

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE IX.

CRITICAL NOTES.

I.

DOES THE LORD'S PRAYER MAKE MENTION OF THE DEVIL?

Ῥῥσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ. Matt. vi. 13.

BY PROFESSOR LEMUEL S. POTWIN, ADELBERT COLLEGE, CLEVELAND, OHIO.

THE revisers of the English New Testament thought best to conceal from the public the results of their labors until the work should be complete. The German revisers of Luther's version thought differently. They issued a "Probebibel" to invite and stimulate the study of those outside of the responsible board, and to learn their opinions before it was too late to use them. There cannot be much doubt, as we look back, that the Germans took the better course. Our method saved time, and perhaps labor, for the committee. It had also the pecuniary advantage of an excited public curiosity, and whatever other good may be supposed to have come from a number of genuine surprises; but it lost the criticism of the many who were to use the book, and whose favor would lead to a speedy introduction of it. Hence the discussion that followed the publication of the New Testament took the form largely of defence and attack; and it soon became evident that this discussion was out of time unless the publication could be regarded as tentative. This idea, unfortunately, was opposed by the Revisers, and not insisted on either by their opponents or by the great body of the undecided.

So ten years have gone by, and the idea of either attacking or defending has gradually subsided, until students of the New Testament have returned to the good old way of interpreting the original Greek as best they can, leaving the versions to take care of themselves. It is in this spirit that we wish to take up the last petition of the Lord's Prayer. Probably no greater surprise was found in the whole Revision than the rendering "Deliver us from the evil one." In some minds there was a feeling akin to indignation that so important a question, long mooted among interpreters, should have been settled for the whole English world by the majority vote of a small company without wider consultation. It was hard, ten years ago, to discuss this rendering without prejudice; but now we have become used to it, and, if it is correct, we are all ready to adopt it.

Is it correct? Or is the former rendering correct, "Deliver us from evil"?

Let us put aside, at the outset, certain considerations that are indecisive.

It is hardly needful to say that the presence of the article before *πονηροῦ* has no bearing whatever on the question, though its absence would, of course, be decisive. We never say, in English, "the evil" when we mean simply evil in the abstract, and it is not strange that it should seem a little more natural to complete the Greek phrase in English fashion—"the evil one." We do not mean that any scholar would deliberately impose an English idiom on the Greek, though we have known some of them to do the reverse; but a large number of those who can read the New Testament in Greek cannot claim exemption from the subtle unconscious effect of always thinking in English. The only way is to rule out this habit resolutely from the decision, if we would have that open mind which is the first requisite in exegesis.

Turning to the connection of thought in the prayer, we find it indecisive. The idea of temptation goes well with the mention of the tempter, but equally well with the idea of that evil into which temptation may bring us. The word *ῥῆσαι* suggests rescue from a person, but is also used of deliverance from death (*ὅς ἐκ τηλικούτου θανάτου ἐῤῥῆσατο ἡμᾶς*, 2 Cor. i. 10), from the power of darkness (*ὅς ἐῤῥῆσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους*, Col. i. 13), and from every evil work (*ῥῥῆσατε με ὁ κύριος ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔργου πονηροῦ*, 2 Tim. iv. 18). The course of thought in the prayer as a whole is appealed to in vain to decide this question, because, as Professor L. J. Evans remarks, "the masculine rendering presupposes that Satan is contemplated not as an isolated being, but as the Head of the Kingdom of evil, representing all the forces and influences of that kingdom." Professor Evans in his very able article¹ supports the masculine rendering,—but if the remark just quoted is true, the kingdom of evil itself might as appropriately be mentioned as the head of that kingdom. Probably few interpreters would go as far as Alford, on the one side, and say, "The introduction of the mention of the evil one would here be quite incongruous and even absurd," and if an equally strong statement should be found on the other side we should have to ascribe both to personal bent rather than to definite exegetical principles.

Further, the general tone of the New Testament as to the use of concrete terms is indecisive. We may acknowledge, with Meyer, the fact of this tone, without finding such a preponderance of the concrete as will have decisive weight in interpreting any single word. There are no philosophical abstracts in the New Testament, but moral abstracts are abundant. The term morality (*ἠθικῆ*) is wanting, but all the elements of morality, all the moral virtues, are present in their usual phraseology. What is more to the point, we find the abstract used in cases where the concrete would be expected. Twice in the twelfth chapter of Romans we read of good and evil where, if it were not

find the thought broadening out into that grand generalization: *Μη σκῶ ὄπρὸ τοῦ κακοῦ, ἀλλὰ ρίπα ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ κακόν* (ver. 21).

