

Notes and Opinions.

In Whose House Did Jesus Eat with Publicans and Sinners?—Luke says plainly that it was in the house of Levi. Professor Gould, in his excellent commentary on Mark, says it is “doubly certain” that it was the house of Jesus. I quote: “Meyer, Holtzmann, and others say that this was the house of Jesus. This is contrary to the statement of Luke, who says expressly that Levi made him a great feast at his house. But the recurrence of the pronoun *αὐτόν* . . . *αὐτοῦ* makes it reasonably certain that they refer to the same person. Matthew does not insert any pronoun after *τῆ οἰκίᾳ*, and that makes his language point in the same direction. And the fact that Matthew and Mark use different language, which nevertheless points to the same conclusion, makes that conclusion doubly certain.” The progress of this argument may be questioned. (1) Matthew’s phrase, “in the house,” if it has any bearing on the question at all, points to the house of Levi rather than to that of Jesus. It is often a modest way of speaking of one’s own house. In this sense it is not uncommon even in colloquial English, and I hazard the opinion that this usage widely prevails in oriental languages. (2) Mark’s language is by no means decisive. We read: “And as he passed by he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the place of toll, and he said unto him: Follow me. And he arose and followed him. And it came to pass that he was sitting at meat in his house, and many publicans and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples.” Here the interest centers in the words, “he was sitting at meat in his house.” Professor Gould and those whom he follows hold that it is “reasonably certain” that the pronouns refer to the same person. That they might do so is beyond question; that that would be more strictly accordant with grammatical rules may be admitted; that they refer to the same person *with any kind of certainty* is exceedingly doubtful. For is it not true that in Greek, as in other languages, pronouns are often used in this loose way, especially where the sentences are short? Certainly it is so in English, as a sentence in the paragraph quoted above from Professor Gould bears witness: “This is contrary to the statement of Luke, who says expressly that Levi made him a

great feast at his house." Here we have to go out of the sentence to become sure that "him" refers to one person, Jesus, and "his" to another, Levi.¹ Precisely the same process applied to Mark's statement makes it accord with Luke's. Moreover, other parts of Mark's narrative strongly confirm Luke's accuracy. Jesus is represented not as the host, but as a fellow guest with the outcasts. They "sat down with Jesus;" "He was eating with" them; "He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners." There is no intimation in any one of these three consecutive statements that our Lord was acting the part of a host, but it would be difficult to find more appropriate language to describe him as a fellow guest with sinners. Nor are the words with which Mark closes the narrative against this view; for they are found in Luke where Jesus is unquestionably represented as a guest.

M. L. GORDON.

¹Our contributor's criticism becomes even stronger when it is noticed that the sentence quoted from Professor Gould is in reality itself a quotation from Luke, in which, as Professor Gould recognizes, *αὐτῷ*, him, refers to Jesus, and *αὐτοῦ*, his, only four words later, refers to Levi. If this is possible in Luke, why is it impossible in Mark?—*Ed.*]