

THE LORD'S PRAYER

IN

THE REVISED VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

MY DEAR LORD BISHOP,

EXETER, *May 21, 1881.*

Early in this present year I was informed, to my extreme surprise and grief, that the Revisers of the Authorized Version had resolved to introduce an alteration of vital importance in the Lord's Prayer.

I find that they have issued the work with that alteration, substituting "the evil one" for "evil" in the closing petition. I observe, moreover, that the extreme gravity of the change is recognised by the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, who defends it in his speech addressed to the Upper House of Convocation on the 17th of this month.

Certainly no change likely to be adopted by men so learned, so high in the estimation of their fellow-Christians, could be proposed which would produce a more general and lively feeling of astonishment and pain—a change affecting the prayer which bears the emphatic designation of the Lord's Prayer, in which every Christian sums up his deepest and most earnest petitions, in which the Church recognises the model and law of her devotions.

Willing and ready as we are to accept the decisions of the Revisers on most points of pure scholarship and theological learning, on such a point as this all must be anxious to know on what grounds the correctness and the necessity of this alteration can be maintained. For my own part, after repeated and earnest inquiry, and, I must add, after consultation with scholars of the highest eminence, I have arrived at the deliberate conviction that its correctness is, to say the least, exceedingly doubtful, and its adoption by the Revisers indefensible on the only admissible ground, that of necessity.

I will endeavour, with all possible brevity, to state the grounds on which this conviction rests.

We have first to consider the usage of the New Testament.

The words "deliver us from" ($\rho\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\alpha\iota \acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron$) may refer to deliverance either (a) from a personal enemy, or (b) from an impending calamity or a moral evil.

(a) In Romans xv. 31, and 2 Thess. iii. 2, the Apostle refers to deliverance from unbelieving Jews,* a very different thing from praying to be delivered from Satan.

(b) 1 Thess. i. 10: "Jesus, which delivereth (A. V. delivered) us from the wrath to come." The amendment is necessary, as St. Paul speaks of a continuous action on the part of our Lord. 2 Tim. iv. 18: "The Lord will (A. V. shall) deliver me from every evil work."

These passages certainly add force to the assumption that in the Lord's Prayer deliverance from evil, specially from moral evil, guilt and its punishment, is primarily intended. It seems to me, and I think to the generality of Christians, more in accordance with the position of those whom Christ has delivered from the *power* of Satan, to pray to be delivered from moral evil, the sin that besets us continually, and from its penalty, than from "the evil one," the devil who will flee from those who resist him: James iv. 7.

I have not referred to passages in which the preposition $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa$ is used instead of $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron$.† There appears to be a real distinction, $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa$ implying that the petitioner is actually under the power of an enemy or principle. The LXX., however, use $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa$ and $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron$ indifferently with $\rho\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\alpha\iota$, which represents גאל, *redeem*, ישיה, *save*, and most frequently יציה, *rescue*.

The Septuagint Version uses the verb $\rho\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\alpha\iota$ in reference to deliverance not merely from personal enemies, but from every kind of evil, as in the following passages, which the reader will find in Tromm's Concordance, *s. v. ρύομαι*:—Gen. xlviii. 16; Exodus vi. 6; Ps. xxxiii. 4, 17, 19; xxxviii. 12; l. 15; liii. 7; lv. 13; lxxxv. 12; xc. 3; cvi. 6, 20; cxxiii. 6, 7; cxliii. 8; Prov. ii. 11; x. 2; xi. 4; xxiii. 14; Job v. 20; xxxiii. 17, 30; Ezekiel xxxvii. 23. This is a point of considerable importance, since, as it is said, the alteration of the Revisers is defended to a considerable extent

* The Revisers alter the rendering in Romans—"the disobedient" in place of them "that believe not." The new rendering requires a note, since the Greek word is used specially of those who refuse to believe the Gospel. See Grimm, Lex. N.T. *s. v. ἀπειθέω*.

† The Revisers have $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa$ in place of $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron$ in 1 Thess. iv. 18, but against the greater number of MSS., and, as appears from Tischendorf's note, contrary to numerous citations by Greek Fathers.

on the ground that *ῥῶσαι* necessarily implies deliverance from a person.

So far as this expression is concerned, I would simply urge the need of extreme caution, considering its bearings upon the state of those whom our Lord has redeemed, saved, and delivered from bondage to Satan, and from his mastery over men's souls.