One may say, This is Paul, not Matthew. Let us come back, then, to Matthew, and to the words of our Lord as recorded by him, and to the Sermon on the Mount. Here we read in the same chapter with the Lord's Prayer such unconcrete expressions as these: "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness" (ver. 23); "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (24); "Seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness" (33). Even the golden rule is a wonderfully broad generalization. Now it is the glory of the New Testament that it is practical, simple, direct, but surely there is no such slavery to the concrete as to give even a presumption, in any single passage, in favor of the rendering "evil one" over "evil."

If, then, neither the connection of thought, as developed by the exact meaning of the words, nor the general habit of New Testament writers is decisive, what shall we do? It seems to us that something more decisive can be found in the answer to this simple question, Was ὁ πονηρός the usual term to designate the devil? If not, then we should not expect to find it in such a formula of devotion as the Lord's Prayer. Now the moment this question is raised, it answers itself in the mind of one who is familiar with the New Testament. Such a one will feel, without resorting to exegetical statistics—often a poor resort—how changed the gospel narrative would be if certain well-remembered passages should read thus: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the *evil one*;" "And when the *evil one* came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, etc.;" "Then the *evil one* leaveth him, and behold angels came;" "The *evil one* that sowed them [the tares] is the *evil one*;" "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the *evil one* and his angels;" "How can the *evil one* cast out the *evil one*?" "Then entered the *evil one* into Judas;" "Ye are of your father, the *evil one*;" "The *evil one* cometh and hath nothing in me"! In these and in more than a score of other passages in the Gospels, which strike one as containing the principal references to the Devil, the original words are *διάβολος*, *Σατανᾶς*, ὁ *πειράζων*, *ἀρχὴν τοῦ κόσμου*. Outside of the Gospels the usual words are *διάβολος* and *Σατανᾶς*.

It is not denied that sometimes ὁ πονηρός means the Devil. No one supposes that it always does. An example both of the masculine, denoting a man, and of the neuter abstract is in Luke vi. 45: ὁ πονηρός ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ [*θησαυροῦ*] *προφέρει τὸ πονηρόν*. So in 1 Cor. v. 13, *Ἐξάρσατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν*, rendered in the Revision, "Put away the wicked man from among

had no right to recognition as an alternative,—we have as claimed the following: Matt. xiii. 19, 38; Eph. vi. 16; 1 John ii. 13, 14; iii. 12; v. 18, 19. Of these, Matt. xiii. 38 is, 'Ο δὲ ἀγρός ἐστὶν ὁ κόσμος· τὸ δὲ καλὸν σπέρμα, οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας· τὰ δὲ ζιζάνια εἰσιν οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ.' Probably the reason why "evil" was not put in the margin was that the common version had "children of the wicked one," there being, therefore, no occasion for marginal concession or conciliation; but is it not true, as Cremer suggests, that the parallel phrase, *υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας*, requires the rendering "sons of evil"? It should be noted that in the words immediately following, the Devil is mentioned by his usual name, and is said to be the sower of the tares and the enemy of him who sowed the good seed. Thus we have two antitheses—the Lord and Satan, good men and evil men; and the antithesis is sharper and much more natural with a single mention of Satan as the antagonist of Jesus. The Hebraism "sons of evil" would be as natural as "son of hell" (Matt. xxiii. 15); "sons of disobedience" (Eph. v. 6); and the "son of worthlessness [Belial]" of the Old Testament.

Another passage in the above list is 1 John v. 19, 'Ο κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῇ πονηρῇ κέεται, rendered in the Revision "the whole world lieth in the evil one," with no "evil" in the alternative margin. But does it not require a strong effort to suppress the sense of incongruity in the rendering "lieth in the evil one," when "in evil" is not only grammatical, but harmonizes fully with "evil one" mentioned in the previous verse? Compare the *τοῦ πονηροῦ* and *πονηρῶ* of iii. 12. Such expressions as "Abide *in* me;" "Them which are *in* Christ Jesus;" "one body *in* Christ;" "fallen asleep *in* Christ;" "Life hid with Christ *in* God;" "We are *in* him that is true" (ver. 20)—expressions so numerous in the New Testament, especially in John, as in the allegory of the vine, imply an all-pervading presence which the Scriptures nowhere ascribe to the Devil, leader of all evil agents and agencies though he be. The "in" of such profound phraseology is very different from the *ἐν* instrumental of Matt. xii. 24, "This man doth not cast out devils, but in Beelzebub the prince of the devils."

