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ESSAY XIV.

**NEW TESTAMENT GREEK IN THE**

**LIGHT OF MODERN DISCOVERY.**

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SYNOPSIS.

"Modern" for this purpose means the last fifteen years or so.

I. Change of standpoint in N.T. Greek study produced by

(a) the regeneration in Comparative Philology, which stimulated the

study of Greek in every epoch, with no preference to the classical;

(b) the extensive discoveries of Hellenistic inscriptions and papyri;

(c) growth of interest in the vernacular dialects of Modern Greece;

(d) convergence of research upon the new material under the

philologist Thumb (and others) and the theologian Deissmann. Signifi-

cance of the latter's *Bibelstudien*.

Homogeneity of Hellenistic vernacular as *lingua franca* of the Empire.

Bearing of this upon an objection to "Deissmannism," viz. that alleged

Semitisms paralleled from papyri may be due to real Semitic influence

upon Greek-speaking Egyptians. Dr A. S. Hunt's view. Evidence from Modern Greek.

Restatement of the writer's doctrine as to Semitisms, in reply to objections.

II. The linguistic position of the several writers of the N.T.

Preliminary notes on the LXX and the nature of its Greek. Relation

between literary and colloquial Greek. Phenomena of "Atticism."

(a) The Lucan Books. Unity endorsed by grammar. Luke's sense

of style, producing conscious assimilation to LXX and to the rough Greek

of Aramaic-speaking natives.

(b) Pauline Writings. Paul as Hebrew and Hellenist alike. His

contacts with Greek literature and philosophy. Vocabulary popular.

(c) The Epistle to the Hebrews. Its literary quality. Blass on

avoidance of hiatus and observance of rhythm.

(d) The "Second Epistle of Peter." Its Greek artificial.

(e) The First Gospel. Hebrew parallelismus membrorum. Methods

of abbreviating Mark's phrases and correcting his Greek. Evidence that

he similarly treats Q.

(f) Johannine Gospel and Epistles. Simplicity of Greek. How

new knowledge affects grammatical exegesis.

(g) Shorter Palestinian writings. Palestine bilingual.

(h) The Apocalypse. True interpretation of its solecistic Greek.

Bearing on authorship.

(i) Gospel of Mark. The Aramaic background, clearest from readings

of D. Coincident corrections of language in First and Third Gospels.

Criticism of Harnack's assumption that compound verbs are signs of

Greek culture. Mark compared with Luke and with illiterate papyri.

III. The vocabulary of the N.T. as illustrated from our new sources.

"Nothing new": instances to contrary: nature of results expected from

new methods. Illustration from δοκίμιος, λογεία, διαθήκη, ἡλικία, λίγιος.

IV. Grammar of N.T. Greek according to new lights. How classical

presuppositions have perverted exegesis here, as in vocabulary.

V. Miscellaneous contributions of papyri and inscriptions. Contribu-

tions of the new Comparative Philology.

The Study of Hellenistic: plea for its recognition as a more important

and easier introduction to N.T. than Classical Greek. The world-language

of the Roman Empire and its suggestions to the Christian thinker.

NEW TESTAMENT GREEK IN THE LIGHT

OF MODERN DISCOVERY.

THE researches which supply material for the present

Essay are described in the title as "modern." This term

obviously needs definition at the outset. It will be used

here of work that has been done almost entirely since the

publication of the Revised Version, and mainly within the

last fifteen years. A brief sketch of the new positions will

fitly precede their defence in points where they have been

considered vulnerable, and some exposition of important

consequences for New Testament study.1

The beginning of the doctrines to be considered here is to

be traced to Adolf Deissmann's *Bible Studies*, the first series

of which appeared in 1895. Despite some voices of cavil

from German scholars who underestimate the importance of

the Berlin Professor's work, there can be no question that

Deissmann has been the leader in a very real revolution.

This revolution has however been prepared for by a host of

workers, toiling almost unconsciously towards the same goal

along a different road. The scientific study of the Greek

language from the close of the classical period down to the

present day has for a generation been attracting able and

diligent students. They have shown that the aftermath of

Greek literature is rich in interest and value of its own, and

that if the comparative philologist and syntactician has fitly

busied himself with the *origines* of Greek, he may with equal

1 As far as possible I shall *N. T. Greek* (vol. i. *Prolegomena*,

avoid repeating what has been al- 3rd edition, 1908).

ready said in my *Grammar of*

464 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

profit study the continuous evolution which issues in the

flexible and resourceful language of the common people in

modern Hellas. This line of research is one among many

products of the regeneration in comparative philology which

dates from the pioneer work of Brugmann, Leskien, and others

in Germany some thirty years ago. The old contempt of the

classical scholar for the "debased Greek" of the centuries

after Alexander was overcome by an enthusiasm which found

Language worth studying for her own sake, in Old Irish glosses

or Lithuanian folk-songs, in Byzantine historians or mediaeval

hagiologies or ill-spelt letters from peasants of the Fayyûm.

Hellenistic Greek accordingly found competent philologists

ready to enter on a field which was already wide enough to

promise rich reward for industry and skill. But with the new

research there came in a vast mass of new material. Hellen-

istic inscriptions were collected by systematic exploration to

an extent unparalleled hitherto. And from the tombs and

rubbish-heaps of Egypt there began to rise again an undreamt-

of literature, the unlettered, unconscious literature of daily

life. The vernacular language of the early Roman Empire

took form under our eyes, like a new planet swimming into

our ken. It remained for some "watcher of the skies" to

identify the newcomer with what had long been known.

Casually glancing at a page of the Berlin Papyri, copied in a

friend's hand, Deissmann saw at once the resemblance of this

vernacular Greek to the Biblical Greek which had for ages

been regarded as a dialect apart. Further study confirmed

the first impression. *Bibelstudien* brought the theologian

into line with the philologist, and a new method of Biblical

study emerged which, even if its advocates be deemed to have

sometimes exaggerated its claims, may at least plead justly

that it is producing fresh material in great abundance for the

interpretation of the Greek Bible.

At this point it will be advisable to sketch some of the

most outstanding features of modern work upon the "Com-

mon " Greek, and name the workers who have specially

advanced our knowledge. The first place must be taken by

the department that gave a lead to all the others. The true

XIV] New Testament Greek 465

character of Κοινή Greek could only be recognized when it

became possible to differentiate between the natural and the

artificial, the unstudied vernacular of speech and the "correct"

Atticism of literary composition. Materials for delineating

the former variety were very scanty. The Paris papyri

slumbered in the Louvre *Notices et Extraits*, and those of

the British Museum, of Leyden and of Turin, provoked as little

attention: classical scholars had something better to do than to

follow the short and simple annals of the poor Egyptian farmer

in a patois which would spoil anybody's Greek prose compo-

sition.1 But when Drs Grenfell and Hunt were fairly started

on their astonishing career of discovery, with fellow-explorers

of other nations achieving only less abundant success,—when

the volumes of the Egypt Exploration Fund stood by the side

of goodly tomes from Professor Mahaffy and Dr F. G. Kenyon in

this country, and many a collection from Berlin, Vienna, Paris

and Chicago, the character of the language soon was realized.

In the meantime the inscriptions of the Hellenistic period

were being carefully studied according to their localities.

