christian authors writing in Latin, such as Tertullian (ca. 160–225), Cyprian (d. 258), and Novatian (d. 257–258), did not use *cotidie* when they paraphrased the cross-saying, nor do we find it in the reconstruction of the work of Marcion (d. ca. 160) by Dieter Roth, as it is unattested by Tertullian.³⁹ Matthias Klinghardt argues that Marcion's version lacked this phrase and that his gospel even lacked the phrase *tollat crucem suam*, which is indeed absent in D (05) and some Old Latin manuscripts.⁴⁰ While Klinkhardt notes that Luke added καὶ ἡμέραν to 9:23, he does not present an argument as to why or refer to any papyrological witnesses; he only mentions that many Greek manuscripts miss καὶ ἡμέραν.

In the Latin tradition, the first appearance other than the Vulgate is found well into the fourth century, written by Jerome as well, but now in his commentary on Matthew (Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 1.38.310–312): *Et qui non accipit crucem suam et sequitur me, non est me dignus. In alio euangelio scribitur: Qui non accipit crucem suam cotidie*. The problem, however, is that this is not exactly Luke 9:23, but a paraphrase of Luke 14:27.⁴¹

35 VL 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17.

36 VL 16, 21, 22, 26, 34, 44.

37 VL7, 9A, 11A, 12, 15, 27, 28, 29, 30, 35, 48. VL 9A was unavailable for me. VL 27, 35, 48 have no *cotidie*. In VL 11A, Luke 9:23 is missing; the text ends at Luke 9:19b and continues from 9:41 onwards.

38 VL 18, 31, 32.

39 D.T. Roth, *The Text of Marcion's Gospel* (NTTSD 49; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015).

40 M. Klinghardt, *The Oldest Gospel and the Formation of the Canonical Gospels* (Biblical Tools and Studies 41; Louvain, Paris, Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2021) 723–724, at 724: “In *9,23, the words καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ are absent in D it, and the amplifying καὶ ἡμέραν is missing in a long series of Greek witnesses. The emergence of the various readings is readily comprehensible: Mark 9,34 [sic] specified the word about self-denial—originating from the pre-canonical Gospel—through the insertion of καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ. From there it reached Matt 16,24 and finally Luke 9,23. During this last step, Luke also inserted καὶ ἡμέραν, which is missing in many witnesses.”

41 Cp. Vulgate: *et qui non baiulat crucem suam et venit post me non potest esse meus discipulus*.

As noted above, the Latin occurrences of *cotidie* in New Testament cross-bearing texts are relatively late and consistently dated to the fourth century. That, together with the late occurrences in early Christian authors writing in Greek, as well as the possibility that $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ dates to the fourth century, seems to indicate that καθ' ἡμέραν first occurred at some point in the second half of the third century—inasmuch as $\aleph$ (01) and B (03) are commonly dated to the first half of the fourth century. However, we shall not only look at the external evidence. Is there a reason for scribes to add καθ' ἡμέραν in that period?

5 The Problem of Harmonization and Reasons for καθ' ἡμέραν

As noted above, the majority of scholars view the manuscript evidence lacking καθ' ἡμέραν as harmonization to either the Matthean or Markan tradition.⁴² Their underlying argument, that is, that non-parallel variants in the Synoptic Gospels should in principle be preferred, can be formulated as follows:

Since scribes would frequently bring divergent passages into harmony with one another, in parallel passages (whether involving quotations from the Old Testament or different accounts of the same event or narrative) that reading is to be preferred which stands in verbal dissidence with the other.⁴³

However, as Nongbri elsewhere notes:

If, as a general rule, editors of the Synoptic Gospels have opted to favor unparalleled readings as more original, then the eclectic text produced by such a process will provide a version of the Gospels with *the least*

42 While C.G. Pardee, *Scribal Harmonization in the Synoptic Gospels* (NTTSD 60; Leiden: Brill, 2019) 115, 126, 268, 375, 405 discusses Luke 9:23, the point of his discussion is the variant ἀπαρνησάσθω. The omission of καθ' ἡμέραν in some manuscripts is not even discussed at all.

43 B.M. Metzger and B.D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 303. The rejection of the harmonisation tendency has been established long before Metzger. Already in the first half of the eighteenth century, Wettstein formulated a text-critical principle concerning expressions arising from harmonisation; see S. Castelli, *Johann Jakob Wettstein's Principles for New Testament Textual Criticism: A Fight for Scholarly Freedom*, NTTSD 62 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 175, 400–403.

possible verbal agreement among the three Synoptic Gospels. What this means is that, even if editors do an excellent job, at least some instances of agreements among the Synoptic Gospels will probably be lost in the production of our Greek text.⁴⁴