The real question, however, is whether *τοῦ πονηροῦ* is masculine or neuter. 1. If it is certainly masculine, it is correctly rendered "the evil one," whether that evil one be a spiritual or human adversary. 2. If it is neuter, "evil" is the only true rendering. 3. If again the gender is doubtful, a double rendering—one in the text, another in the margin—is admissible, or necessary.

1. In support of the Revisers' amendment, we have the important fact that *ὁ πονηρός*, "the evil one," is a designation of Satan in the New Testament.

Thus, in Matt. xiii. 19, we read, "then cometh the evil one."

St. John, moreover, in his First Epistle, four times uses the masculine adjective, with the definite article, as equivalent to Satan.

This leaves no doubt as to the admissibility of the rendering, when it is supported by the context; but it must be observed, first, that the Epistle of St. John was written more than half a century after the delivery of the parable in St. Matthew, *i.e.* at a time when the expression, taken from the exposition of the parable itself, had probably become idiomatic; and, secondly—a point of great importance—that St. John does not represent the evil one as a foe, or tyrant from whom the Christian has to be delivered, but as an enemy whom even the young men have overcome (1 John ii. 13, 14), and who is powerful over those only who abandon themselves to his influence: ch. v. 18, 19. As for the Christian, St. John assures us, THAT EVIL ONE TOUCHETH HIM NOT.

2. On the other hand, St. Paul uses the Greek word (*τὸ πονηρὸν*), Rom. xii. 9, in the precise sense of "evil:" "Abhor that which is evil," lit. *abhorring evil*, *i.e.* wickedness. Again, *τὸ πονηρὸν* (A. V. "that which is evil") is the expression used in a discourse of our Lord, Luke vi. 45, as the antithesis to *τὸ ἀγαθόν*, "that which is good."

These are the only passages in the New Testament in which the gender is distinctly marked. They certainly do not settle the question, so far as the grammatical construction is concerned. We are free to choose that sense which is most in accordance with scriptural teaching; in my opinion, it is that which fixes our mind

upon the real point of spiritual danger,—the sinful thought, word, or act which alone gives access to “the evil one,” from whom Christ *has delivered* every true child of God.

3. We have now to consider the oblique cases (τοῦ πονηροῦ, and τῷ πονηρῷ) which occur in St. Matthew’s Gospel.

Ch. v. 37, Ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἐστίν. There the A. V. has, “cometh of evil.” The Revisers consistently give another rendering, “is of the evil one,” in the text, and relegate “evil” to the margin; thus implying a dissentient minority.

But to that alteration there is the formidable and, as it seems to me, insuperable objection, that it must imply that every adjuration or oath is either prompted by Satan, or originates with him: a view which it is scarcely conceivable that any devout reader of the Bible should adopt.

On the other hand, the statement that every oath, especially every oath used to confirm an asseveration, owes its existence to moral evil in man, is in full accordance with our experience and with the teaching of Holy Scripture. But for mutual distrust between man and man, it would never have been thought of; and when employed needlessly, lightly, irreverently, it involves serious guiltiness. But on solemn occasions, when it would otherwise be impossible to distinguish between thoughtless utterances and serious declarations, or when needed to convey full assurance to a timid conscience or distrustful heart, an oath is more than justifiable: it comes not from the evil one, but from the goodness of the utterer. We need only refer to the numerous passages in which God Himself swears, in which our Lord complies with the solemn adjuration of the High Priest, or to those in which oaths are enjoined by the law, to prove that, although in every case the necessity or justification of such oaths “cometh of evil” in the heart or mind of man, who needs such assurances, it would be simply monstrous to attribute it to the suggestion or influence of the evil one.

I must add that the latest and most thoughtful commentators on this Gospel in Germany, viz. Weiss and Keil, defend and, in my opinion, prove the correctness of the rendering of this passage in our old Authorized Version.*

Matthew v. 39 : Μὴ ἀντιστῆναι τῷ πονηρῷ. A. V. “Resist not evil.” The Revisers, “Resist not him that is evil.” Here it is a point of

* They are supported by a considerable number, in fact by a majority, of the ablest modern critics, e. g. Luther, Calovius, Bengel, Rosenmüller, Tholuck, De Wette, Bleek, Ewald, Achelis, and others. Meyer is answered fairly and conclusively by Weiss.

considerable importance that although the Revisers, and the generality of modern commentators, adopt the masculine adjective, they do not suppose that it refers to Satan. That would, in fact, be in direct opposition to scriptural teaching. "The evil one," if a personal agent, is the man who inflicts the injury.