The dialectic evidence of the vase inscriptions had yielded

important results in the hands of Paul Kretschmer. K. Meister-

hans taught us the true idiom of Athens from its stone

records; and Eduard Schweizer (now Schwyzer) threw welcome

light on the Κοινή of Asia Minor in his *Preisschrift* on the

accidence of the inscriptions of Pergamon. The great epi-

graphist Wilhelm Dittenberger annotated with the utmost

fulness of knowledge four massive volumes of Greek inscrip-

tions from Greece and the East. More illiterate compositions

were collected in Audollent's *Defixionum Tabellae*; while Sir

W. M. Ramsay's researches in Asia Minor have given us a great

mass of rude monuments of the popular local dialects, valuable

to us in direct ratio to the "badness" of the Greek. Material

of another kind has been gathered by specialists in sundry

languages of antiquity, who have collected Greek loanwords,

1 That Lightfoot would have by an extract from his lectures

reaped a harvest from these col- supplied to me by a pupil of his

lections, had it occurred to him to (*Proleg*. 2 or 3, p. 242).

examine them, is strongly suggested

466 Cambridge Biblical Essays [xiv

and shewn from them what forms Greek was assuming in the

localities involved at certain epochs known: we may instance

Krauss on Greek words in Rabbinic Hebrew, and Hubschmann

on similar elements in Armenian. At the head of the scholars

who have assimilated this ever-growing material, and from it

drawn a synthesis of vernacular Hellenistic under the early

Empire, stands Professor Thumb of Marburg, a philologist of

extraordinary versatility and learning, whose modest little

treatise on "Greek in the Hellenistic Period" (1901) marks

an epoch in our knowledge. The chapter on Biblical Greek in

that invaluable book will engage our attention later on.

It is manifestly insufficient to examine Κοινή Greek only

from the classical side, as our ancestors mostly did; nor can

we be discharged from our duty when we have added the

monuments of the Hellenistic age. A German savant coming to

study Chaucer with a good equipment of Anglo-Saxon would

confessedly produce one-sided results. To add a thorough

knowledge of Gower and Langland would still leave him

imperfectly fitted unless he could use the English of Shak-

spere's age and our own as well. This truism has not been

acted upon till very recently in the case of Greek. *Byzantin-*

*ische Zeitschrift*, founded and conducted through sixteen

years by Karl Krumbacher, has been gathering together a

goodly band of scholars to work on Greek in its mediaeval

period. The language suffers sorely from artificialism in the

remains which have reached us. But the New Testament

student may get much illumination from genuine books of the

people like the "Legends of Pelagia" (ed. H. Usener). The

facts of the language throughout this period may be seen in

Jannaris' *Historical Greek Grammar*, the theories of which

however need to be taken cautiously.

Finally we have the modern vernacular, which is being

well worked by Hellenistic students of the present day. As

in private duty bound, the writer recalls that one of the

earliest effective uses of it for the illustration of New Testa-

ment Greek was in W. F. Moulton's English *Winer*, nearly

forty years ago. Great scholars of modern Hellas, notably

Hatzidakis and Psichari, have given us a wealth of material.

XIV] New Testament Greek 467

But the foreigner who travels in Greece to-day is in some

danger of bringing away with him a broken reed to lean on.

Greek writing is infected with the virus of artificial archaism

now as it was in the days of Josephus. The Greek of the

newspapers is refreshingly easy for a classical tiro to read;

and the schools do their best to initiate the *Graeculus* of

modern Athens into its mysteries, alien though they are from

the dialect of daily life. But it is a dead language, for all

that, and—what is worse—a language that never was spoken

in Hellas at one and the same time. We need not argue the

burning question as to the propriety of the Καθαρεύουσα as a

medium of literary prose composition in twentieth century

Athens. That is a domestic problem for the Hellenes them-

selves, as to which the foreign visitor will be discreetly silent,

whatever private opinion he may cherish. But for scientific

study of N. T. Greek we can only use the modern book-Greek

as we use that of Lucian and the other Atticists of ancient

times. Both may employ genuine living idioms or forms, but

they cannot be called as witnesses of the living language. It

is the vernacular Greek of the uneducated to which we should

rather go, as lying in the direct succession of the Κοινή.

Thumb's handbook of the *Volkssprache*, with a scientific

grammar and a chrestomathy of ballads and other popular

literature, will be invaluable to Hellenistic scholars who

know how to use it. A new line of research has recently been

essayed by this acute observer, starting from his own investi-

gations among the out-of-the-way dialects of the modern

Greek world. There are points in which dialectic differences

of the present day seem to attach themselves to differences

dimly seen in the local variety of the Κοινή in ancient times.

The extreme difficulty of detecting with any certainty points

of difference between the Κοινή as spoken in widely separated

localities within the Empire, makes this new criterion possibly

helpful for our special purpose; for if we could establish some

features of dialectic differentiation they might sometimes be

of importance in criticism.

The last-mentioned point in this general sketch leads us

on to the statement of a result which is of primary importance

468 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

for the thesis of the Essay. The popular spoken Greek of

the Empire, as recovered in our own day from converging

evidence of very different kinds, was homogeneous in nearly

every feature that our methods can retrace. Pronunciation

apart, it seems clear that a Hellenist like Paul would have

provoked no comment whether he preached in Tarsus or in

Alexandria, in Corinth or in Rome. It is on these lines, it

would seem, that the answer lies to an objection recently raised

by the lamented Dr H. A. Redpath and by Professor Swete1

against the doctrine associated with the name of Deissmann,

but maintained with equal emphasis by the great philologist

Albert Thumb—the doctrine, that is, of the non-existence of

"Biblical Greek" as a real separate category. The papyri

have naturally figured very largely in arguments about

"Semitism." They form by far the most considerable element

in our materials for the colloquial Κοινή. It accordingly

happens very often that an idiom which can be paralleled

from a papyrus, or from several, is claimed as owing nothing

to Hebrew or Aramaic thought lying behind the expression.

But the Jewish population in Egypt was exceedingly numerous

—what if these papyrus parallels are Semitisms as well as the

Biblical phrase for which they are quoted? The general

answer to this acute objection would be that the Greek of the

non-literary papyri does not differ from that of vernacular

inscriptions found in widely distant regions; and we cannot

postulate in every quarter an influential Ghetto. But it is

undeniably fair to say that an isolated papyrus parallel for

some Semitic-seeming locution is not evidence enough for

our plea, since it may itself have been tarred with the same

brush in a different way. Such cases must be examined on

their merits. The papyrus or papyri in question may be

scrutinized for other signs of Semitic influence. (It can be said

at once that these will be extremely hard to find.) And the word

or usage may be examined in connexion with the general

record of its class in Hellenistic vernacular. This will best

1 Cf. also Mr G. C. Richards in second edition) unfortunately came

*J. T. S*. x. 289 (Jan. 1909). This too late to be used in the present

eminently helpful review (of my paper.

