
A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

THE PHILOLOGY OF THE GREEK BIBLE: ITS PRESENT AND FUTURE.[1]

II

THE PROBLEM OF "BIBLICAL" GREEK

In our first lecture we called attention to the close connexion between the Greek Old Testament, represented by the Septuagint translation, and the Greek New Testament; and we described the new sources for the philological investigation of the Greek Bible. To-day we are to discuss briefly the great fundamental problem of Biblical philology, the problem of the language of the Greek Bible.

The essence of the problem is indicated at once by our manner of formulating it. We are to inquire not about Biblical Greek but about the language of the Greek Bible. This distinction is not a mere playing with words; it points to a fundamental principle of great importance.

Most of the earlier books on the subject were devoted to the investigation not of the language of the Greek Bible but of Biblical Greek, or of a part of it, namely, New Testament Greek.

Let us glance at a few titlepages. Edwin Hatch wrote *Essays in Biblical Greek*,[2] and H. A. A. Kennedy wrote on the *Sources of New Testament Greek*.[3] Hermann Cremer's work, even in the ninth edition, in spite of the sharp criticism it has undergone, remains what it was

[1] These lectures were delivered in the Summer School of the Free Churches, at Cambridge, in July and August, 1907. In writing them I allowed myself the use of part of an address given by me at Giessen in 1897. The lectures were translated for me by Mr. Lionel R. M. Strachan, M.A., Lector of English in the University of Heidelberg.

[2] Edwin Hatch, *Essays in Biblical Greek*, Oxford, 1889.

[3] H. A. A. Kennedy, *Sources of New Testament Greek: or the influence of the Septuagint on the vocabulary of the New Testament*, Edinburgh, 1895.

before, a "Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek."[1] The new German revision of Winer's Grammar appeared under the old title, *Grammar of the New Testament Idiom*,[2] and the late Friedrich Blass presented us with a *Grammar of New Testament Greek*.[3]

We even find this kind of title used by more recent scholars—Dr. J. H. Moulton,[4] for example—but in these cases it is merely a formal concession to the older phraseology. With the older scholars, however, such a form of the title indicated a distinct peculiarity of scientific method, as is proved by such pointed sentences as the following. Hatch[5] writes, "Biblical Greek is thus a language which stands by itself." Cremer[6] adopts the words of Richard Rothe: "We can indeed with good right speak of a language of the Holy Ghost. For in the Bible it is manifest to our eyes how the Divine Spirit at work in revelation always takes the language of the particular people chosen to be the recipient and makes of it a characteristic religious variety by transforming existing linguistic elements and existing conceptions into a shape peculiarly appropriate to that Spirit. This process is shown most clearly by the Greek of the New Testament." And Blass, though the statements in his Grammar show, notwithstanding its title, that he afterwards altered his theoretical views on this question, remarked once in a review[7] that New Testament Greek was

[1] H. Cremer, *Biblisch-theologisches Wörterbuch der neutestamentlichen Gräcität*, Gotha, 1866–8; neunte vermehrte Auflage, Gotha, 1902.

[2] G. B. Winer, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Sprachidioms als sichere Grundlage der neutestamentlichen Exegese;* achte Auflage, neubearbeitet von P. W. Schmiedel, Göttingen, 1894, 1897, 1898.

[3] F. Blass, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, Göttingen, 1896; zweite Auflage, Göttingen, 1902.

[4] J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, based on W. F. Moulton's edition of G. B. Winer's Grammar*. Vol. i. Prolegomena. Edinburgh, 1906. Second edition, 1906.

[5] *Op cit.*, p. 11.

[6] In his Preface of 1883. The quotation is from Rothe, *Zur Dogmatik*, Gotha, 1863, p. 238.

[7] *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1894, xix., col. 338.

" to be recognized as something peculiar, obeying its own laws."

These quotations could be increased by no small number of similar ones from other books. I believe that they are the expression of an opinion, still widely prevalent even at the present day, which, whether openly avowed or not, is far-reaching in its effects, particularly on exegesis. The Greek Bible, or at least the New Testament, is thus separated off from the bulk of the monuments of the Greek language that have come down to us from antiquity, in just the same way as, for example, the inscriptions in the Doric dialect might be collected into a special volume or section by some one who was editing all the Greek inscriptions extant. The Bible is thus isolated because it is supposed to be written in " Biblical " Greek, and the New Testament because it is in " New Testament " Greek, in a " language," an " idiom," a " Greek," that must be sharply distinguished from the rest of what people have been so fond of calling " profane Greek." They could only commit one more blunder by speaking of a Biblical or New Testament *dialect.* I have never met with this term in the literature of the subject, but I am sure it represents the popular conception in many quarters as to what the " language " of the Bible or the New Testament is.