We will venture, then, to subtract two from the list given above, leaving six in the whole New Testament, and *one only* in the four Gospels (Matt. xiii. 19). That one is indisputable, because assured by the parallel passages in Mark and Luke. In the parable of the sower, where Matthew says: "Ἐρχεται ὁ πονηρὸς καὶ ἀρπάζει τὸ ἐσπαρμένον;" Mark says: "Ἐρχεται ὁ Σατανᾶς (iv. 15); Luke says: "Ἐρχεται ὁ διάβολος (viii. 12). If we had a similar parallelism in the Lord's Prayer, there would be no need of discussion. The most that we can

Mount. Compare Luke vi. 45 with Matt. vii. 18. Further, that which makes the case so clear in the parable of the sower is also evidence of a wavering testimony as to the word used in designating Satan. The Gospels do not exhibit a phonographic exactness in recording words. Whatever word our Lord used, in the language which he spoke, it meant the Devil, and the fact that only one of the evangelists gives *ὁ πονηρός* confirms the proof, elsewhere apparent, that the Devil was comparatively seldom spoken of as the evil one. This is the only point that we make. Now while it is possible that this rare usage should be incorporated into such a formula as the Lord's Prayer, it seems to us extremely improbable. The presumption is strongly against it.

This strong presumption is confirmed, and made almost a certainty, by Old Testament usage. The Septuagint has frequent use of *πονηρόν* and *κακόν*, with, and sometimes without, the article, to denote evil in general. The first reference to evil is in Gen. ii. 9—*τὸ ξίλον τοῦ εἰδέναι γνωστὸν καλοῦ καὶ πονηροῦ*. In Deut. iv. 25, we read: *ἐὰν ποιήσῃτε τὸ πονηρὸν ἐνώπιον κυρίου*, and this language is so reiterated in the books that follow, that doing "evil in the sight of the Lord" rings like a sad refrain all through the history. The Psalms and prophets continue the same usage. David's lament in the penitential Psalm—*σοὶ μόνῃ ἤμαρτον, καὶ τὸ πονηρὸν ἐνώπιόν σου ἐποίησα* (li. 4. (1. 6))—and Isaiah's *οἶαί αὶ λέγοντες τὸ πονηρὸν καλόν* (v. 20) are examples. We base no argument on the fact that Satan is never called "the evil one" in the Old Testament. We do not place Old Testament usage on a level with that of the New Testament on this point. Whatever may be the reason, the doctrine of Satan is mostly a New Testament doctrine, but the notion of evil in general is common and impressive in the Old Testament, and is very often expressed in the Septuagint by *τὸ πονηρὸν*. The Old Testament all bears one way on the question before us. We would not limit all the words of our Lord to Old Testament meanings, but his hearers were familiar with the idea of evil itself as a dreadful reality. It was a part of their biblical training, and we may well believe that divine wisdom did not overlook this in giving form to that comprehensive guide to prayer. Indeed, if we do not greatly overestimate the influence of the Old Testament on the minds of serious Jews, we may say that, unless the language employed by our Lord was decisively limited to an evil *person*, his hearers would inevitably understand it of evil itself. In all this we do not forget that the Septuagint is a translation, and that a large part of the Gospels is virtually the same. The argument from the Old Testament is from the idea of evil, and not from any particular word to express it. It should be added, however, that in the Hebrew Old Testament the article is almost always used with עַל (עָרַל) to express "evil" substantively—that which is evil. Undoubtedly the usage in the Aramean, the oral original of the Lord's Prayer, was the same.

In this connection we ought perhaps, to notice the argument drawn from the Talmud in favor of the rendering "the evil one." Bloomfield says:—"I render 'the evil one' Satan. . . . Thus in the ancient prayers of the

Jews, 'et libera nos a Satana.' . . . As the prayer is almost composed of Jewish formulas, the first argument has considerable weight."¹ Professor Evans, in the article already referred to, says "The parallelisms of the Talmud and the Jewish liturgies favor either rendering. Here we have both, 'Deliver us from evil' and 'Deliver us from Satan.'" Now we do not pretend to be familiar with the Talmud, a book, or mass of books, the knowledge of which, it has been said, is mostly disseminated by quoting from quotations. But we are somewhat familiar with the orthodox Jewish prayer-book, and perhaps its ancient prayers represent the devotions of the time of Christ as correctly as the Talmud, which in its earliest written portions is two centuries after Christ. Among these ancient prayers, none of which make mention of the evil one, we find in the Morning Service the following: "O Lord, have pity on thy people Israel, and deliver us from all evil."² "Lead us not into the power of sin, transgressions, iniquity, temptation, or contempt. Suffer not the evil imagination to have dominion over us; and remove far from us evil men and wicked associates and works." But the Talmud, it seems, adds to such prayers as these the petition: "Deliver us from Satan." Now, if the question were, Did the ancient Jews pray to be delivered from Satan *or* from evil? then the Talmud would answer, They prayed for deliverance from *both*. But when the question is, What word did they use in prayer when they meant the Devil? the answer appears to be that when they meant Satan, they said Satan, and when they meant evil itself they said evil. If so, then the Lord's Prayer in adopting the latter did not adopt the former, but rather excluded it.