XIV] New Testament Greek 469

be expounded by an example. The instrumental use of e]n in

Biblical Greek has naturally been taken as arising from the

wider use of the Semitic preposition which answers to it

generally. Unwilling to adopt this account for ἐν ῥάβδῳ in

1 Cor. iv. 21, where the use of a foreign idiom seems antece-

dently most improbable, Deissmann was unable to quote

any vernacular parallel in Bible Studies (p. 120)1. Then

in 1902 appeared the first volume of papyri from Tebtunis,

with half-a-dozen examples of ἐν μαχαίρῃ and the like,

all due to different writers, the comparison of which

produced an additional example by a certain restoration

in one of the Paris Papyri2. Are we to explain the new

"Semitisms" by postulating an influential Jewish colony at

or near Tebtunis—the seat, by the way, of a "famous"

(λόγιμον) temple of the crocodile-god Sobk? If so, they

succeeded wonderfully well in suppressing nearly all trace of

their existence throughout two large volumes of papyri. On

this point may be quoted the judgement of Dr A. S. Hunt3,

whose impression on any question touching the papyri naturally

goes very far. "Dr Swete's objection," he writes, "is of

course hardly to be disproved, but I think the probabilities

are very much on your side. I do not at all believe that

there was any considerable Jewish element in the population

of Tebtunis and the neighbourhood4; an element strong

enough to influence the local speech and make itself felt in

official correspondence would certainly be expected to be

more distinctly in evidence in so large a number of docu-

ments. I should imagine that, as you say, the Jews were

mostly to be found in the bigger towns (there was a προσευχή

Ἰουδαίων at Crocodilopolis, by the way: P. Teb. 86); but they

1 An exact parallel was quotable that an editor did not know how

nevertheless from Lucian — see correct the phrase is.

Winer-Moulton, p. 485, n.3, and 2 *P. Par.* 11, from the Arsinoite

Dr Findlay's note *in loc*.: it will nome apparently.

scarcely be urged that this was the 3 In a letter to the writer, dated

"'last infirmity" of the great Atti- Dec. 20, 1908.

cist's Syrian birth. The doubt felt 4 Dr Hunt notes that the papyri

about the ἐν there, recorded by in *Tebt. Pap*. 1. are mainly from

Deissmann from Winer, means only Kerkeosiris, not Tebtunis.

470 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

were also to be found, I think, in the country: cf. *e.g*. P.

Magdola 3 (B. C. H. xxvi. p. 104), where Θεόδοτος, Γαδδαῖος

and [ Ο?]νίας (apparently Jews) appear as the μισθωταί of a

κλῆρος; and the Arsinoite village Σανλάρεια must not be

forgotten (cf. *Tebtunis Papyri*, H. p. 383, *s.v*. Κερκεσῆφις).

But it is a long step from facts of this kind to the assumption

of a Semitism in the Greek of a local official, whom there is

no reason to suspect of Jewish connexion, and whom there is

good reason to believe to have been comparatively free from

Jewish intercourse. The occurrence of the same idiom else-

where makes the step still more precarious." An appeal to our

other material, in fact, soon shews us that loose uses of ἐν in

Hellenistic vernacular need no foreign influences to account

for them. The dative was getting feebler and feebler, and in

many uses the addition of a preposition seemed to make no

difference at all. "To grow weak with hunger" has in one

Ptolemaic papyrus the simple dative, in another of the same

date and in the same collection the dative with ἐν.1 "Let

them be tried before three judges " is expressed by ἐν in a

dialectic inscription from Delphi of the third cent. B.C.2, just

as in Acts xvii. 31 and 1 Cor. vi. 2. It seems a fair inference

that the apparently narrow range of the illustration we are

able to give for Paul's ἐν ῥάβδῳ does not compromise our

right to use it as a proof that there is no Semitism here.

A further criterion of importance must not be overlooked.

It is laid down with emphasis by great authorities like Thumb

that the persistence of an alleged Semitism in Modern Greek

may be generally taken as evidence that it arose in the

ancient Κοινή without foreign suggestion. This doctrine rests

upon the established fact that the modern language is the

lineal descendant of the Κοινή vernacular. There is one very

obvious objection, that the modern usage may be simply the

Biblical word or phrase perpetuated in a country where the

Greek Bible has been read in church for ages. Now this

might count for something if it were merely the word or

phrase itself that has survived—it would be a simple quota-

tion, not affecting the language in its essence. If the Greeks

1 Proleg. 62. 2 Ibid.3 107.

XIV] New Testament Greek 471

said συμπόσια συμπόσια to-day, we should take it as a Biblical

phrase and reject it as contributory evidence against Semitism

in Mark vi. 39. But when we find other nouns thus repeated

in the popular speech to form a distributive, we claim it

without hesitation, since our own language alone suffices to

teach us that borrowed phrases are sterile and produce no

imitations.

We must not spend too much space on the question of

Semitism; but a short restatement seems desirable before we

pass on, in view of criticisms which have been passed by

important scholars. To put in brief form the contention of

the new school, we might say that the Epistles of Paul are

written in the ordinary Greek of his time in exactly the same

sense as the Authorized Version is said to be written in the

ordinary English of the seventeenth century. There are

phrases in the latter which are mere "translation English,"

like "Noah the eighth person," but we do not make "Biblical

English" a special category on their account. "Biblical

English" will be simply archaic English, the well-remembered

phrases of the Book colouring the style of preachers and others

when speaking on religion. The Epistles are named here

because they shew free composition by a man who used Greek

as a mother-tongue1. Other parts of the New Testament,

especially the Gospels, are on rather a different footing, for

which the Revised Version will supply an apt parallel. Tied

down by their instructions not to forsake the diction of their

predecessors (except where it involved complete obscurity),

and precluded from indulging in paraphrase, the Revisers

often used the deliberate archaism proper to literature as

distinguished from ordinary educated speech. This is very

much what Luke does when he employs the literary dialect,

to the very moderate extent he allows himself. His imitations

of the Septuagint Greek will answer to the over-literal trans-

lations which are sometimes found in the Revised Version, as

in its predecessors. This element is of course much more

considerably found in the writings of Mark and in the

1 Of course Paul, "a Hebrew, the of a Greek city, was really possessed

son of Hebrews," and yet the native of *two* "mother-tongues."

472 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

Apocalypse, where the author was at home in a Semitic speech

and used Greek without freedom, like a Welshman stumbling

in English, even though he has spoken it occasionally since

school days.

At this point may be recalled the remarks on Semitisms

contained in Dr Nestle's review of the writer's *Prolegomena*.1

Nestle cites Jewish German, and sundry examples of blunders

made by Germans newly arrived in England, translating

German phrases all too literally. "If these things happen,"

he says, "I can only regard it as a great exaggeration if one

insists on denying the existence of a Jewish and a Biblical

Greek. Why do we need a ‘Grammar of New Testament

Greek’ at all?" To the last question the answer seems obvious.

A "Digest of Platonic Idioms" or a "Shaksperian Grammar"

exists not because Plato's Greek or Shakspere's English differs

from that of his contemporaries, but merely because Plato and

Shakspere are writers of great importance and their meaning

can be illustrated by a grammar restricted for convenience to

forms and syntax found in their writings. A New Testament

Grammar justifies itself more completely still, since there is

no other literature, properly so called, written in its own

idiom: it can be written wholly without prejudice to the

more scientific "Grammar of the Vernacular Κοινή" of which

it forms a part. The other element in Nestle's criticism brings

him nearer to our modern school than he seems to realize.