Chrysostom, however, on whose authority special reliance is placed with regard to the petition in the Lord's Prayer, here brings in the personality of Satan; thereby materially weakening his authority as a sound expositor, especially on a point where he might be influenced by prevalent notions.

I do not object to the new rendering, though for my own part I should prefer the old rendering, understanding it as referring to evil treatment. "Evil" in the abstract undoubtedly includes "injury" or "wrong," which Christians are bound specially, when persecuted for conscience' sake, to bear without struggle or murmur. It is not so obvious that they are not to stand up against any "evil one" who may assault them illegally: bear witness our Lord's remonstrance (Matt. xxvi. 55; John xviii. 23), and the conduct of His Apostles under similar circumstances. As it seems to me, the injunction is closely connected with the last of the Beatitudes, ch. v. 10, 12.

Ch. xiii. 38: οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ. A.V. "The children of the wicked one." R.V. "The sons of the evil one." It is perhaps unnecessary to question the propriety of this rendering, in which the Revisers accept the old version with a slight modification. The use of the masculine is justified, and will probably commend itself to most readers, as it is accepted by the generality of commentators, ancient and modern.

It may, however, be observed that if the words were rendered *the children or sons of evil*, they would correspond more nearly to the expression *the children of the kingdom* in the preceding clause; and that they would be in full accordance with the idiom common in the New Testament, "children of light," "children of obedience," "children of disobedience," "children of perdition." Both expressions as here used are, in fact, explained by our Lord in the following verses—the one, *them that do iniquity*; the other, *the righteous*.

It should also be noticed that the old versions favour this rendering. The Old Italic had "filii nequitiae," according to the two best MSS., Vercell. Veron. Jerome, following another ancient reading of the Old Italic, sc. Cod. Corb., has "filii nequam," *wicked children*, not children of the wicked one: he would have used

maligni had he meant *children of the evil one*, a rendering adopted in the later Cod. Besc. of the Old Italic.

It is scarcely necessary to extend this inquiry to other books in the New Testament. Speaking generally, in one case, Eph. vi. 16, the masculine is determined by the context: in others, either rendering gives a satisfactory meaning, though, in my opinion, the neuter in some is preferable, as in 2 Thess. iii. 3; 1 John v. 19 (where the expression "lieth in evil" is clear and perfectly intelligible, whereas "lieth in the evil one" * appears to me extremely difficult). I am, however, not concerned with the question whether the masculine, bringing before us the personality of Satan, is an admissible rendering in the Lord's Prayer, or in any disputed passage. It suffices for my immediate purpose to show that it is not a necessary, or even generally preferable, rendering—preferable, that is, to an extent which justifies its adoption in the text of the Revised Version. I hold and think that I have shown that the neuter *evil* rests on not less high authority than the masculine, *the evil one*: certainly it is not excluded by comparison with other passages in St. Matthew's Gospel or in other books of the New Testament.

We have now to inquire whether there are sufficient grounds to determine the sense in which the words τοῦ πονηροῦ, or the Aramaic equivalent בִּישָׁא, would naturally be understood by the hearers of our Lord, and by the first readers of the Gospel.

For a decisive answer to this important question, we have to ascertain the usage of the Septuagint and of the Targums.

The answer given by the Septuagint is clear; and, as in other cases of doubtful interpretation, I hold that it should be regarded as conclusive.

The word πονηρὸς occurs very frequently: it occupies three columns in Tromm's Concordance.

When it is found without the article, it corresponds to ער, *evil*, or רעה, *wickedness*; where it occurs with the article, it represents the Hebrew הרע, *that which is evil*.

Τὸ πονηρόν, in the sense of evil, moral and spiritual evil, is one of the commonest forms. It occurs, *e. g.*, eight times in Deuteronomy, and repeatedly in the historical books. In the Psalms we have David's saying, τὸ πονηρὸν ἐνώπιόν σου ἐποίησα; Hebrew,

* In this passage the neuter is certainly supported by the Coptic Version, probably by Dionysius Alexandrinus, in a note attributed to him in an ancient catena, ap. Migne, pp. 1594, 1599, as also by the critics quoted in the preceding note (p. 6).

וְהָרַע בְּעֵינַיִךָ עָשִׂיתִי, "I did *this* evil in thy sight" (Ps. xli. 4, A. V.). Compare with this Isaiah v. 20; and Amos v. 14. In the oblique cases, $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\omicron\upsilon$, $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\omega$, the word means "evil:" see Gen. ii. 9; Lev. xxvii. 10, bis, 33, bis; 2 Sam. xiii. 22; xix. 35; Eccles. ix. 3; and Ecclus. iv. 20.

