



The Enigmatic Presence of “Evil” in the World and Delivery from It: A Critical Look at Matthew 6:13

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ABSTRACT

In the last two requests in His model prayer in Matthew 6: 9-13, Jesus alluded to leading into “temptation” and delivering from “evil.” The two requests form a composite by the use of the conjunction *alla*. The construction of the expression *ἀπο του ponērou* in Koine Greek poses some translation and theological dilemmas. Does the statement *του ponērou* refer to “evil” as a substantive phenomenon or as a personality? Is Jesus requesting deliverance from “temptations,” “tests,” and “trials,” or from the one who originates these conditions? The idiom, *του ponērou*, may be interpreted and understood as the sinister conditions in the world. Suggestively, the idiom may also be understood as “the evil one,” or “the devil” due to the use of the preposition *ἀπο* “away from”, instead of *εκ* “out of” both of which take the genitive case. This article demonstrates, by the use of interpretive methods, that the two requests form one appeal by the employment of the conjunction *alla* and that the literal translation of the expression *alla hrusai hmas apo tou ponērou* should be “but deliver us away from the evil one/devil” the theologically alleged source of all “evil.” This petition, which is missing in the Lukan account, hinges on the request before it; hence Luke finds it redundant and omits it.

Keywords: Lead, temptation, deliver, evil, evil one.

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus’ model prayer in Matthew 6:9–13 falls within a larger pericope generally referred to as the “sermon on the mountain” in Matthew but the “sermon in the valley” in Luke. In Matthew, this pericope begins in chapter 5:1 and ends in chapter 7:29. The parallel prayer in Luke 11:2-4 falls within a shorter pericope (chapter 11:1-54). In Luke, the setting for uttering the prayer is dictated by requests from the disciples observing him pray and what they observed from John the Baptist (11:1). In Matthew, no such circumstances are given but only to teach the disciples the proper way to pray, a way dramatically different from the “hypocrites,” referring to the Pharisees and the Sadducees – (Matt 16:1-4). The prayer is cast in the context of a child placing a series of requests, with seemingly patronizing and appeasing comments, before a caring, powerful father; or a destitute citizen before a benevolent potentate: “*Our Father who is in heaven yours is the kingdom, and the power and the*

glory forever. Amen.” The third part of the verse (v. 13c) summarizes David’s adoration of God (1Chr 29:11-13). The variant readings are acknowledged.¹

The plea in this prayer is reminiscent of a similar and significant prayer in the Old Testament (OT) where Jabez requested the God of Israel, pleading that “Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my boarder, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm, so that it might not bring me pain” (1 Chron. 4: 10, ESV).² While the Septuagint (LXX) did not use the specific word for “evil” (*ponēros*), the Hebrew idiom for doing or experiencing evil, harm or pain: *poiēseis gnōsin tou mē tapeinōsai*, was employed instead. All the same there is the plea for deliverance from some sort of harm or pain considered as evil. Was Jesus aware of this prayer? Most likely so, as shown in the biblical gospels that he was vexed in the OT scriptures and had the penchant for quoting from them (Matt. 4: 1- 11; 5: 17-48; Lk. 4: 1-12).

Matthew’s Jesus listed seven specific requests ranging from the emergence of the reign of God on earth to the deliverance of the children of God from un-Godly provocateur(s) or situations. Can these be considered complete and necessary needs that a child of God requires from God? This question will not be pursued in this paper, but suffice it to say here that the model prayer covers the totality of what the child of God should be concerned about (Matt 6:25 -34). The focus of this paper is directed at the seventh and last request: *alla hērusai hēmas apo tou ponērou* (“but deliver us from evil/evil one”) in Matthew (v. 13b).³ In this, Jesus affirms the presence and reality of evil and/or the evil one from which or who the child of God should be rescued.