This Greek, so people go on to argue, is outwardly, in comparison with other Greek, of unmistakable individuality, and inwardly it is uniform, subject to laws of its own, and possessing its own vocabulary. Even those words which are not to be reckoned among the specifically " Biblical " or " New Testament " words show for the most part a change of meaning that is often considerable and not infrequently is owing to the influence of the Hebrew or Semitic genius.

To sum up: the two fundamental notions most com-

monly met with in the older literature of the subject concerning the linguistic character of the Greek Bible are firstly the peculiarity, and secondly the uniformity of Biblical, or at least of New Testament Greek.

Those who support these two fundamental notions show more or less clearly by so doing their connexion with the earlier stages of research. The second idea in particular, that of the uniformity of Biblical Greek, is very old—as old as the earliest scientific speculation about the language of the Greek Bible. In the controversy of the Purists and Hebraists in the seventeenth century it was never for one moment questioned; it was a postulate for the theories of both parties.

And it is historically not difficult to understand; it is the simple consequence of them echanically conceived doctrine of inspiration as applied to the New Testament. The extension of the idea to the Greek Old Testament, which is no doubt of recent date, probably originated in an equally simple backward inference from the New Testament. The idea, once established, was supported by the concept, also quite logical in its way, of what is Biblical in the literary sense, the concept of what is Canonical.

But how does this doctrine of the peculiar and uniform nature of Biblical Greek square with the facts? One thing seems clear to me from the outset: it is, to say the least, incautious to make this doctrine the starting-point of research.

And if we have given up the theory of mechanical inspiration, a glance at the history of the growth of the Greek Bible in its separate parts will make us still more distrustful. For this history shows us the possibility and the probability of temporal and local differentiation.

But the sacred texts themselves speak most clearly of all. They call emphatically for division on linguistic lines

into two great groups—original Greek writings, and translations of Semitic originals. Any one who does not respect this boundary line soon loses his bearings, especially in criticizing the syntactical phenomena of the Greek Bible. The boundary line, it is true, does not run in such a way that the Septuagint lies on one side and the books of the New Testament on the other. On the contrary, the sayings of Jesus in the synoptic Gospels, and perhaps more of the New Testament, must be counted with the examples of translators' Greek, while several of the so-called apocryphal books of the Old Testament, adopted by the Septuagint, go with the Greek originals.

These two groups differ very remarkably from each other in respect to their linguistic character. We might compare, for example, the Second Epistle to the Corinthian with the Greek version of Job. The original Greek writings are examples of Greek as it was really spoken; the Greek of the translations often shows traces of being influenced by the language of the original, and may sometimes be described as absolutely artificial, for it was not a spoken language but invented by the translators for their immediate purpose. We must not say, therefore, that this translators' Greek was so spoken by the Jews of Alexandria and Asiatics; we must not call it "Jewish Greek." The real spoken language of the Greek Jews is illustrated in the writings of Philo, who inclined rather to the use of the literary language, and in the Pauline Epistles, Jewish inscriptions and papyri, where we find more the colloquial language in its various grades.

Yet the non-Greek character of the translated books must not be exaggerated. I myself have formerly been less reserved in expressing my opinion on this point than I should be now. The Septuagint in many of its parts is not a non-Greek book if only we take as our standard not the classical

Attic of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. but the popular cosmopolitan Greek of the last three centuries B.C. Much that is non-Attic in the Septuagint is not necessarily non-Greek, but is proved by contemporary "vulgar" texts to be popular Greek.

We find, moreover, remarkable differences within the two main groups themselves, as was only to be expected. The translations were not made by one and the same hand, nor on a uniform method; for example, the sayings of our Lord in the Gospels are in general better translated than many parts of the Septuagint. How characteristic is the language of the Gospel and Epistles of St. John as compared with, say, the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Johannine Epistles are classical examples of the simplest popular language; the Epistle to the Hebrews exhibits a strong leaning towards the literary language.

In the face of these facts, therefore, we cannot assume that under the Ptolemies a uniform Greek for religious purposes grew up among the Egyptian Jews, and that under Tiberius, Claudius, etc., until right into the second century, this was also the language of Christians in Syria, Asia, Achaia, and Rome. These assumptions are now seen to be fictitious.

On the contrary, if we examine historically the language of the Old and New Testaments, our decided impression can only be this: Here we have side by side linguistic elements of essentially dissimilar types; and in stating and in solving our problem there can be no other point of view to be adopted except the historical.