While harmonization is certainly plausible, we must consider Nongbri's warning. The different reading (καθ' ἡμέραν) is not necessarily the original. Moreover, external evidence suggests a later addition.⁴⁵ But is it possible that a certain scribe added καθ' ἡμέραν to Luke 9:23? If so, for what reasons? As we have already noted, καθ' ἡμέραν is a distinctive Lukan term. Luke's Gospel uniquely emphasizes the ongoing, everyday nature of discipleship through repeated use of temporal markers like "daily" (καθ' ἡμέραν). For example, in Luke 11:3, Jesus says, "Give us each day our daily bread" (highlighting daily dependence on God); in Luke 19:47, Jesus teaches "daily in the temple" (underscoring the rhythm of his ministry). A scribe familiar with Luke's stylistic patterns might have inserted "daily" in 9:23 to reinforce the thematic thread, distinguishing Lukan discipleship as a *habitual* practice rather than a singular act. By contrast, Matthew and Mark frame cross-bearing more eschatologically, tied to immediate sacrifice or martyrdom. The scribe likely recognized that Luke's audience—often seen as Gentile Christians navigating daily life—required this emphasis on perseverance.

Bruce Metzger, in his textual commentary, considers the possibility that καθ' ἡμέραν was a scribal addition under the influence of 1 Cor 15:31 (where Paul says καθ' ἡμέραν ἀποθνήσκω) but concludes that it is more likely that the phrase is original to Luke and was later omitted due to harmonization with Matthew and Mark.⁴⁶ However, based on the arguments we have presented thus far, there is ample reason to think that the thematic overlap may have caused a scribe to add "daily," especially when persecution became a thing of the past. It is possible that "daily" from 1 Cor 15:31 was added to the text in the second half of the third century to make the text more in line with Paul's

44 B. Nongbri, "Manuscripts: The Problem with the Synoptic Problem," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Synoptic Gospels* (ed. S.P. Ahearne-Kroll; New York: Oxford University Press, 2023) 152–174, here 167.

45 This is different from Turner's argument that grammatically we should opt for the mss without καθ' ἡμέραν. See N. Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 1965, repr. 2015) 31.

46 B. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 148: "It is less likely that the words were introduced by scribes from 1 Cor 15:31 than that they were omitted due to influence from the parallel passages (Mt 16.24; Mk 8.34)."

idea about daily dying because the persecutions were over. It has already been established that in times of persecution, the cross-bearing sayings, whether from the “Q”-source or the triple tradition, were interpreted as relating to martyrdom. A plausible historical moment for the insertion of καθ’ ἡμέραν would lie in the second half of the third century, when the Decian persecutions of the 250s were in the past and a period of relative peace was in progress.⁴⁷ Adding “daily” to the cross-saying would mitigate the saying, turning the martyrological interpretation of the past into a nuanced teaching suitable for stable times.⁴⁸ One could also imagine that after the persecutions of the early fourth century and the more stable times under Constantine, the addition could have been spread far more easily, resulting in the widespread use of the phrase in the fourth century and beyond.

6 Conclusions

In this short article, we have discussed the issue of the presence or absence of καθ’ ἡμέραν (“daily”) in Luke 9:23. Many Greek witnesses of the verse lack the qualification καθ’ ἡμέραν. The Old Latin manuscripts of Luke that contain this verse also lack the phrase. Moreover, literary evidence from early Christianity shows that the phrase did not occur before the fourth century, even if the passage is quoted (e.g., Origen). The earliest attestation in the Greek manuscripts is P⁷⁵, traditionally dated to the early third century. The argument that the other Greek manuscripts lack “daily” due to harmonization relies heavily on the dating of P⁷⁵. However, as Brent Nongbri has shown, P⁷⁵ could equally plausibly be dated to the fourth century. That makes the argument for harmonization and the presence of the phrase in Luke’s original less strong. Together with the fourth-century emergence of καθ’ ἡμέραν in Greek and *cotidie* in Latin, the evidence suggests that the phrase may have appeared sometime shortly before or in the late third or early fourth century.

All in all, our contribution highlights the intricate process involved in interpreting Gospel passages that address synoptic issues. The tendency toward harmonization may not always be the best solution; we believe that our

47 See the old, but still useful W.H.C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981 repr.), 440–476.

48 For such an interpretation, see, e.g., Van Wingerden, *Cross-bearing in Early Christianity*; and S. Bøe, *Cross-bearing in Luke* (WUNT 11/278; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 79–130.

proposal offers an alternative to explain the complexities of textual evidence. Furthermore, it serves as a good example of the interconnected dynamic between textual criticism and exegesis. These two disciplines are indeed “twins”; you can’t do one without the other.⁴⁹

49 This famous metaphor is, of course, coming from Delobel; see J. Delobel, “Textual Criticism and Exegesis: Siamese Twins?,” in *New Testament Textual Criticism, Exegesis, and Early Church History: A Discussion of Methods* (ed. B. Aland and J. Delobel; CBET 7; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994) 98–117.