All his illustrations apparently assume for his concept of

Jewish or Biblical Greek that it is the Greek of men who are

too familiar with another language to be able to write Greek

idiomatically. What then about the Gentile Luke, the Tarsian

Paul, or the most cultured Greek of them all who wrote the

*Epistle to the Hebrews*? If these are excluded from the

definition of Biblical Greek, there is not much left to quarrel

about. If they quote the Greek Bible, and even deliberately

copy it to produce an appropriate effect of style, we cannot

classify their Greek as a thing apart on this ground, unless we

are prepared to take John Bunyan out of the list of English

writers and make a new category for him as a writer of

1 *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift*, Dec. 8, 1906.

XIV] New Testament Greek 473

"Jewish English." We shall indeed have to enlarge our

categories of English in various directions. The "Jewish

English" infects Milton badly; and in his case we shall have

to bring in Hellenized and Latinized English as well, to suit

the numerous places where (*more Lucae*) he deliberately

copies a foreign idiom to produce a particular effect, or simply

because his mind was so steeped in the great literatures whose

gems he set in his own crown. If "Biblical Greek" is used

only in a sense analogous to "Miltonic" (or again "Puritan")

English, we need raise no objection on the score of theory.

As Professor Thumb puts it1, writing of "translation Greek":—

"Speaking generally, everything which after full investigation

has to be set down as not Greek, has been produced by slavish

imitation of Semitic sources." Thumb goes on to urge the

importance for the theologian of an adequate study of

"profane" Greek (including of course the Κοινή), instancing

some places in which Zahn has based critical conclusions upon

"Hebraisms" that will not bear examination. There is in fact

no small danger that scholars whose strength lies in Semitic or

in classical and patristic Greek—and this description naturally

covers most of our theologians—may exaggerate the extent

of the Semitisms even in "translation Greek." Dr Nestle

himself appears to err in this way in the valuable review just

cited, when he selects ἕως πότε as "for me a Hebraism, even if

it is still used by Pallis in his Modern Greek translation," and

though it "may be quotable from early Greek, and have spread

in later times." It is not quite clear why Dr Nestle does not

feel satisfied that these admitted facts make the locution good

Κοινή Greek. Will it turn the scale that Hadrian says ἐκ πότε2?

(Hadrian is indeed not the only Emperor whom Dr Nestle's

principles would bring under the damaging imputation of

Semitism in language: according to Wilamowitz and the MS.

witness, Marcus Aurelius at least once lapsed into what we

must presumably call Yiddish Greek3, though the new Oxford

Texts editor kindly corrects him.) If Nestle merely means

1 *Hellenismus*, p. 132. The 2 *Proleg*.3 107.

whole discussion there will repay 3 *Ib*.3 76.

careful study. See also pp. 174 ff.

474 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

that ἕως πότε is a Semitism in Mark because it exactly answers

to a Semitic original, we need only ask whether our own *till*

*when* is a Semitism also.

The fact is often overlooked that the idioms of colloquial

speech in widely distant languages differ much less than do

those of the corresponding literary dialects. Colloquial idiom

affects parataxis—to take one very large category for illustra-

tion—and it is simply the independent working of identical

causes which makes colloquial English and the Egyptian non-

literary papyri approximate in this respect to Hebrew, which

still remains so largely in the simple paratactic stage. The

more rudimentary the education, the closer the resemblance

grows. It is futile therefore to cite the commonness of καί in

the Fourth Gospel as an evidence of the author's Semitic birth,

though when this has been established by other evidence we

may readily admit a real connexion. Birth and residence in

a country where Greek was only a subsidiary language, were

for the Evangelist the sufficient causes of an elementary Greek

culture. The same cause operated in the Egyptian farmer

who writes his letter or petition in exactly the same style.

The Coptic mother-tongue of the one, the Aramaic of the other,

were equally innocent of their excessive use of *and*; for the

uneducated native who tells of the marvellous cures achieved

by the god in an Asclepieum, though he knows no language

but Greek, falls naturally into the same kind of language. If

we are seeking for evidences of Semitic birth in a writer

whose Greek betrays deficient knowledge of the resources of

the language, we must not look only for uses which strain or

actually contravene the Greek idiom. We shall find a subtler

test in the *over-use* of locutions which can be defended as

good Κοινή Greek, but have their motive clearly in their

coincidence with locutions of the writer's native tongue. This

test of course applies only to Greek which is virtually or

actually translated—to the Hebraism of the LXX and the

Aramaism of New Testament books which are either translated

from Aramaic sources or written by men who thought in

Aramaic and moved with little freedom in Greek. The other

kind of Semitism discoverable in the New Testament, the

XIV] New Testament Greek 475

direct imitation of the LXX, is a different matter altogether.

When we make up on these lines our account of the genuinely

non-Greek elements that can be recognized in the writings

before us, we shall find their total astonishingly small. Even

the new material of the past eight years has sensibly

strengthened the evidence for the verdict Prof. Thumb pro-

nounced in 1901. "Had the living language," he writes1,

"been infected to any extent with Oriental idiom, we could not

have expected such a negative result in Philo and Josephus"--

whose freedom from Semitism he has just been describing--

"and much less in the papyri."

Our subject calls us next to estimate the linguistic posi-

tion of the several writers of the New Testament, according

to our modern knowledge; after which it remains to indicate

how recent research helps us in the general determination of

the meaning of words, and in the application of the canons of

grammar. Though we are strictly not concerned with the

Greek Old Testament, it is scarcely possible to pass it by

entirely, in view of its large influence upon the New. The

parts of the Old Testament which provide an immense

preponderance of quotations in the New, and may therefore

be presumed to have exercised by far the greatest influence

on its writers, are the Pentateuch, the Prophets (including

Daniel) and the Psalms: the historical books and the rest of

the Hagiographa fall very much into the background. If we

count the separate verses cited in WH to make a rough test,

we find that the Pentateuch accounts for a quarter of the

New Testament quotations and allusions, the Prophets (and

Daniel) for nearly a half, and the Psalms for a fifth, while all

the rest only amount to 6 per cent. The prominence of the Law,

brought out by this and other tests, makes it of importance to

observe the quality of this oldest part of the LXX, regarded as

a translation. If Schmiedel (*Gramm*. 29) can say of the LXX

translators generally that as a rule they do not use construc-

tions which are actually not Greek, this is preeminently true in

the Pentateuch. The reverential literalness which produced

such extraordinary results in later translations was not yet

1 *Hellenismus*, p. 126.

476 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

known; and ignorance of the meaning of the original does not

afflict these pioneer translators as it often afflicted their

successors. The result is that we can recognize a version

which if clone into English would differ very little from our

own Bible. A careful study of such a typical narrative

passage as the Saga of Joseph will soon reveal to the student

of the papyri that its Greek is the pure vernacular of daily

life, with a very small admixture of abnormal phrases due to

literal translation. That it is not the Greek of the books may

be seen most vividly by comparing it with the two dozen pages

in which Josephus shewed how elegantly the story ran when

rescued from its unadorned simplicity and clothed in the Attic

which everybody wrote and nobody had spoken for generations.

But it is good Greek for all that. It does not reach the aim

of the modern translator, that of making the reader forget

that he has a translation before him. Neither does our

English Bible, except through the familiarity which makes us

think its "translation English" to be genuine native idiom.