A good deal of the uncertainty, however, which does nevertheless undoubtedly exist on this matter, arises from people's confusing the religious with the linguistic point of view in their historical examination. From the point of view of the history of religion the sacred books, despite their want of linguistic uniformity, must be taken together as

documents and memorials of two phases of revelation that are inseparable from one another. That is beyond doubt, and no less certain is it that the thoughts, the concepts, the spirit of the Greek Old Testament and of the New Testament are related, and that they differ characteristically in their main lines from the average faith of Graeco-Roman religion. But these are considerations dictated by the history of religion; they can play no part in the determination of a specifically Biblical or Christian Greek.

One single consideration drawn from the history of language speaks for a certain linguistic peculiarity and uniformity of the Biblical writings, though only in a formal sense. They must all be criticized as monuments of late Greek, and most of them as monuments of non-literary Greek, and with the express reservation that "late Greek" does not mean something sharply defined, always recognizable at once and with precision, but something fluctuating, often problematical, something which we do not fully know, a piece of living and therefore mysterious linguistic history.

There is no formula by which to describe briefly the characteristics of late Greek, and qualitative judgments describing it as "bad" Greek, and so on, are either uttered by doctrinaires regardless of history or echoed from the grammarians who fancied themselves able by their authority to prevent the changes and chances of things.

Greek philologists, enslaved to the prejudice that only the so-called classical Greek is beautiful, have long treated the texts of the later period with the greatest contempt. A good deal of their false judgments about late Greek is the simple consequence of their complete ignorance of it. The renaissance of Greek philology in our own day, owing to the progress of Epigraphy and Papyrology, has made amends for the neglect of late Greek by the older genera-

tion of scholars. At the present day there are plenty of accurate workers engaged in investigating philologically the newly discovered specimens of cosmopolitan Greek of the period from Alexander the Great to Constantine. I will mention only the most important: Dr. Wilhelm Crönert of Göttingen (*Memoria Graeca Herculanensis*);[1] Dr. Karl Dieterich, of Leipzig (*Investigations on the History of the Greek Language*);[2] Dr. Hatzidakis, the well-known Professor at Athens (*Introduction to Modern Greek Grammar*);[3] Dr. van Herwerden, the veteran Dutch philologist (*Lexicon Graecum Suppletorium et Dialecticum*);[4] Dr. Jannaris, the St. Andrews lecturer (*Historical Greek Grammar*);[5] Dr. Kretschmer, of Vienna (*The Origin of the Κοινή*);[6] Dr. Mayser, a Stuttgart schoolmaster (*Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Ptolemaic Period*);[7] Dr. Meisterhans and Dr. Schwyzer, two Swiss scholars (*Grammar of the Attic Inscriptions*);[8] Dr. Nachmanson, a Swede (*Phonology and Morphology of the Inscriptions of Magnesia*);[9] Dr.

[1] *Memoria Graeca Herculanensis. Cum titulorum Aegypti papyrorum codicum denique testimoniis comparatam proposuit Guilelmus Crönert.* Lipsiae, 1903.

[2] Karl Dieterich, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der griechischen Sprache von der hellenistischen Zeit bis zum 10. Jahrh. n. Chr.*, Leipzig, 1898.

[3] Georgios N. Hatzidakis (=Chatzidakes), *Einleitung in die neugriechische Grammatik*, Leipzig, 1892.

[4] Henricus van Herwerden, *Lexicon Graecum suppletorium et dialecticum*, Lugduni Batavorum, 1902, 1904 (two parts).

[5] Antonios N. Jannaris (=Giannares), *An Historical Greek Grammar*, London, 1897.

[6] Paul Kretschmer, *Die Entstehung der Koine*, Sitzungsberichte der Kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, philos.-hist. Klasse, Band cxliii., Nr. 10.

[7] Edwin Mayser, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit, mit Einschluss der gleichzeitigen Ostraka und der in Ägypten verfassten Inschriften.* Laut- und Wortlehre. Leipzig, 1906.

[8] K. Meisterhans, *Grammatik der attischen Inschriften*, Berlin, 1885; zweite Auflage, Berlin, 1888; dritte vermehrte und verbesserte Auflage, besorgt von E. Schwyzer, Berlin, 1900.

[9] Ernst Nachmanson, *Laute und Formen der magnetischen Inschriften*, Upsala, 1903.

Wilhelm Schmid, the Tübingen Professor (*The Atticists*);[1] Dr. Wilhelm Schmidt, a Prussian schoolmaster (*De Flavii Josephi elocutione*);[2] Dr. Wilhelm Schulze, a member of the Berlin Academy (*Graeca Latina*);[3] Dr. Schweizer (*Grammar of the Inscriptions of Pergamos*),[4] who now calls himself "Schwyzer" and has been already mentioned as the reviser of Meisterhans; Dr. Thumb of the University of Marburg (*The Greek Language in the Hellenistic Period*);[5] Dr. Wackernagel, the Göttingen Professor of Comparative Philology (*Hellenistica*),[6] and other scholars.