We are not discussing the Talmud. Nothing shall tempt us to discuss a work that we have never read. We merely claim that certain statements taken from it and used against our view are not really against it. In fact, we do not believe that the Talmud has very much to do with the question what the Lord's Prayer means. If it gave us the exact petition "Deliver us from the evil one," how much would its evidence be worth against that derived from the Old Testament?

Our conclusion, then, is that in the Lord's Prayer we are taught to say "Deliver us from evil"—a petition that reaches to the lowest depths of weak sinful human nature. If it could be shown that "evil one" was the usual designation of the Devil, even then there would be no preponderance in favor of the rendering, "Deliver us from the evil one." The case would be simply evenly balanced so far as the language itself is concerned; and the weight of evidence from the Old Testament would be decisive. But when

POSTSCRIPT.

The following paragraphs are due to the kindness of correspondents to whom advance sheets of the foregoing Note were sent.

The Peshito version of the New Testament is claimed on the side of the rendering "the evil one;" but Dr. Isaac H. Hall, a recognized authority in Syriac scholarship, writes: "As to the Peshito, perhaps different people would argue differently from the same data. I think, however, that it favors the rendering 'evil.' Adjectives used as abstract nouns prefer the feminine form, both where the Latin uses the neuter plural and neuter singular, but this is by no means the universal usage. It prevails rather in extra-biblical and later Syriac. The masculine is common enough for abstracts of every sort. There is no neuter gender in Syriac. The Lord's Prayer has the masculine, which is used in very many places in the Peshito for the neuter, even in rendering other words than *πονηρόν*. So far as I have read Syriac, the writers generally—I refer to allusions only—look upon the phrase as "evil" not "the evil one."

Dr. Hall also writes in regard to the Talmud: "Dr. Charles Taylor, author of 'Sayings of the Jewish Fathers,' once told me that his opinion was that in the Greek alone there was a very slight preponderance in favor of the rendering 'the evil one,' but that the Talmudic and Aramaic and Jewish use was all the other way."

A professor, whose name would carry great weight if I were at liberty to give it, writes: "So far as Jewish prayers are concerned, the oldest—the Eighteen Prayers—contain no analogous petition; and no one, so far as I know, has ever alleged an instance in which the Hebrew and Aramaic words for evil mean Satan."

My brother sends the suggestion that to one familiar with the book of Job the word "temptation" was of itself sufficient reference to Satan, and fitly opened the way to the broader thought of deliverance from all moral evil.

In opposition to the view advocated in the Note, more than one correspondent reminds me of the unanimity of the Greek Fathers in favor of the rendering "the evil one." But what precisely are the grounds of such deference to the Greek Fathers? Certainly not their general exegetical trustworthiness. No one would seriously dispute what Archdeacon Farrar says of the Fathers, both Greek and Latin: "Their exegesis, in the proper sense of the word, needs complete revision both in its principles and in its details."

judge of their interpretation by their reasons for it. Their view may, perhaps, be explained by this remark of a correspondent who favors the Revision: "The Jews and ancient Christians had a much more lively sense of the personality of Satan than we." These Fathers, then, might see this meaning in the Lord's Prayer, even if it does not belong there; and the interpretation passing unchallenged, and therefore unstudied, from one generation to another, would sufficiently account for their unanimity.

II.

THE RESURRECTION AND FINAL JUDGMENT.¹

BY THE REV. J. A. WELLS, PRESBYTERY OF ELIZABETH, NEW JERSEY.

DR. FAIRFIELD'S article is certainly very well written. So far as rhetoric is concerned, nothing more could be asked of it. The author also evinces scholarship and general culture sufficient to entitle him to high respect; and he is fairly entitled to whatever credit may be due to an open, outspoken, and plain statement of his views. But in respect to the doctrines taught, he has by no means said the last word.

It has been the accepted doctrine of the church, from the days of the apostles to the present time, that there will be an end of the world, that Christ shall appear in glory, that the dead shall be raised, and that there will be, then, a general judgment. These points of belief are so interwoven with all the commonly accepted Christian doctrines, with all orthodox theology, and with the practical teaching of the Christian religion, and, moreover, they are so plainly taught in the Holy Scriptures, as understood by the best scholars and the most reliable teachers of divinity in all the ages, that nothing short of a revolution can displace them.

But the author of the article in question distinctly and positively rejects every one of the above-mentioned doctrines. He has evidently set out upon a radical reconstruction of the beliefs of the church upon those points. It is a bold undertaking, but it may be expedient and necessary for all that. Lu-

¹ In view of the history of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* it is scarcely necessary to state that the editors are not responsible for the opinions promulgated in contributed articles, but within reasonable limits its pages are opened to the presentation of divergent views. It seems specially proper, in view of present interest, to permit a somewhat free discussion of the subject of Dr. Fairfield's article in the January number. In the line of this policy we gladly make room for the accompanying *Critical Notes*, and hope soon to have a more formal presentation of the arguments supporting the generally accepted view.—
EDITORS.