However, the discussion of this request in Matthew will rope in the earlier one from which it draws its basis. Is Jesus requesting deliverance from “temptations,” “tests,” and “trials,” or the one who, supposedly, originates these conditions? The interpretive approach is employed. This method explores the syntactical and etymological presumptions of the expressions *eisenegekēs hēmas* and *eis peirasmon* in the main clause of the verse; and *hērusai hēmas* and *āpo tou ponērou* in the sub-clause, both in the LXX and the New Testament (NT). In the NT, attention is on the biblical gospels and the epistles (Paul’s and James’); they are most effectively used. The concept of *tou ponērou*, “evil,” is explored in greater detail, using the grammatical tool to understand the text’s general understanding under consideration. Quotations from the New King James Version are mostly used in this article.

Christian dogma contrasts two ideologies relating to *evil*: physical evil and moral evil. Physical evil refers to what is called natural evil. This evil is the disorder in the physical world, a physical cause that is inimical to physical and mental well-being. To some extent, this sort of evil is “the effect or penalty of sin... (Gen 3:10-12; 6:13).”⁴ This evil results in suffering—bodily ailment and mental torture/suffering—as promised by God (Gen 3:14-19).⁵ The pain highlighted by philosophers: mental anguish, as observed by Hicks earlier,⁶ is worth noting. These “evils,” as pointed out, inevitably result in various degrees of psychosis, psychosocial and emotional agony entrenched in individuals and their socio-economic environment.

The second genre of *evil* –“moral evil” relates to morality. Unger defines it as “sin, disorder in the moral world.”⁷ He explains that “It is the failure of rational and free beings to conform in character and conduct to the will of God. This is the greatest evil (*see* Rom 1:18-32).”⁸ Therefore, moral evil

¹Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Novum Testamentum Graece* 26th ed., ed. Curt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger and Allen Wikgren, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983), 13; Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger and Allen Wikgren, eds. *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), 18.

² The ESV Bible offers an alternative translation for the idiom *poiēseis gnōsin* as keep from “evil” in the margin.

³ This last request is included in the King James Version (KJV) and the New King James Version (NKJV), while omitted in the Revised Standard Version (RSV), the New International Version (NIV), and the English Standard Version (ESV).

⁴ Merrill F. Unger, “Evil,” *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 382.

⁵ The debate over whether, or to what extent, physical suffering is necessary to lead to greater good will not be made here.

⁶ John H. Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 4th ed., (New Delhi, India: Prentice-Hall of India, 2006), 39.

⁷Unger, “Evil,” *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, 382.

⁸Italics in original.

stands opposed to God's incorruptible nature, introducing corruption into the created world that was good (*agathos/kalos*) (Rom 1:23). This moral evil stands against the will of God—the fruit of the Spirit detailed by Paul as the works of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21). In anticipation of this, Paul talks of deliverance “out from this present evil age” (*ezelētai hēmas ek tou aiōnos tou enestōtos ponērou*) (Gal. 1: 4), where, as can be seen, he has presented the same grammatical expression “*ek ... tou ... ponērou*” with the specific indication that the deliverance is out of this world. Here, Paul further emphasizes this by combining the preposition *ek* with the second aorist subjunctive middle of *-aireo* (take out) (*ezelētai*), meaning *rescue* or *deliver*. He may be referring to the same situation “of a crooked and perverse generation” in Phil. 2:14. Paul reiterates this in his lamentations in Rom. 8: 20-22. He refers to the “bondage of corruption” (vs. 21) using *phthora*—*corruption, decay*—sometimes used to synonym *ponēros* and antonym for mortality.⁹ Paul is fond of pointing to the enigmatic/mysterious (*mustērion*) nature of divine phenomenon which borders on sin and evil (Rom 11:25; 16: 25; Eph. 1: 9; 3: 3-4, 9; 5: 31, 32; 6:19; Col. 1: 26, 27; 2: 2; 4: 3; 2 Thes 2: 7; 1Tim. 3: 9, 16). Significant among these is the talk about “the mystery of lawlessness” which he declared was already manifest in his days (2 Thes. 2: 7). Paul refers to the enigmatic nature of sin and evil in the activities of “the man of lawlessness” who acts at the bidding of Satan, in deceiving those who are perishing because they “did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thes. 1 - 12). John the Revelator also alludes to this in a few instances, although related, but not directly in the matter of sin and evil (Rev. 1: 20; 10: 7; 17: 5, 7).

