

ARTICLE VII.

CRITICAL NOTE.

FURTHER ON τοῦ πονηροῦ IN THE LORD'S PRAYER.

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A NEW edition of the book "On a Fresh Revision of the English New Testament," issued by the Trustees of the Lightfoot Fund, renews the sense of loss to New Testament scholarship sustained in the death of Bishop Lightfoot—a man great not only in learning and mental force, but great in candor and spiritual power. This third edition (1891) contains an additional Appendix "On the last petition of the Lord's Prayer," occupying fifty-five pages (269-323)—a reprint from the *Guardian* of Sept. 7th, 14th, and 21st, 1881. The author intended to revise these articles, but unrevised they probably come as near being an authoritative statement of the reasons of the Revisers for the rendering "Deliver us from the evil one" as will ever be given to the public. They furnish the occasion for adding a little to the discussion found on pages 332-339 of this volume of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*. For the sake of brevity I will number the points without trying to adjust them to each other. What is quoted from Bishop Lightfoot's Appendix will be marked "L," with the page following.

I. "Ὁ πονηρός, the Evil One, is a common expression in the New Testament, and occurs three or four times as often as τὸ πονηρὸν, the evil thing" (L. 280). Taking the author's own examples, we find that this generalization, converted into its particulars, is this: The masculine is used seven times, and the neuter twice, and possibly four times more, for there are four examples doubtful (pp. 274, 275). I have given some reasons¹ for transferring two of the seven,—which would make the numbering stand five to four,—but, letting

the usual designation of Satan, but was comparatively rare.¹ That speech, I assume, was faithfully reflected in the New Testament record made by contemporaries of Christ. While spending our time in debating whether Satan is called "the evil one" just seven times, or six, or five, we are apt to forget that more than seventy times he is called by other names, almost always Satan or Devil. All the undoubted examples of the term "evil one" except two are in the First Epistle of John. In the Gospels there is but one, viz. Matt. xiii. 19, this being given by only one of the three reporting evangelists. If we were not in a serious discussion of a delicate question of language, I should be tempted to call it one-third of an example, because doubtless, either by varying tradition or by deliberate choice of the writers, the three words came from the same Aramaic source.

2. "Does not the word 'temptation' at once suggest the mention of the tempter?..... If the tempter is mentioned in the second clause, then, and then only, has the connection $\mu\eta$ - $\delta\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ —its proper force. If, on the other hand, $\tau\omicron\upsilon$ $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\omicron\upsilon$ be taken neuter, the strong opposition implied by these particles is no longer natural, for 'temptation' is not co-extensive with 'evil.' We should rather expect in this case '*And deliver us from evil*'" (L. 288, 289). But is not this making too much of $\mu\eta$ - $\delta\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ —? It is safe to say that in Greek (though the like would not be quite true of Latin) $\omicron\upsilon\kappa$ ($\mu\eta$)— $\delta\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ is used properly whenever "not—but—" could be used in English. And has the English mind ever felt any infelicity of connection in the common rendering "Lead us *not* into temptation, *but* deliver us from evil"? "Bring us not into solicitations to evil, but deliver us from it." Certainly $\omicron\upsilon\kappa$ - $\delta\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ —does not require the clauses to be very exact counterparts. Examples of a looser antithesis could easily be produced, if it were necessary. Here are two from Matthew: $\omicron\upsilon\kappa$ $\epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota$ $\delta\epsilon$ $\rho\iota\zeta\alpha\nu$ $\epsilon\nu$ $\epsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}$ $\delta\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ $\pi\rho\sigma\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\omicron\varsigma$ $\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ (xiii. 21); $\omicron\upsilon\kappa$ $\epsilon\pi\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega\sigma\alpha\nu$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$, $\delta\lambda\lambda'$ $\epsilon\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\alpha\nu$ $\epsilon\nu$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}$ $\theta\sigma\alpha$ $\epsilon\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta\sigma\alpha\nu$ (xvii. 12). In both these $\kappa\alpha\iota$ $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}$ $\tau\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$ might have been used instead of $\delta\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$, but surely both are right, as they are. The question quoted above I should answer thus: The word "temptation" does at once suggest the tempter, but not necessarily "the *mention* of the tempter." That might be dispensed with, as being fully implied, and the thought in the second clause advanced and broadened to deliverance from all the forms and power of sin which the tempter promotes.

3. An argument is drawn from the omission of this clause by Luke, because practically involved in the preceding. "The comment is just if $\tau\omicron\upsilon$ $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\omicron\upsilon$ be masculine, but not so if the neuter be adopted" (L. 290). The general answer is, that the neuter does not make the second clause an independent petition. Luke's petition is virtually: "Deliver us from temptation to evil," and thus his record involves abridgment, but not serious curtailment. But there is a more special answer. Luke gives us "Thy kingdom come," and omits "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." The petition omit-

¹ This vol. p. 334.

ted may be called merely an expansion of the preceding, but it is nearer being an independent petition than "Deliver us from evil."