In this renaissance of Greek philology the Greek Bible has also been regarded with new eyes. It may now be described as the central object of the investigations into late Greek. Whereas formerly the qualitative judgments, "good" or "bad," prevented the clear recognition of its linguistic character, now, owing to its being brought into vital connexion with late Greek, floods of light are being shed upon the Bible. We may say that the Greek Bible is now seen to be, in its very nature and in its influence, the noblest monument of cosmopolitan late Greek.

This late Greek, including the original Greek of the Bible, is neither good nor bad; it bears the stamp of its age and asserts its own distinctive position in a grand process of development in the language, which, beginning in the

[1] Wilhelm Schmid, *Der Atticismus in seinen Hauptvertretern von Dionysius von Halikarnass bis auf den zweiten Philostratus*, Stuttgart, 1887–97 (5 vols.).

[2] Guilelmus Schmidt, *De Flavii Iosephi elocutione observationes criticae*, Lipsiae, 1893; (from Fleckeisen's Jahrbüchern, Suppl. xx., pp. 345–550.

[3] Guilelmus Schulze, *Graeca Latina* (Einladung zur akademischen Preisverkündigung), Göttingen, 1901.

[4] Eduard Schweizer, *Grammatik der pergamenischen Inschriften*, Berlin, 1898.

[5] Albert Thumb, *Die griechische Sprache im Zeitalter des Hellenismus: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Beurtheilung der* Κοινή, Strassburg, 1901.

[6] Jacobus Wackernagel, *Hellenistica* (Einladung zur akademischen Preisverkündigung), Göttingen, 1907.

earliest times, has lasted down to the present day. Late Greek has stripped off much that was customary in the earlier period, and it contains germs of future developments destined to be completed in Modern Greek.

We may then speak of a certain peculiarity and uniformity in original " Bible " Greek, but solely as opposed to earlier or later phases of the history of the language, not as opposed to " profane Greek."

The peculiarities of late Greek are most clearly discernible in the accidence. We are now so far advanced as to have established almost completely the morphology of the popular and colloquial forms of Hellenistic Greek. And we find that there is remarkable agreement between these forms and the forms that used to be considered peculiar to New Testament or Septuagint Greek.

From the lexical point of view there is also found to be great community between the Biblical and non-Biblical Greek.

As for the syntactical and stylistic peculiarities that formerly were considered the chief reason for isolating " Biblical " Greek, they also appear now in a different light. We have come to recognize that we had greatly over-estimated the number of Hebraisms and Aramaicisms in the Bible. Many features that are non-Attic and bear some resemblance to the Semitic and were therefore regarded as Semiticisms, belong really to the great class of international vulgarisms, and are found in vulgar papyri and inscriptions as well as in the Bible.

The number of real Semiticisms is therefore smaller than was supposed, and smaller than Julius Wellhausen,[1] for example, has recently declared it to be. But not one of the recent investigators has dreamt of denying the existence

[1] Julius Wellhausen, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien*, Berlin, 1905, p. 9 ff.

of Semiticisms. They are more numerous in the Septuagint than in those parts of the New Testament that were translated from the Aramaic; but in the original Greek texts they are very rare.

In pronouncing on them philologically a distinction must be observed that was formulated by Hermann Paul[1] in a case of the same kind: the distinction between what is occasional and what is usual. Semiticisms are "occasional," for example, if they are brought about in a translation by the accidental influence of the original from which the translation is made; they are "usual" if, for example, they have become stereotyped in "sacred formulas" or other phrases. A certain number of these "usual" Semiticisms were moreover coined by the Septuagint, and may therefore, as Theodor Nägeli[2] well suggested, be called Septuagintisms.

What we do deny is merely this: that the Semiticisms, particularly those of the New Testament, are sufficient reason for scholars to isolate the language of our sacred texts. Our opinion of the Biblical language is reached by considering its innumerable coincidences with the cosmopolitan language, not its numerable differences from it. The Semiticisms do not place the Bible outside the scope of Greek philology; they are merely birthmarks. They show us that in this great cosmopolitan Book the Greek cosmopolitan language was spoken by men whose home lay in the East.

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[1] Hermann Paul, *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte*, 3. Auflage, Halle, 1898, pp. 67, 145.

[2] Theodor Nägeli, *Der Wortschatz des Apostels Paulus*, Göttingen, 1905, p. 74.