Syntactical Analysis

A great dilemma for the believer and humanity, in general, is a concern for “evil.” Jesus seems to echo the same sentiment in his model prayer in Matt 6: 13. Similar views are expressed in Jesus' prayer in John 17:15. The requests as seen in Matthew seem to contain a double barrage of petitions asking God to keep the believers safe by (1) preventing, at best, temptation, trials or tests, by keeping at bay “evil” or the “evil one” if the second interpretation is preferred. These requests are reminiscent of the narrative in Matt. 4: 1, where we also see the same terminologies of “leading” by the Spirit, to be “tempted” by “the devil/” evil one.” Similar sentiments are expressed in Luke 4: 1-2a, suggesting that Matthew and Luke have a common source in the Jesus tradition about “the devil's” penchant for tempting the children of God. After all, Jesus himself experienced it firsthand and wished none of his followers goes through his experience.

The two requests are made into a composite whole by the evangelist's use of the conjunction *alla* (*all'*), a derivative of *allos* (*other, another*). *Allos* is an adversative particle that carries a stronger emphasis than the *de* conjunction.¹⁰ Here in Matthew, it is appropriately neuter plural of *allos* being used adverbially with a changed accent, thus taking on the meaning “*otherwise,*” “*on the other hand*” (Rom 3:31). The two requests in Matthew 6:13a-b, therefore, make a combined plea to God, which reads, “*and do not lead us into temptation, otherwise/on the other hand, deliver us from the evil one.*” Thus, Matthew's Jesus teaches his followers to plead for exemption from temptation; however, if this does not please their Father, He should provide the needed assistance to overcome it. Here, the followers of Jesus are being instructed to ask their Father/God to be spared the possible unpleasant result of failure in temptation by He setting in to prevent or control the situation.

The second part of the request does not appear in Luke's records,¹¹ neither are there any traces of such request in the remaining synoptic gospel—Mark. As pointed out earlier, John reports something

⁹ For further discussion on this in Paul's writings, see (1) Dziejzorm R. Asafo, “Paul's Assertions in Rom. 8:20-22: Implications for Ecological Distress in the World.” In Daniel Berchie, Daniel Kwame Bediako and Dziejzorm R. Asafo (eds.). *The Bible, Cultural Identity and Missions*. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 215-231; and (2) Dziejzorm R. Asafo, “The Doctrine of “Redemption from Evil and Corruption”: A Catalyst for Ecological degradation in Africa.” *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*. (September, 2017.), 1 (1): 105-122.

¹⁰ G. Abbott-Smith, “*ἀλλά*”, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3rd ed., (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1981).

¹¹ Based on the N-U text. The N-U text is the New Testament Greek text believed to be the most accurate text as found in the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (originally produced by Eberhard Nestle and revised by Kurt Arlan and Barbara Arland)

close to this, 17:15). In his submission, the author of the gospel, Matthew, writing in the *lingua franca*, *Koine Greek*, made use of a grammatical construction *tou ponērou*. This submission has posed a translation and, consequently, a theological challenge to modern readers. Traditionally, evil is identified as “that which is contrary to God’s will.” This definition does not address the dilemmas encountered in the specific Biblical records. Does the expression mean “evil” as defined ostensibly as “physical pain, mental suffering, and moral wickedness,”¹² or is it talking about an embodiment of evil itself, the “Devil/Satan”? It is further explained that one of the three combinations of the things referred to as “evil” is the source of the other two: that moral wickedness is responsible for both physical pain and mental suffering. The argument is that much of human pain and suffering, be it bodily or mental, comes from human activity, emanating from human unethical or immoral behaviour. It is further asserted that

[t]his pain includes such major scourges as poverty, oppression and persecution, war, and all the injustice, indignity, and inequality that have occurred throughout history. Even diseases fostered, to the extent that has not yet been precisely determined by psychosomatic medicine, by emotional and moral factors seated both in individuals and in their social environment.¹³

Some pain and suffering are attributed to factors other than human activity, such as those caused by natural sources like bacteria, earthquakes, storms, and lightning. Others still suspect those resulting from a combination of human activity and natural disasters such as fire, flood, and drought.