4. "Nor is it an insignificant fact that, only two chapters before, St. Matthew has recorded how the Author of this prayer found himself face to face with temptation (iv. 1, 3), and was delivered from the Evil One" (L. 290). But this same St. Matthew in recording "only two chapters before," the temptation calls the tempter once *ὁ πειράζων* (verse 3), four times *ὁ διάβολος* (verses 1, 5, 8, 11), and not once *ὁ πονηρός*, "the evil one."

5. It is claimed that if *τοῦ πονηροῦ* means moral evil, a better word could have been chosen, as *ἀμαρτία*, *πονηρία*, *ἀνομία*. It is not always possible to show why a writer or speaker does not choose some different word. Nor is it necessary to prove that he chooses the best word. But, in this case it is easy to see that *ἀμαρτία* would fail to carry the suggestion of harm and loss which *τὸ πονηρὸν* does, and that *ἀνομία* is more restricted in meaning. In regard to *πονηρία*, which Matthew uses but once, or *κακία*, these also, as abstracts, are less suggestive of the evil fruits of wickedness than *τὸ πονηρὸν*. The latter would be more likely, I think, to be used by one who felt and feared the curse of sin. Nor should it be forgotten that *τὸ πονηρὸν* is broad enough to embrace not only all evil conduct, but all evil influences, and all evil ones.

6. All this does not prove that *τοῦ πονηροῦ* is neuter, but perhaps it does prove that a decision cannot be reached—except as a matter of personal impression—by forever balancing the probabilities of diction and context. Hence the attempt to find decisive considerations outside (1) in the fact that *ὁ πονηρός* was not, in the New Testament, the usual designation of Satan, and (2) in the prominence and impressiveness of the references in the Old Testament to "that which is evil."¹

The second of these points has been met by the claim that the Old Testament has little weight because Satan appears in it so infrequently under any appellation. With this also may be put the following, with special reference to the Septuagint. "The Septuagint version of the Old Testament was made two or three centuries before the Gospels were written. This interval was a period of constant and rapid development. Theological nomenclature moved forward with the movement of the ages. Terms wholly unknown at the beginning of this period were in everybody's mouth at the end" (L. 282). But the influence of the Old Testament on the minds of Christ's hearers in regard to "evil" did not depend on the frequency or infrequency of the mention of Satan, or on the diction of the Septuagint, but on the positive and ever-present power of those writings which were "read in the synagogues every Sabbath," and taught in every devout family. No doubt, new terms arose, but they must have arisen slowly, and have supplanted others still more slowly, and if any term ever clearly had the field to express wicked conduct, it was in our Saviour's time, "evil," in whatever language it may have been clothed; while "evil one" was, it is true, beginning to be used occasionally as a name

¹ See pages 334-336 in this volume.

of the Devil. The question is not one of diction, but of habits of thought, based on Old Testament ideas.

7. But the consideration that is made to overbear the Old Testament and almost everything else on the other side is the opinions and diction of the Greek Fathers. "Among *Greek* writers there is, so far as I have observed, absolute unanimity on this point. They do not even betray the slightest suspicion that any other interpretation is possible" (L. 307). "To sum up; the earliest Latin Father [this is much more effective than to say, "The erratic Tertullian"], and the earliest Greek Father of whose opinions we have any knowledge, both take *τοῦ πονηροῦ* masculine. The masculine rendering seems to have been adopted universally by the Greek Fathers. At least no authority, even of a late date, has been produced for the neuter. In the Latin church the earliest distinct testimony for the neuter is St. Augustine at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century. From that time forward the neuter gained ground in the Western Church till it altogether supplanted the masculine" (L. 319). "With Augustine, however, a new era begins. The voice of the original Greek has ceased to be heard, or at least to be heard by an ear familiar with its idiom; and, notwithstanding his spiritual insight, the loss here, as elsewhere, is very perceptible" (L. 314). It is further claimed, though not, I think, by Lightfoot, that the usage and diction of the Greek Fathers are evidence, independent of their interpretation, in favor of the masculine. In other words, they constantly refer to Satan as "the evil one" in other connections than in the Lord's Prayer, and are therefore independent witnesses to the linguistic usage.

