

On “The Evil One” Rendering in Matthew 6:13

By John William Burgon

XII. Are we to regard it as a kind of *set-off* against all that goes before, that in an age when the personality of Satan is freely called in question, “THE EVIL ONE” has been actually *thrust into the Lord's Prayer*? A more injudicious and unwarrantable innovation it would be impossible to indicate in any part of the present unhappy volume. The case has been argued out with much learning and ability by two eminent Divines, Bp. Lightfoot and Canon Cook. The Canon remains master of the field. That *the change ought never to have been made* is demonstrable. The grounds of this assertion are soon stated. To begin, (1) It is admitted on all hands that it must for ever remain a matter of opinion only whether in the expression ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ, the nominative case is τὸ πονηρόν (as in S. Matth. v. 37, 39: Rom. xii. 9), or ὁ πονηρός (as in S. Matth. xiii. 19, 38: Eph. vi. 16),—either of which yields a good sense. But then—(2) The Church of England in her formularies having emphatically declared that, for her part, she adheres to the former alternative, it was in a very high degree unbecoming for the Revisionists to pretend to the enjoyment of *certain* knowledge that the Church of England in so doing was mistaken: and unless “from evil” be “*a clear and plain error*,” the Revisionists were bound to let it

⁶⁵⁹ Those of our readers who wish to pursue this subject further may consult with advantage Dr. Gifford's learned note on the passage in the *Speaker's Commentary*. Dr. Gifford justly remarks that “it is the natural and simple construction, which every Greek scholar would adopt without hesitation, if no question of doctrine were involved.”

alone. Next—(3), It can never be right to impose the narrower interpretation on words which have always been understood to bear the larger sense: especially when (as in the present instance) the larger meaning distinctly includes and covers the lesser: witness the paraphrase in our Church Catechism,—“and that He will keep us (a) from all sin and wickedness, and (b) *from our ghostly enemy*, and (c) from everlasting death.”—(4) But indeed Catholic Tradition claims to be heard in this behalf. Every Christian at his Baptism renounces not only “the Devil,” but also “*all his works*, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh.”⁶⁶⁰ And at this point—(5), The voice of an inspired Apostle interposes in attestation that this is indeed the true acceptation of the last petition in the LORD'S Prayer: for when S. Paul says—“the LORD will deliver me *from every evil work* and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen,”⁶⁶¹—what else is he referring to but to the words just now under consideration? He explains that in the LORD'S Prayer it is “*from every evil work*” that we pray to be “delivered.” (Note also, that he retains *the Doxology*.) Compare the places:—

S. Matth. vi. 13.—ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ. ὅτι σὸς ἔστιν ἡ βασιλεία ... καὶ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. Ἄμήν.

2 Tim. iv. 18.—καὶ ῥυσηταί με ὁ Κύριος ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔργου πονηροῦ καὶ σώσει εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ ... ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.... Ἄμήν.

⁶⁶⁰ Note, that this has been the language of the Church from the beginning. Thus Tertullian,—“Aquam adituri ... contestamur nos renuntiare diabolo, *et pompæ et angelis ejus*” (i. 421): and Ambrose,—“Quando te interrogavit, Abrenuntias diabolo *et operibus ejus*, quid respondisti? Abrenuntio. Abrenuntias *sæculo et voluptatibus ejus*, quid respondisti? Abrenuntio” (ii. 350 c): and Ephraem Syrus,—Ἀποτάσσομαι τῷ Σατανᾷ καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ (ii. 195 and iii. 399). And Cæsarius of Arles,—“Abrenuntias diabolo, *pompis et operibus ejus* ... Abrenuntio” (Galland. xi. 18 e).

⁶⁶¹ 2 Tim. iv. 18.

Then further—(6), What more unlikely than that our LORD would end with giving such prominence to that rebel Angel whom by dying He is declared to have “destroyed”? (Heb. ii. 14: 1 John iii. 8.) For, take away the Doxology (as our Revisionists propose), and we shall begin the LORD'S Prayer with “OUR FATHER,” and literally end it with—*the Devil!*—But above all,—(7) Let it never be forgotten that this is *the pattern Prayer*, a portion of every Christian child's daily utterance,—the most sacred of all our formularies, and by far the most often repeated,—into which it is attempted in this way to introduce a startling novelty. Lastly—(8), When it is called to mind that nothing short of *necessity* has warranted the Revisionists in introducing a single change into the A. V.,—“*clear and plain errors*”—and that no such plea can be feigned on the present occasion, the liberty which they have taken in this place must be admitted to be absolutely without excuse.... Such at least are the grounds on which, for our own part, we refuse to entertain the proposed introduction of the Devil into the LORD'S Prayer. From the position we have taken up, it will be found utterly impossible to dislodge us.