Etymological Considerations

Four significant theologically charged terms are found in the final set of petitions in Jesus’ model prayer: two in the main clause: *eisenegkēs* and *peirasmos*; and the other two in the sub-clause *hērusai* and *poneros*. Curiously, these four terms are applied and used together to make two solid theological statements: one “leading into temptation” and the other “rescuing/protecting from the initiator of the temptation,” as noted below. The first set of terms comprises one verb *eis-enegkēs* derived from *phero*, and *peirasmos*, a noun form of *peirazo*.

Eis-enegkēs

This term is a compound verb formed from *eis* and *enegkēs*, the second aorist subjunctive derivative of *phero*: “lead into.” The request is to the Heavenly Father *not to cause, or allow, to enter into*. It appears in various forms about 25 times in the LXX with multiple meanings depending on the context of the occasion. Its use here by Matthew carries the meaning “to bear, to lead” (Num 11:14); *to lead, to direct, to incline somebody to do [something]*, when expressed with the infinitive, as in Exod 35:29. Matthew’s use of the term here, in the second aorist subjunctive together with the preposition prefix *eis-*, although not in the infinitive, never-the-less gives a clear option to the Father to carry out the request or not. This appeal is reminiscent of the request made by Jesus himself, as all the Synoptics reported (Matt 26:39, 42, Mk 14:36; Lk 22:42). The subjunctive mood (the mood of a doubtful assertion) applied in Matthew’s first reportage makes that request equivalent, in giving the choice to the Father whether to comply or not, to that in Matt 26:39, 42, and in the other Synoptics. In effect, the disciples are to leave it to God to decide, at his will, to permit or not to allow the *peirasmos*—the temptations—that may come their way.

and United Bible Society’s *Greek New Testament*). It is included in the King James, and New King James Versions, but not in the New International Version.

¹² Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 39.

¹³ Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 39.

Peirasmos/Peirazo

The word is used eight times in the Septuagint and translated as “trial” or “test” (Deut 4:34), as “temptation” (Sir 44:20; Deut 4:34), and as “disaster or plague” (Deut 7:19).¹⁴ Its derivatives such as *peiraterion*, *peiraw*, and *peirazo* are also found and translated as *to test*, *to put to the test* (Gen 22:1; Exod 15:25; 16:4; 17:2, 7); *to prove* (Eccl 7:23), *to try*, or *to tempt* (Deut 6:16).

In the NT, *peirazo* and its noun form “*peirasmos*” continue their LXX connotations and are used mostly as *a trial*, giving the ethical sense of purpose and effect, which could be good or evil (Jam 1:13). The verb form is translated “prove”/“test” (John 6:6); “examine” (2 Cor 13:5); and “assayed”/“try” or “tried” (Acts 16:7; Heb 11:17; Rev 2:2, 10; 3:10). Paul (Gal 4:14), James (1:12, 13), and Peter (1, 4:12) used it in the good or neutral sense. It is used especially for afflictions sent or permitted by God (2Pet 2:9, Rev 3:10). In the negative sense, it is used for trial considered as leading to sin, hence translated *temptation* (Lk 8:13, 1Cor 10:13; 1Tim 6:9), an example being the narrative of the temptation of Jesus by the devil (Lk 4:13). The third sense is when it is used of “distrustful testing trying or challenge of God” by man (Acts 15:10; 1Cor:10:9).¹⁵

One may strike a difference between the two categories: “temptation” on the one hand, “trials” and “tests” on the other, for which the same Greek term *peirasmos* is used. Temptations will suggest the condition urging one to engage in sin, while “trials” will indicate the condition urging someone to deny the faith and their God. This can be caused by the ostensive definition of “evil” as understood by philosophers. Both conditions are forms of “tests” for the believer.

The second set of terms also includes a verb: *hērusai* and a corresponding noun: *tou ponērou*, a derivative of *poneros*.