The masculine δ $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\omicron\varsigma$ is used, as is also its Hebrew equivalent, of course, to designate a wicked man, when an individual is pointed out; but it is never used in the Septuagint to designate the "evil one." It certainly would not occur to any one familiar with the language of the Septuagint, to interpret the word as equivalent to Satan; nor is it at all probable that in a Gospel written specially for the use of Hebrew Christians the words $\tau\omicron\upsilon$ $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\omicron\upsilon$ would be employed in any other sense than that generally, I may say universally, accepted by readers of that version.

Not less decisive is the usage of the Targums, which undoubtedly represent the form in which lessons from the Bible were publicly read or expounded to the contemporaries of our Lord.

If, as I doubt not, the Sermon on the Mount was spoken in the vernacular language of Palestine, the words used by our Lord would be understood in the sense supplied by the Targums.

Now the words corresponding to $\tau\omicron$ $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\omicron\nu$ are either רְבִישׁ, that which is evil (e.g. Deut. iv. 25, and ix. 18; Syr. ܪܒܝܫ), or בִּישָׁן, or בִּישְׁתָּא, in the general sense *evil*, "malitia."

For δ $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\omicron\varsigma$ both Targum and Syriac have generally עֲבִיר רְבִישׁ, "a doer of what is evil."

It is certain that neither the Targum nor the Syriac of the Old Testament uses the expression "the evil one" as meaning Satan.

Thus, as respects the Targums, I have but to repeat, and urge not less strongly, the argument drawn from the use of the Septuagint.

The testimony which the ancient versions, especially the Old Italic and the Syriac, bear to the opinions or traditions of primitive Christendom is justly held by the Revisers to be of paramount importance.* In reference to the passage now under consideration, that testimony would be conclusive, were it unanimous or unambiguous. It is, however, open to question, but I am greatly mistaken if it does not tell in favour of the old rendering rather than of that adopted (as is evident, not without serious misgivings as to its effect upon their readers) by the majority of the Revisers.

* The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, in his speech in Convocation, May 17 (*Guardian*, May 18), said, "In all more difficult passages we have ever given special heed to the great early Versions."

The Old Italic, followed by Jerome, has "libera nos a malo." There is no variation here in the MSS., so far as I can ascertain.

The question is, of course, in what sense the words *a malo* are to be taken.

On referring to other passages, I find that in every case but one, where the Greek certainly points to a personal agent, and specially to Satan, both Jerome and the Old Italic have the word *malignus*, not *malus*.

The single exception (Matt. xiii. 19) to which I refer is, however, very important; I have already alluded to it, and would on no account question its significance. I believe it to be the one saying of our Lord recorded in the earlier Gospels which determined the later usage of the Church. It was spoken, however, long after the Sermon on the Mount, and is far from proving that when that great discourse was uttered the hearers would attach such a meaning to the expression.

Next to the Old Italic Version, which, together with what we find of old African Versions from Tertullian to Augustine, represents the traditional interpretation in the Western Churches, come in order of time the older Syriac Versions, the Peshito, in Walton's Polyglott, and that published and commented by Cureton. Especial weight attaches to this testimony, inasmuch as it is highly probable that the very word used by our Lord himself in the passage now in question is preserved in those Versions. That word is *bisho*, which in the Targums, and in old Rabbinical writings, is the exact equivalent of *הרע*.

But this too leaves the question now before us undecided. *Bisho* in Aramaic, *i.e.* both in Chaldaic and Syriac, is the strong form of *bish*, and is equivalent to "evil" with the definite article. Its gender, masculine or neuter, in every case is determined by the context. Thus in the first passage cited by Buxtorf, *Lex. Chal.*, we read, "If thou doest that which is evil, *malum (bisho)*; with us" (Gen. xxxvii. 20); and again in the first quotation from early Rabbinical writings in Levi's 'Chaldäisches Wörterbuch,' i. p. 95, the sense is marked with equal distinctness, "doest thou good to an evil man (*bish*), so doest thou evil (*bisho*)."

It is indeed true that the word is used throughout the New Testament in this Version as a designation of Satan; but we should not be justified in assuming that the other, more general and certainly more obvious, meaning did not present itself first to the minds of those who listened to our Lord's teaching at the

commencement of His public ministry: if so, we must surely conclude that it was the meaning He intended to convey.

The Æthiopic Version leaves no doubt as to the sense in which it was understood by the translator, who may be assumed to represent the mind of a considerable portion of the Church in the fourth century. This is the date given by Dillmann, the best authority. Others assign it to the sixth or seventh century; but it certainly represents a very ancient interpretation. It has, "deliver us from *all evil*."