It would be safe to assert that these chapters of the Greek

Genesis sounded no more foreign to Alexandrian ears than the

English version would to our own, were we reading it for the

first time. Indeed there are not a few places where the Greek

is distinctly more idiomatic than the English. Thus an

unnecessary behold—the over-use of which is in the New

Testament quite a hall-mark of the writer to whom Greek is

not native—is dropped in Gen. xxxvii. 15 and 29. Egyptian

inscriptions shew that ἵλεως ὑμῖν (xliii. 23—cf. Matt. xvi. 22)

was idiomatic, which "Peace be to you" certainly is not.

"Eat bread" in xliii. 25 compares indifferently with ἀριστᾶν.

Of course there are many points in which the advantage lies

with our version. In xxxvii. 8 "Shalt thou indeed reign over

us?" is more successful than Μὴ βασιλεύων βασιλεύσεις ἐφ'  
ἡμᾶς; and "for indeed I was stolen away" (xl. 15) than ὁτι  
κλοπῇ ἐκλάπην. Nevertheless, as has been shewn elsewhere1,

the Alexandrian translators came much nearer to their own

idiom here than did ours when they perpetrated "By hearing

ye shall hear, . . . and seeing ye shall see." What translators

1 *Proleg*. 75 f.

XIV] New Testament Greek 477

with a stricter standard of literalness could do with this

Hebrew infinitive is seen in Jos. xvii. 13 (B), ἐξολεθρεῦσαι λὐκ  
ἐξωλέθρευσαν, a phrase which might almost as well have been

left in its original Hebrew1. One other example we may name,

the use of προσθέσθαι *pergere* with the infinitive, to express

"do again" or "do more." The fact that this usage survives

in Josephus (in a less aggravated form), the only Semitism

which the microscope of research has found sullying the

virgin purity of his Atticism, is enough to shew that literary

ears would not have been grossly offended by it. There are

several other instructive points on which we might tarry in

these chapters, but for our present purpose these will suffice.

They shew that the New Testament writers, setting forth to

write a religious literature in the language of daily life as

spoken throughout the Empire, had for their model the Books

which on other grounds took the first place in their venera-

tion.

Before we take up the New Testament writers and try to

estimate their linguistic position, some general comment is

needed on a question that will be constantly before us, the

relation between literary and colloquial Greek. In Greek

Testament studies we are not concerned with the phenomenon

of Atticism, which dominated all prose composition more or

less throughout the Imperial age, and in a slightly varied form

lominates written prose in Hellas to-day. Within the covers

of the Cambridge Septuagint we meet with it in 4 Maccabees,

and (as we have seen) Josephus has it strongly developed.

But there is hardly anything even remotely like it in the New

Testament2. The very fact that the Greek there found was so

long regarded as wholly *sui generis* attests the difference there

is between the sacred writers and the least artificial of prose

authors outside, including even the Greek Fathers, who at an

early date reverted mostly to the standard dialect of literature.

We have nothing in English exactly answering to Atticism.

1 "They did not destroy them so find that Mr A. E. Brooke regards

as to destroy" would represent it in the reading of B as an error.)

English. (In *Proleg*. 76, n.1, I note 2 2 *Peter* is the nearest—on this

that "A emends o]leqreu<sei." I now see below.

478 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

In its milder forms it is not unlike Dr Johnson's written style,

especially when contrasted (as Macaulay points out) with

his terse and vigorous colloquial language. In its extreme

developments the effect is not unlike that of the Babu English

which sometimes comes for our amusement from India. The

principle of it has some general resemblance to a rule that

bound our Revisers. To use no words that were not current

in Elizabethan English was a restriction on which the shades

of Phrynichus and Moeris might have smiled approval. So

far as the parallel goes, it makes us wish the more heartily

that Convocation had left the Revisers free. But of course

it does not carry us far, for our educated colloquial has

changed from Elizabethan English much less than Hellenistic

from the Attic of the fourth century B.C. As has been implied,

Atticism was very much a matter of degree. There are

many conspicuous writers in the Hellenistic age who can

hardly be said to Atticize at all. That is to say, they never

use a really dead language, in which they may blunder

egregiously, like Lucian when he employs the optative regard-

less of sequence. Their language is not colloquial in any

sense, but it is not artificial. Our own language gives us

adequate analogies here. Our great stylist Macaulay has left

us his English in two or three forms. His biographer gives

us some of his diary notes, jotted down after visiting scenes

he was about to paint in his History, that we may compare

the passages in which he works up the notes into their

final literary form1. Macaulay's diary is as little conscious

literature as the notes he scribbled to his sister between two

courses at dinner. But the difference between diary or letters

and the History is not the difference between natural and

artificial, between present-day English and archaism. It is

all living English, but of two different kinds. Putting aside

authors with marked mannerisms, we may say that written

and spoken English alike vary only with the culture of the

writers. And this is essentially true of the wholly natural and

living Greek which we find in the New Testament.

1 We recall Luke's "Travel up, or at least not to anything like

Diary," which was *not* thus worked the same degree.

XIV] New Testament Greek 479

Among the New Testament writers we will take first those

who most certainly wrote in Greek as a native tongue. After

Harnack's decisive endorsement of Hobart's work, it will no

longer be regarded as the mark of an uncritical person with

an apologetic bias if we assume the Gentile physician Luke

to be the author of the two books *ad Theophilum*. Their

unity of phraseology and style has been sufficiently proved;

but grammar has still something to say, and a whole series of

syntactical tests establish an agreement between the author

of the "We-document" and those of the Gospel and the rest

of *Acts* which is hard to explain on any theory but the old-

fashioned one. There are obvious points in which Luke's

diction differs from that of other New Testament writers1,

some of them such as we should expect from a writer of Greek

birth who knew no Semitic language till middle life (and

probably not then), and others which seem strange in a writer

of these antecedents. The Lucan use of the potential optative

—in indirect questions and conditional with ἄν—is one of

those which we have called literary but not artificial. Luke's

vocabulary includes a good many words which belonged to

the speech of more cultured circles, as well as words current

in his profession, and other words (medical or ordinary) found

in the Greek medical works on which he had been trained.

But there is also in him the instinct of style which a Greek

could hardly shake off, even when writing on themes that

made artificiality of any kind a thing impossible. He con-

sciously imitates the Greek Bible, and in the parts of his

narrative which have their scene in Palestine he feels it con-

gruous to retain the rough diction of his sources, the Greek

of men and women who would talk Greek to a foreigner,

just as a Welshman talks English to a tourist, with a style

betraying preference for his native tongue. In a Greek this

conscious or half-conscious adaptation of style to the sur-

roundings of his narrative is wholly natural, and does not

suggest the slightest labouring of effect. The reading of the

1 Cf. Thumb, *Hellenismus*, p. 184. synoptists to shew how far Luke

He cites Norden's thorough-going goes in the literary direction.

comparison of Luke with the other

480 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

classics soon shews us how the several literary forms attached

themselves to dialects associated with their earliest exemplars.

Epic poetry, even down to Nonnus, must endeavour to follow

the nondescript dialect into which Ionic rhapsodists had

transformed the Achaian of Homer. Choral odes in tragedy

and comedy must preserve the broad *ā* which witnesses to the

origin of drama in some region outside the area of the

Ionic-Attic h. We can therefore understand the instinct that

would lead the educated Greek Evangelist to suit his style

under certain conditions to the book which held the same

relation to his Gospel as the *Iliad* held to subsequent experi-

ments in epic verse. Whether Mary (or Elizabeth?) and

Zacharias and Simeon or Luke himself (as Harnack would

teach us) composed the canticles of chaps. i. and ii., we can

see that they are steeped in the language of the Greek Bible.