Hērusai hēmas

Hērusai hēmas is a request for rescue and deliverance. The term takes on the aorist imperative middle of *heruomai* here. Used about eleven times in the LXX, (Gen 48:16, Exod 2:17, 19; 5:23; 6:6); it is variously translated, to mean *to rescue*, *to save*, *to deliver*, *to preserve* (JudgB 18:28; to save oneself (Prov 6:31); [tina] (Exod 2: 17); [ti] (Exod 12: 27); *to deliver out of* [tina ek tinos]; *to deliver from* [tina ek tinos] (Gen 48:16), [tina apo tinos] (Exod 2: 19); *to spare* [ti] (2 Kings 23:18); *to redress* [ti] (LkJ 53); *ho heruomenos—the deliverer* (Isa 59:20), and *rescued/delivered out of the hands*, (Jos 22:31).

As in the LXX, *heruomai* continues to carry its meaning *to draw to oneself*, connoting *to rescue*, *deliver*, with the accusative person, as seen in Matt 27:43 and II Pet 2:7. Its use followed by *apo* is found only three times in the NT (Matt 6: 13; Luke 11” 4; II Tim 18). However, its use followed by *ek* is predominant in the Pauline writings (Rom 7: 24; II Cor 1:10; Col 1:12; I Thes 1:10; II Tim 3:11; II Pet 2:9). It is also used in the participle form *ho heruomenos—the deliverer* found only in Romans 11: 26; and in its passive form, followed by *apo* (Rom 15:31; II Thes 3:2) and *ek* (Lk 1: 74; II Tim 4:17).

Tou ponērou

It is noted that the term *evil* (*ponēros*) and its variants are counted seventy-eight (78) times in the Greek New Testament and translated as *evil*. The LXX has it 360 times. The term transformed in the Greek world from the Classical period to OT (LXX) and later Judaism, then to the New Testament.

In classical Greek, the term paints a picture of a sense of sorrow and unhappiness, a situation “laden with care.”¹⁶ Furthermore, it describes “that which causes trouble and brings sorrow.”¹⁷ It was

¹⁴ Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel and Katrin Hauspie, “πειρασμος,” *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003). It is used in Deut. 6:16 and 9:22 as the name of the place where the Israelites “tested” the LORD (Exod 17:7).

¹⁵ Abbott-Smith, “πειραζω”, “πειρασμος”, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*.

¹⁶ Gunther Harder, “poneros, poneria,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. VI, ed. by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 548.

¹⁷ Harder, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 548.

used for all unpleasant situations, in all areas of life, whether in politics, social, or business life. Above all, the term came to take on its moral sense of “morally reprehensible” in conduct towards the gods and men, “willingly and knowingly bad.”¹⁸ By the close of the Hellenistic period, the moral sense of *ponēros*, meaning “morally reprehensible,” “useless,” “bad,” “evil,” had been established. Thus, one finds the *ponēroi* –“evil ones,” being “contrasted with the *kaloikagathoi* or ethically with the *agathoi* and *megalopheleis*.”¹⁹

In the LXX and other Greek translations, *ponēros* used for *raa* is an all-inclusive term that encompasses all that is opposed to the “divinely appointed harmony of the universe.”²⁰ By extension, the impulse, the heart, or the eye, particularly the covetous eye, are “evil.” Acts and intentions are evil or false before both men and God (Neh 2:10; 13:8; Gen 38:7; 1Kg 11:6; 14:22), but it is only God who determines what is good and evil and hence understood as that which is in opposition to God, for it is only God who is good (Matt 19: 16, 17).

In addition, *ho ponēros* can be used to apply to “the wicked man.” The idiom is expressed sometimes with *adikos*—unrighteous, *sklēros*—brutal, stern, severe, violent, and *anomos*—lawless. Sometimes it is in contrast with *agathos*—(the) good man, or *dikaios*—(the) righteous.²¹ The wicked man is the one who transgresses the Law, does not seek Yahweh or His commands or who will not be guided by him (Ezek 11:2); and deserves to be exterminated (Deut 17:7, 12; 19:19; 21:21, 22:21-24; 24:7). In this developmental stage, *hō ponēros* is not yet used for Satan in the LXX/OT.