The Coptic (M) has ΠΙΠΕΤΖΩΟΥ, the word which, I believe, it uses invariably to render τὸ πονηρόν. Perrone, the highest authority, holds it to be *neuter*, Lex. Cop. p. 340. Had a personal agent been meant, all ambiguity would have been avoided by the use of either of two common forms.*

It is true, however, that the Coptic word here used occurs elsewhere (*e.g.*, Deut. xvii. 7; xx. 21; and Matt. xiii. 38) as a masculine noun, and that the Sahidic Version has ΠΙΠΟΝΗΡΟΣ, a rendering which most probably† indicates a personal agent.

The Gothic of Ulfila has *af thamma ubilin*, corresponding to the Old Italic, *malum*, i.e. *evil*, not *the evil one*. The Anglo-Saxon has, *alys us of yfle*.

On the whole it may be safely asserted, that although the testimony of these versions may be open to discussion, in no case can it be alleged as conclusive in favour of the new rendering, especially as understood to refer to the Arch-enemy, and that while all the versions are perfectly compatible with the old rendering, one, the Æthiopic, unquestionably supports it.

It may be added as another proof of the usage in Palestine that where Satan is spoken of in early Rabbinical writings he is either called Satan, or the Destroyer, or other similar names, but that he is never called simply and absolutely "the evil one," הרע. In a very ancient prayer used on the Sabbath in synagogues we find the petition "may they be delivered from every evil, and specially all evil accidents." In the Talmud we have a considerable number of prayers attributed to ancient Rabbis: see especially the prayer

* ρεϥ̄ρ̄πετ̄ζωοϥ or εϥζωοϥ. In fact, as a general rule the form quoted above is appropriated in the Memphitic Version to the *neuter*. See a very striking instance of this in 1 John v. 18, 19, where δ πονηρὸς is rendered ΠΙΠΟΝΗΡΟΣ, and τῷ πονηρῷ, ρ̄ρ̄πετ̄ζωοϥ.

† Not certainly; for when Greek words are taken into the Coptic Version the translators keep the first and simplest form unchanged—*e.g.*, ΜΕΤΧΡΗCΤΟC for "goodness."

in the first treatise of the Talmud, Berachoth, fol. 60. 2, and also fol. 16. 2, near the bottom of the page, where Satan is named and called the Destroyer.*

It must surely be inferred that had our Lord intended to fasten the attention of His hearers or His disciples upon the personality of Satan, He would have chosen a specific designation instead of one with which all must have been familiar in the sense of evil, moral, spiritual, and physical.

I trust that no incompleteness or weakness in my statement of this argument may affect its cogency. To me it appears conclusive.

Unless passages can be adduced from the Septuagint, the Targums, or early Rabbinical writings, designating Satan as the evil one, it seems to me scarcely conceivable that our Lord, addressing His countrymen, should have used the expression in the sense adopted by the Revisers.

We have now to consider the witness of the Church, as recorded in the writings of the Antenicene Fathers. I do not at all undervalue the witness borne by later Fathers,—among them stands foremost Chrysostom, in many respects the greatest expositor of the writings of the New Testament,—but it may be stated, without at all derogating from their legitimate authority, that they represent the views of their own age, which certainly differed in many subordinate points, especially in matters of exegesis and traditional interpretation, from those of the earlier Fathers. I would also observe that when we come to the writings of the fourth and fifth centuries we find a marked difference in representations of the relative positions of Christians and the Arch-enemy. The earlier Fathers agree, as I believe, with the scriptural view, which looks upon him as an enemy who has been expelled from the precincts of the Church, whom the Christian as such opposes, resists, and overcomes, armed, as St. Paul describes him, in the panoply of faith, and safe under the protection of his Lord.† But after the

* I quote the passage as one of great interest in its bearings generally, and specially upon this question. יהי רצון מלפניך ה'אלהינו שתצילנו מעזי פנים ומעוות פנים מאדם רע ומפנע רע מיצר רע מחבר רע משכן רע ומשמן המשחית. "May it please thee, O our God, to deliver us from impudent men and from impudence, from the evil man and evil accidents, from evil disposition, from an evil companion and evil housemate, and from Satan the Destroyer."

† It should be borne in mind that to "deliver to Satan" was in New Testament language equivalent to "excommunicate." This implies that the Christian in communion with the Body of Christ had no need to pray to be delivered from Satan, for he was not in Satan's power. Exhortations and warnings against fear