One might compare Theocritus, deserting his usual Doric to

write the "Distaff" in the Aeolic of Sappho. Or, to seek a

closer parallel, we might suppose one of ourselves charged

with the difficult task of composing special prayers to be used

in conjunction with some from the Book of Common Prayer:

it would obviously be essential that every turn of expression

should exhale as far as possible the English of its intended

surroundings. Something of this kind Luke has manifestly

aimed at, though he only maintains the effort in very limited

parts of his work, and drops it mostly when lie has his two

authoritative Gospel sources to incorporate. In dealing with

them he feels free in narrative to improve upon their

uncultivated style, though in the Sayings of Jesus drawn from

"Q" we may venture to believe that his stylistic alterations

were decidedly less extensive than Harnack asserts1. In his

second volume we may see the local colouring appropriately

reflected in the retention of the style of his Palestinian

witnesses, whose story would have seemed almost artificial

if clothed in the cultured Greek into which the historian

naturally falls when he is out in the Gentile atmosphere of

the missionary journeys.

1 I may refer to my paper in the cation of this belief: see also below.

*Expositor* (May, 1909) for a justifi-

XIV] New Testament Greek 481

So we pass on to Luke's great teacher, the next largest

contributor to the sacred volume. It is not very easy to say

how much is involved in the Apostle's claim to be Ἐβραίος ἐξ

Ἐβραίων—a Hebrew, not merely a Jew, and the descendant of

Hebrews. There were clearly senses in which it was possible

to be both Hebrew and Hellenist—Hebrew in that the tie to the

mother country was never broken, and Aramaic was retained

as the language of the family circle1, Hellenist in that foreign

residence demanded perpetual use of Greek from childhood.

Canon Hicks and Sir W. M. Ramsay have made us realize that

Paul's Hellenism was deeply ingrained. How much he knew

of Greek literature is an old question which can never

perhaps be decisively answered. But if we may assume that

the intensely Pauline address (or rather exordium of an

address) at Athens really represents what Paul afterwards

sketched to the disciple who was writing the story of the

Gospel's victories, Dr Rendel Harris's recent discovery adds

a most interesting novelty to the tale of Paul's quotations.

From the Syriac lines he has found we easily reconstruct such

a verse as

ἐν σοὶ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινύμεθ' ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσμέν--

and the quatrain, of which this forms the last and Tit. i. 12

the second line, becomes a Greek philosopher's scornful

protest against unworthy views of God, such as would be

wholly after Paul's heart. There is not however evidence to

suggest that Paul's studies in Greek literature went very far.

Certainly they did little to colour his style. The careful

examination of his vocabulary by Nageli chews strikingly that

his words do not come from literary sources but from the

common stock of ordinary spoken Greek. One possibly typical

exception however might be cited. The vernacular record of

αὐτάρκης and αὐτάρκεια is fairly ample, and the meaning is

always very simple: thus τὰ αὐτάρκη καύματα in a first

century papyrus is only "*sufficient* fuel." Paul's use of the

word in the philosophic sense of "self-sufficient, contented"

1 But cf. H. A. A. Kennedy's both of them Greek-speaking Jews

note: " Eusebius. . . applies the desig- with little if any knowledge of

nation to Philo, and. . . to Aristobulus, Hebrew."

482 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

shews that, for all his essentially popular vocabulary, he could

employ the technical words of thinkers in their own way1.

That of course entirely agrees with his subtle allusions to Stoic

and Epicurean tenets in Acts xvii.; and it is exactly what

we should expect from a missionary so full of sympathy for

every effort of men groping after God. For the rest, we need

say no more as to the character of Pauline Greek. We have

seen that it is the Greek of one who had always been at home

in the language, however familiar the Aramaic with which at

a crisis of his life he could hush the Jerusalem mob to hear

his story. In such a Greek we have about the same expecta-

tion of Semitisms as of Cymricisms in the English speeches of

Mr Lloyd-George. And the well-known conditions of his

letter-writing preclude to a peculiar extent the invasion of

literary phrase or conscious art. The letters are in colloquial

Greek for the best of reasons—they were spoken and not

written, and they reflect in every line the impetuous utterance

of one who never dreamed that his unstudied words would

survive all the literature of his time. Whether if Paul had

ever sat down to write a treatise we should see Nageli's

results materially affected we have no means of knowing.

A composition more literary than anything by Paul or

Luke meets us in the noble work of an unknown man—or

woman—of their circle. The Epistle to the Hebrews is easily

recognized as coming nearer to the definite literary style than

anything else in the New Testament. Blass pointed out that

it manifests a general avoidance of the harsher kinds of hiatus

between successive words. This would probably be almost

instinctive in anyone who had received a good Greek educa-

tion, to whom ἐλέγετο αὐτῷ2 would have sounded harsh, much

as a word like "idea" sounds harsh in English when followed

by a vowel in rapid speech. Blass goes on to demonstrate the

presence of an elaborate system of rhythm. In estimating this

we must not forget that we have to do with the judgement of

1 Repeated from the lexical note Jan. 1909, p. 5, published since these

*sub voce* in *Expositor*, VII. vi. 375 f. pages were written.

The general sense agrees very well 2 Blass's example (*Grammar*, p.

with Sir W. M. Ramsay's account of 297).

Paul's language in *Expositor* for

XIV] New Testament Greek 483

a Hellenist who had no peer—except indeed our own Jebb,

who was taken from our head not long before Germany lost

Blass,—and one who did much of his finest work upon the Greek

Orators. But we cannot repress the reflexion that Blass went

on later to apply his canons of rhythm to Paul, a supremely

improbable subject a priori. Few will listen to such a thesis,

even when propounded by Blass, and its natural effect is to

make us suspicious of the canons when applied to Hebrews.

It is not quite easy moreover to understand why Blass, after

sensibly discountenancing the futile occupation of verse-hunting

in New Testament prose, seems to regard the presence of two

consecutive iambics in xii. 14, 15 as worthy of mention, with

a "faultless hexameter" in the previous verse that is ruined

by the reading (ποιεῖτε) which Blass himself prefers. One

would have thought that actual verses in literary prose were

rather a blemish than a beauty. And—to select an example

for the *reductio ad absurdum* which has not, we think, been

noticed before—are not the consecutive iambics in *Hebrews*

fairly matched by the consecutive anapaests in John v. 14—

ὑγιὴς γέγοωας· μηκέθ΄ἁμάρτανε,

ἵνα μὴ χεῖρόν σοί τι γένηται—

which have the advantage of forming a complete sentence!

(The hypercritic will object to the hiatus between the verses,

but we really cannot have everything.) Apart however from

false scents like these, we have plenty of evidence wherewith

to trace the higher literary quality of *Hebrews*. But even here

we must keep within limits. There is no archaism visible, not

even the potential optative which we noticed above in the

Lucan writings. It is the higher conversational style after all,

comparable best perhaps with what we can hear in the pulpit

style of a cultured extempore preacher. We must not forget

to notice in passing the suggestive paradox that a letter "to

Hebrews" is written by someone who knew no Hebrew, and

used the Greek Bible alone.

We must not discuss on this scale the Greek of all our

writers; but it will be well to refer briefly to one more before

passing on to those with whom Greek was a secondary language.