In the NT, *ponēros* has maintained its two senses of meaning: (i) the sense of *bad, harmful, unserviceable, useless*; and (ii) the moral/ethical sense in terms of its adjectival use in application to (a) *persons* in antithesis to God, and denoting obstinacy, stubbornness, or stiff-neckedness despite God’s offer of salvation;²² and (b) *things and concepts* such as names.²³

The dilemma in interpreting the term as used in its noun form is whether it stands for an “evil thing” or an “evil person.” Is its use here intended to be the “evil one,” that is, the devil, or evil as a principle? It is suggested that the conjunction “but” (*alla*) tilts the interpretation of the statement towards making “evil” parallel to “temptation” in the previous clause. If accepted, “evil” will probably mean a moral wrong.²⁴

A further noun used in terms of “evil person” is found in its application to (a) the *bad man*—he who do not meet the righteous demands of God; and (b) *the devil*—the absolute antithesis to God (Matt 13:19²⁵; Eph 6:16; 1Jn2:13, 14; 5:18). As noted earlier, the peculiar use of the word for Satan has no precedence until NT times.

There is also the debate whether to understand the rendering *tou pōnērou* as masculine, thus translated as *the devil*, or neuter, *evil* (Jn 17:15; Matt 6:13). In John, it makes no significant difference in how it is interpreted: masculine or neuter. It is argued, however, that if the petition in Matt 6: 13 is to be taken in its masculine sense to mean *the devil*, or *the evil one*, it will be because the request is for deliverance from the eschatological tribulation or physical pain and mental suffering, which originator is the devil. For that matter, “the prayer for ultimate deliverance may well refer to him.”²⁶ On the other

¹⁸Harder, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 548.

¹⁹Harder, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 549.

²⁰Unger, “Evil,” *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, 382.

²¹Harder, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 550.

²² Ref. to Matt 7:11, 12:34, 35, 18:32, 25:26, Lk 6:45, 11:13, 19:22, Acts 17:5, 2Thess 3:2, and 2Tim 3:13.

²³ Ref. to Matt 5:11, 12: 35, Lk 6:22, 45, Jn 3:19, 7: 7, Acts 18:14, 25:18, Gal 1:4, Col 1:21, 1Tim 6:4, 2Tim 4:18, Heb 3:12, 10:23, Jam 2: 4, 7, 4:16, 1Jn. 3: 12, 2Jn. 11, and 3Jn 10.

²⁴ Francis D. Nichol, ed., “Mathew”, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, (Hagerstown: Review & Herald, 1980), 348.

²⁵ Compare parallels Mark 4: 15—*erchetai ho satanas* and Luke 8:12 – *erchetai ho diabolos*. The word however, does not occur in Matthew 4: 10, nor in 12:26. The discussion of why so will not be taken up here as it is not relevant to our discussion in this paper.

²⁶Harder, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 560.

hand, *tou ponerou* may be taken in its neutral sense, mainly in Matthew. This form is linked especially to Satan, the *evil one* (Matt 5:37, 6:13, 13:19, 38; see also Lk 11:4;). Harder argues that,

It is evil in the sense of the Jewish prayers, especially the eschatological tribulation. It is also the bad which one might do or plan to do against someone. The eschatological character of the prayer does not allow us to take to *poneron*²⁷ merely in the sense of temporal evil. The prayer is for definitive, eschatological deliverance.²⁸

In Jesus' model prayer, Matthew made use of the expression *tou ponerou*. This expression, found in the final request in the prayer, which is the bone of contention in this discussion, is missing in Luke (11:2-4), although this last request seems to be a natural conclusion of the previous one. In Luke, the final plea in the prayer ended with the petition for God not to "lead us ... into temptation." Granted, without admitting that the two sections of the verse belong together, why has Luke omitted this? Perhaps the omission is in the tradition (Q) of which Luke is aware since variant manuscripts of Matthew also omit it? Or, is it probably that Luke's theological orientation does not accommodate the idea of "evil"? Furthermore, does he consider the second part redundant since God would not "lead" the believer into "temptation" or allow "trials" and "tests" to overwhelm his children, and by that "delivered" them from the "evil one" or "evil"?