In regard to the exegesis of the early Fathers it is needless to bring proof that in judgment and acumen they are inferior to modern interpreters and to some of the later Fathers. The only points worth considering are whether their nearness to apostolic times, or their intimate knowledge of Greek and "an ear familiar with its idiom" makes them reliable guides. On this last point it is enough to say that the gender of *τοῦ πονηροῦ* is not a question of Greek idiom. Masculine and neuter are both equally good Greek. Also, the logical connection cannot be determined by linguistic evidence. To say that St. Augustine had lost the delicate sense of Greek idiom—but he was familiar with Greek—I cannot think to be important. Indeed, an imperfect acquaintance with Greek would have inclined him to the masculine because of the un-Latin-like idiom of the article with the neuter. The Vulgate has the ambiguous rendering "a malo." A poor Greek scholar would have put it—as Beza, who was not a poor Greek scholar, did, following the Greek Fathers,—“ab illo malo.” It simply cannot be that the Fathers favored the masculine on account of Greek idiom.

As to the independent value of the diction of the Fathers, it might be said that their usage simply grew out of their exegesis, but I will not insist on this. Let it stand that both in exegesis and in general usage the Greek Fathers unequivocally favor the masculine. Let us refrain too from saying that their unanimity was owing to the overwhelming influence of Origen.

Admitting all that is claimed in regard to their interpretation, their usage, and their opportunities of traditional light from the primitive Christian years, we have yet to set down two important facts.

First, the diction of the Fathers in the use of *πονηρός* is different from that of the New Testament. A striking illustration of this is found in the excerpts quoted by Bishop Lightfoot (p. 307) from the Clementine Homilies. These sentences (xix. 2) are not far apart, but they contain six instances of the masculine *πονηρός* applied to Satan. What is more, there are two quotations from the New Testament in which *ὁ πονηρός* is substituted for the New Testament words. The passage in Luke (x. 18) "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven" appears thus: 'Εώρακεν τὸν πονηρὸν ὡς ἀστρατὴν πεσόντα. A passage from Paul (Eph. iv. 27)—we need not blame this Father, whoever he was, for forgetting that Paul said it instead of Jesus—"Neither give place to the devil," is given, almost unrecognizable, it is true. Μὴ δότε πρόφασιν τῷ πονηρῷ. We can imagine what a transformation would have been wrought in Matthew's record of the temptation, and elsewhere, if this writer had been allowed to display his diction in the New Testament. This is an extreme case. I cannot, I regret, say whether the author does not also use the neuter. Certainly the Didache uses it—ἀγρυπνοῦντες οὐκ εἰς τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἀλλ' εἰς τὸ πονηρὸν (chap. v.). The corresponding passage in the Epistle of Barnabas is ἀγρυπνοῦντες οὐκ εἰς φόβον θεοῦ, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὸ πονηρὸν (chap. xx.). Only a few paragraphs before (chap. xviii.) he speaks of ἀγγελοι τοῦ σατανᾶ. But if the neuter were shown to be altogether wanting in the Greek Fathers this would only prove the more conclusively how divergent their diction is, at this point, from that of the New Testament. Somehow this argument from diction is progressively self-destructive. The stronger it is the less it amounts to. It may be said that the patristic usage was a normal development of apostolic usage. But any development contravenes the use of parallel passages, and this particular development I should rather call distortion.

The second important fact is one of theological opinion, viz. that the Fathers, in their thinking, gave more prominence to Satan than the New Testament does. This is shown first by the theory of the atonement held by even so early a Father as Irenaeus. Imagine Peter and Paul preaching and writing that the sufferings and death of Christ were a ransom paid to the Devil for our release. Says Shedd, speaking of the writings of the first three centuries, "It is very plain that in seizing so rankly, as the theological mind of this age did, upon those few texts in which the connection and relations of Satan with the work of Christ are spoken of, and allowing them to eclipse those far more numerous passages in which the Redeemer's work is exhibited in its reference to the being and attributes of God, it was liable to a one-sided construction of the doctrine."¹ Again, "The claims of God and of the attribute of justice were thrown too much into the background by those of Satan" (p. 266).

The patristic theory of the atonement is sufficient to prove the deviation

¹ History of Christian Doctrine, Vol. ii. p. 215.

of the Fathers from the sobriety and truth of our Lord and his apostles. But we may put beside this the great importance attached to exorcism. Evil spirits, subjects of "the evil one," must be cast out by rites and ceremonies. Early in the third century exorcism began to be connected with baptism, and thus virtually became a sacrament of the church.

Now all this subserviency to Satan seemed to the early Fathers genuine Christianity; but we see it to be exaggeration and perversion. And is it not plain that minds breathing such a theological atmosphere as they did would inevitably interpret ambiguous passages of the New Testament so as to magnify the agency of Satan? Why then should we follow their guidance under the notion that somehow "the voice of the original Greek" taught them the true meaning? It seems to me that the real foundation of the new rendering "Deliver us from the evil one" is the opinion of the Greek Fathers. And is it not a very insecure foundation?