484 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

The *Second Epistle of Peter*, presumably the latest of the New

Testament writings, presents us with the nearest analogue to

the work of the Atticists which we can find within the Canon

—though certainly the Atticists would have scorned to own a

book so full of "solecism." It is hard to resist the impression

that the author learnt his Greek mainly from books. Dr

Abbott's comparison with Babu English does not discredit the

Epistle as he thought it did, and we may probably take it as

justifiable. Greek proverbs1, Greek inscriptions2, and Greek

books which we can no longer handle seem to have contributed

to the writer's vocabulary, and moulded the fine sense of

rhythm to which Dr J. B. Mayor bears effective testimony.

That the one definitely pseudepigraphic Book in the Canon

should have these further traces of elaboration and artificiality,

is quite in keeping with its character; nor would we admit that

they impair its value, any more than the perfectly understood

convention of writing under the shelter of a great name from

the past. We do not scorn the majestic Book of *Wisdom*

because it bears the name of Solomon, while we are assured

that even Solomon's wisdom was not capable of producing an

original work in Alexandrian Greek. That the writer of

*2 Peter* was not a born Greek may perhaps be inferred from

the blunders into which he seems not seldom to fall.

In our second class may be noted first those writers whose

Greek betrays least of the stiffness due to imperfect Hellenism.

The intrinsic importance of the First Gospel prompts special

attention to its linguistic phenomena. Semitic birth is

inferred for the author from his thought and general outlook,

not at all from his language, which is a simple and rather

colourless Hellenistic of the average type. He is capable of

elaboration, but it is on the lines of a Hebrew author rather

than those of a Greek. He has an instinct for the parallelism

of Hebrew poetry, which produces the beautifully balanced

periods of the "Two Builders" at the end of the Sermon—

to mention only the most conspicuous among many examples,

—where Luke's much less symmetrical form must surely (*pace*

1 See Mayor on ii. 22. 2 Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, 360 ff.

XIV] New Testament Greek 485

Harnack) be regarded as Q unadorned1. But "Matthew " is not

by any means destitute of resource in the use of Greek. With

so much fresh matter to add to his Marcan source, he is always

seen pruning wherever space can be gained without sacrifice

of what seems essential; and he would sometimes very

effectively shorten sentences from the Matthaean "Sayings "

without losing anything of the meaning. Thus "to stoop

down and unloose the thong of his sandals" is reduced to τὰ

ὑποδήματα βαστάσαι, "to remove his sandals" (iii. 11). In

xi. 27 ἐπιγινώσκει, is exactly equivalent in sense to the Lucan

γινώσκει τίς ἐστιν: this follows naturally from Dean Armitage

Robinson's illuminating account of ἐπιγινώσκειν2, which could

be supported now with new evidence3. There are also places

to note where Matthew mends the Greek of Mark: e.g. ix. 6

κλίνην for the vulgar κράβαττον, xii. 14 συμβούλιον ἔλαβον for

s. ἐδίδουν, or the many places where he drops the historic

present4. No doubt he does not do this as often as Luke;

but that he does it not infrequently should make us ready to

expect similar treatment of Q. Careful investigation of each

case on its merits would, one may venture to think, transfer

not a few passages from one side of the account to the other,

where Harnack has assumed stylistic alteration of Q in Luke

on the strength of a tendency supposed to be proved. We do

not deny the tendency, nor that it is stronger in Luke than

in Matthew but it must not be pressed too far. Thus in

Luke iii. 17 it seems probable that Q had διακαθᾶραι . . . καὶ

συνάξαι, as Luke reads according to אa; and that the vulgar

first aorist (emended to συναγαγεῖν in א\* B) was altered to

συνάξαι by Matthew, with another future in the first clause—

a much less cumbrous construction. (Compare ἐπισυνάξαι in

Luke xiii. 34 (Q) with the " correct " ἐπισυναγαγεῖν in Matt.

xxiii. 37.) In Matt. iii. 9 Harnack does not convince us that

1 The same tendency to heighten (one at least of them taken from Mark)

parallelism is seen in an exaggerated to prove that the τίς ἐστιν is Luke's

form in the Oxyrhynchus " Logia." own; but he shews hesitation in

2 *Ephesians*, pp. 24S ff. ; cf. *Pro- his excursus.*

*leg*.3 113. 4 Cf. Hawkins, *Horae Synopt.*

3 Harnack, *Sayings of Jesus,* pp. 113 ff.

p. 295, cites four Lucan τίς clauses

486 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

do<chte is the phrase of Q, which idiomatic Greek Luke

deliberately marred by introducing "a favourite phrase of

his," derived from literal translation of Aramaic sources. In

Luke xii. 28 we find the Hellenistic ἀμφιάζει, undoubtedly

due to Q: Matthew has substituted the literary ἀμφιέννυσιν.

Matthew's shortening of the precept of Luke vi. 27, 28 may

quite possibly have been conditioned partly by the avoidance

of ἐπηρεάζειν, which emphatically *does* "belong to the vocabu-

lary of common speech": Harnack (*Sayings*, p. 61) must have

overlooked the papyri. Again we may notice how in xxiii. 35

Matthew has substituted the clearer Greek ναοῦ, "shrine,"

for the too literal οἴκου of Luke and Q: Harnack's opposite

conclusion (p. 105) seems to rest on an assumption that ναός

was the same as ἱερόν.

The foregoing remarks on the language of the First

Gospel have been prolonged rather beyond due limits for a

special purpose. Professor Harnack's book on the *Sayings*

*of Jesus* is a brilliant reconstruction, as anything from his

pen is bound to be. It seems almost presumptuous for a

mere grammarian to criticize but when scholars so great as

Harnack and Wellhausen call ἀφήκαμεν a perfect1, or form

nominatives like "ἑαυτός" and "ἀλλήλοι2," the humble philolo-

gist is encouraged to think that there may be a corner in

this field for him to glean. We shall return to a further point

of this kind later on.

The Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles must

of course be considered together: the philologist's lancet

is useless for dissecting out the distinct elements which

cleverer surgeons have diagnosed to exist. We have antici-

pated the most important note that modern research prompts

here—on the inferences to be drawn from the extreme

simplicity of Johannine style. Those who would still find

Semitism in these plain coordinated sentences, with their large

use of καί, may be recommended to study the most instructive

parallels which Deissmann has set out in his new *Licht vom*

*Osten*, pp. 88 f.,—John ix. 7 ,11 compared with a section from

1 *Sayings*, p. 65.

2 *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien*, p. 30 ; cf. *Proleg*. 242.

XIV] New Testament Greek 487

an inscription (Rome, 138 A.D.) which tells of a blind man's

cure in the temple of Asclepios.1 Deissmann's delineation of

the primitive popular Greek in which John writes is illustrated

with other telling parallels from monuments coming from

the same stratum of culture—if we make "culture" for this

purpose synonymous with knowledge of literary Greek. Apart

from this important consideration, modern linguistic research

has but little to say which touches the burning questions that

centre on the Fourth Gospel. There are however linguistic

novelties which affect exegesis profoundly, and nowhere so

much as here. Those of us who were brought up on Westcott's

great Commentary became familiar early with the subtleties

that had sometimes to be wrung out of ἵνα. A more moderate

view was taken by W. F. Moulton in his English *Winer*. But

our vernacular sources, with the significant fact that ἵνα (now

νά in Modern Greek replaces the obsolete infinitive, shew

us conclusively that all these subtleties must go. In a typical

passage like John xvii. 3 it does not seem possible to dis-

tinguish effectively between the ἵνα γινώσκωσι which John

prefers and the τὸ or τοῦ γινώσκειν which some other New

Testament writers would have been tolerably sure to substi-

tute. Ultimately the distinction became a geographical one,

Asiatic Greek retaining the infinitive, European allowing it

to fall into disuse, and employing the ἵνα construction as its

surrogate. If we could establish an early date for the dialect-

differentiation, we should have a most valuable tool for our

lower and higher criticism alike.