Grammatical Considerations

The debate as to whether *tou ponerou* should be translated as "the evil one" or "evil" rests on the grammatical considerations of the use of the definite article in *Koine Greek*. In this last request in the prayer, one reads *apo tou ponerou*. It carries with it two grammatical analyses: the use of the definite article and the use of the preposition *apo*.

The use of the definite article "tou."

The definite article in Greek comes with many flexibilities and its attendant ambiguities.²⁹ It is to be noted that three functions of the Greek article can be traced in the sentence. First, it functions by giving simple definitions such as *ho doulos*, **the** (*particular*) *slave (referred to)*. Secondly, when used as an antecedent to a participle or adjective, the definite article provides a simple way of expressing ideas that a relative clause would have said. For example, instead of *hos erchetai*—*he who is coming*, one may say *ho erchomenos*, *the coming one*, as in Matt 11:3. Thirdly, the article also provides the avenue to change words and phrases which are not nouns into virtual nouns: e.g., *ho plesion*, i.e., one's neighbour—*hos plesion estin*; or, in Acts 13: 13 – *hoi peri Paulou*—*Paul and his party*. Moule explains that "a key to many uses of the article is the recognition that it often puts a word in apposition with another" because "by changing the use of the participle from a verbal or adjectival to a substantial one, alters the meaning of the phrase."³⁰ An example is found in the sentence *ho basileus erchomenos* – a sentence in which the article does NOT precede the participle—which means *the king as he comes (or came)*. However, *ho Basileus ho erchomenos* means *the king—that is—the coming (one), the king who is coming*. Hence the use of the article in Matthew implies identifying a particular personality who is evil.

The use of the prepositions "apo" and "ek."

The use of the preposition $\alpha\pi\omicron$ is also significant. It is understood that the use of the genitive case indicates "possession," "genus," and also the idea of "separation," which is equivalent to the Latin *ablative* – *ablatus*, meaning "carried away." Two prepositions, *apo* and *ek*, meaning "from," are followed by the genitive. The difference in understanding is that *apo* connotes "from" or "away from,"

²⁷Transliteration supplied.

²⁸Harder, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 561.

²⁹ C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 106.

³⁰ Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 106.

and *ek* means “from” or “out of.” Matthew uses the preposition *apo* in reporting the request being discussed: *apo tou ponērou*. This translated, says “away from the evil (one).” The impression is that the flight is away from an object and not out of a situation. Thus the request is the deliverance from the hands of a personality. It may equally be posited that the appeal is taken from the appalling worldly situation taken as an entity. However, this assertion is weak since the children of God do not live outside the world but in the world, a condition required for the preposition *ek*. Since Matthew used *apo*, it is understandable that he meant deliverance or protection from an adversary. A comparable usage of the preposition *ek* with *tou ponērou* is found in Matt 5:37. On the contrary, in this instance, the statement is better translated as “coming out of evil/maleficence.”

A similar appeal appears in Jesus’ prayer in John 17:15. Here John records Jesus saying *alla hina tereses autous ek tou ponērou*). Similarly, grammatical considerations, as laid out above, do not allow the same understanding (as of Matt. 6:11) on account of the use of the preposition *ek* (pro John) as against *apo* (pro-Matthew). In John, the request is in line with being not taken *ek tou kosmou*. It is, therefore, clear that here, Jesus is requesting God to make safe His children out from the perilous situation in the world. It is, therefore, safe to propose that Matthew’s Jesus is thinking of the protection of the *hagioi* (the holy ones) from the destroyer (*the evil one*), by extension, implying temptation rather than the disparaged conditions (evil) in the world. In Matthew, Jesus is pleading for protection against the distorter of moral uprightness rather than life’s discomforts.

Following the cue from Jesus, Paul made a similar request of the Lord, as in Matthew, through the saints in Thessalonica, that he (Paul) and his fellow ministers *herusthomēn apo ton atopon kai ponēron anthropon* – “... be delivered from wicked/perverse [out of place] and evil men” (II Thess 3:2). Although Paul’s deliverance (*heruomai*) request is different in tense (aorist), mood (subjunctive), and voice (passive), as well as specific and limited in scope, it is similar in terminology: *herusthomen apo ton atopon kai ponēron anthropon* – “wicked/perverse and evil men.” Albeit, Paul may have the originator of evil in mind, the one who works through some men who oppose the missionary activities of Paul and his friends. Paul made this even more explicit in the subsequent verse (II Thess 3:3) by using Matthew’s exact expression *apo tou ponērou*, thus alluding to a protagonist, “the evil one,” known to the believers.

Making Sense of it All

Jesus, in the last of the barrage of requests in his model prayer, urged his followers to ask God to spare them from experiencing tests, trials, and temptations. Should this not be permitted, the Father should protect and rescue his children from the hands of the enemy of God. Satan has long been considered the arch-enemy of God. The Bible has given clear evidence in the temptation and fall of humankind narrative (Gen 3:1-24; 2 Cor 11:3); and John the Revelator’s description of Satan (Rev 20:2). This argument stands on three fundamental considerations: syntactical, etymological, and grammatical. First, on the syntactical basis of the use and understanding of the same, if not similar, expression in the Jesus tradition in “Q” (Matt 4:1; Lk 4:1-2a), talking of the Spirit “leading” Jesus to be “tempted” by the “devil.” Second, etymologically, the constant historical use of the terms *peirasmos* and *ponēros* together gives the unavoidable understanding of “temptation” and “evil one,” respectively. Third, grammatically, it is based on applying the preposition *apo* followed by the genitive case, as opposed to *ek* (which also carries the genitive case), *to ponēros* as seen in the idiom, *apo tou ponērou*.

With the foregone explanation, it is clear that Matthew’s expression *tou ponērou* falls in the third analysis above. However, it is in the genitive plural of *ponēron*, evil, or *ponēros*, Evil One. Human history, in general, and as exemplified in Biblical prophecy, is violent and full of evil. Take specifically the prophecy in Dan. 8 in which two animals, a ram and a goat, symbolizing two world empires, fight each other (Dan 8:5-7).

In current language, Jesus appears to be saying, “do not allow us to wander into enemy territory, but snatch/rescue us from the hands of the Evil One, the source of the unpleasant worldly situation.” The appeal for deliverance, therefore, can be seen in two ways. First, the children of God are to be taken out of immorality, or unpleasant living conditions, as implied in some translations. Secondly,

however, the idiom is to be correctly understood that God has the power to protect his own, the followers of Christ, from the Devil or Satan. Satan's activities result in moral wickedness (i.e., immorality or an unethical state), which breeds physical pain and mental suffering. It is as if to say, sometimes we look around, and things look really bad. Violence, immorality, corruption, and diseases crop up everywhere. An enemy, not made of flesh and blood, brutally attacks us from all sides. But no matter how difficult the battles we have to fight, Jesus fights for us and stands as our Prince and High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.³¹

CONCLUSION

The focus of this article is on the final two of Jesus' requests in his model prayer in Matt 6: 9-13. The two requests in verse 11 read: "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from [the] evil/evil one." Reading Koine Greek, the expression *ἀπο του ponērou* poses some translation and theological dilemmas. The dilemmas emanate from the statement *του ponērou*, whether this refers to "evil" as a substantive phenomenon (a natural or social condition) or as a personality (the originator of the said unpleasant condition). An attempt has been made to answer the question raised in reading Greek "Is Jesus asking for deliverance from "temptations," "tests," and "trials," or from the one who originates these conditions? On the one hand, the idiom, *του ponērou*, may be interpreted and understood as the sinister conditions in the world. On the other hand, *του ponērou* on its own may also be understood as "the evil one," or "the devil" due to the presence of the preposition *ἀπο* "away from", contrary to *ek* "out of" both of which by necessity must take the genitive case. By using hermeneutical methods to assess the issue, it has been established that, the two requests form a composite appeal by the application of the conjunction *alla* and that the literal translation of Jesus' statement *alla hērusai hēmas apo tou ponērou* should be "but deliver us from *the* evil one/the Devil," Satan, the theologically confirmed source of all "evil."

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³¹ Elias Brasil de Souza, "Daniel," *Bible Study Guide for First Quarter 2020*, Teachers Edition, (Silver Spring: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2020), 142.

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