Three professedly Palestinian writings come next, de-

manding only a few words before we go on to the Apocalypse

and the Gospel of Mark, which stand in a special category.

The letters ascribed to James, to his brother Jude, and to

Peter--2 *Peter* has been dealt with—have in common the

incongruity which in some critics' opinion prevents our

assigning to inhabitants of Palestine documents written in

such free and vigorous Greek. The incongruity disappears

when we recognize the bilingual conditions of Palestine.

Without repeating what has been said elsewhere on this

1 Dittenberger, *Sylloge*2. no. 807.

488 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

subject1, we may remark that there is no adequate ground for

supposing Palestine to have been isolated from the Empire

by a wide-spread ignorance of the universal language. The

papyri give us a living picture of bilingualism in Egypt, where

peasants and slaves and schoolboys can express themselves

in Greek with perfect freedom, and with correctness varying

simply with their education. Demotic papyri in abundance

survive to shew that they did not forget their native language.

All over the East, as far as Alexander's arms penetrated, Greek

inscriptions attest this same condition, nor is Palestine an

exception there. Sundry small proofs converge—the Greek

names that meet us everywhere, the hushing of the crowd

at Jerusalem when Paul came forward to address them (as

they presumed) in Greek, the dependence of the Shechemite

Justin Martyr upon the LXX, and so on. In "Galilee of the

Gentiles" it may be conjectured that Greek was needed even

more regularly than in Judaea. That Joseph and Mary and

their family talked Greek at home, or that our Lord's discourses

to His disciples or the multitudes needed no translation to

prepare them for reception into our Gospels, few would care to

assert now. But that a perfect readiness in Greek expression

should be reached by members of the Lord's own circle need

cause no surprise whatever, and can certainly supply no

argument against the traditional authorship of the three

Epistles.

The two remaining Books stand on a lower level of Greek

culture than anything else in the New Testament. *Greek*

culture, we say, for if a Palestinian native, who presumably

spent most of his time in Jerusalem till he reached middle

life, failed to get a thorough hold of Greek idiom, it clearly

groves nothing as to his status as an educated man. We often

welcome first-rank German savants whose efforts at English

conversation are imperfectly successful; and we fully realize

what some of our return visits might witness in the shape

of German grammar. Now the author of *Revelation* has

undeniably a copious Greek vocabulary, and he uses the

language with perfect freedom. But there are principles of

1 *Proleg*. 7 f.

XIV] New Testament Greek 489

Greek grammar which he seems to defy at will, though

frequently evidencing his knowledge of them1. Conspicuous

among these is the rule of concord. Our German analogy

will help us here. We English stumble inevitably over gender,

till a thorough proficiency in German has been reached; and

our failure is due to the fact that we have no real gender in

our own language. A Frenchman might fail because he has

gender, but of a very different kind. The solecism of which

ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός is a type seems to be

inexplicable except on these lines. Examples of exactly the

same kind recur very commonly in the papyri: specimens are

cited elsewhere2, shewing the same use of the nominative with

a noun in apposition, where the governing word is felt to have

exhausted its influence upon the word standing in immediate

relation to it. It seems very artificial to explain these

and other solecisms—see the convenient list marshalled on

pp. cxxiii f. of Dr Swete's introduction—by such a theory

as Archbishop Benson's (*ib*. p. cxxiv). The assumption of

occasional or frequent lapse from correct grammar, in the

writing of a foreigner who attained complete fluency in the

secondary language but never grasped its grammar well enough

to write correctly by instinct, is true to every-day experience,

and paralleled all along the line by the phenomena of the papyri,

due to the same cause. Dr Swete's unwillingness to compare

a literary document with ephemeral writings like the papyri

may be met by considerations advanced already in the course

of this Essay. We have seen that the isolation of "Biblical

Greek," finally ended by the study of the papyri and other

records of spoken Hellenistic, was due entirely to the fact that

"literature" was always written in a dialect of its own. From

this convention, for reasons which we need not examine, the

Greek translators of the Pentateuch boldly broke away; while

their later successors, some from reverence for the sacred

text, some from defective knowledge of its meaning, made no

1 The whole of this section is in seen when these words were written.

welcome agreement with the Dean He in turn coincides with the writer's

of Westminster's pages in *J.T.S*. for views in *Proleg*. p. 9.

October 1908, which had not been 2 *Proleg*. p. 60 n.

490 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

effort to exclude even solecisms from their version. With

such a book as the LXX set high above all other books as

their model, were New Testament writers likely to feel the

importance of careful revision to excise mere slips of grammar?

And can we be quite sure that John would have discovered

his slips if he had made such a revision? They had better be

left, we may venture to believe, with Paul's anacolutha, as

the sign-manual of a writer far too much concerned with his

message to be conscious of the fact that he is writing

literature which after ages will read with a critical eye.

Modern linguistic investigations have something to con-

tribute to the comparison of the Apocalypse and the Fourth

Gospel which must ultimately determine the question of their

common authorship. So far as these tests can go, they

strengthen the criticism of Dionysius, who (we must remember)

was a Greek weighing stylistic and grammatical differences

found in books written in his own language. In the evidence

so carefully and impartially set forth by Dr Swete, we find

our lexical and grammatical facts tending to emphasize the

differences between the Gospel and the Apocalypse, and to

reduce the significance of the resemblances. Thus of four

"unusual constructions" given on p. cxxviii as common to the

two Books, the use of ἵνα and the combination σωῴζειν ἐκ will

hardly retain their position in a list of varieties, nor does the

strengthening of the partitive genitive with ἐκ impress us now

as out of the way1. And the contrasts of grammar already

mentioned shew up all the more markedly as we study

them in the light of the vernacular Greek outside the Bible.

Into the vocabulary we need not enter, except to say in

passing that Professor Thumb has vindicated κατήγωρ from

appropriation by Jewish Greek2. We interpret our facts

either by yielding assent to Dionysius, or by taking (with

Hort) the early date for the Apocalypse and postulating a

subsequent improvement in John's Greek culture, or by

pointing with Dr Swete to the probability that the author of

the Gospel supplied its matter but left other pens to write it

down. *Discernant grammatici*, the " critics," as we call them:

1 Cf. *Proleg*. p. 102. 2 *Hellenismus*, p. 126.

XIV] New Testament Greek 491

this is beyond the province of "grammar" in our modern

restricted sense.

The Greek of our Second Gospel would justify a much

more detailed examination than we can give it here. That

there was very marked deficiency in Greek culture here will

hardly be denied. We assume the authorship of John Mark,

if only for the absurdity of supposing early second century

tradition to have selected by guesswork so unlikely an author.

The position of Mark's family does not favour the idea that

he was badly educated: he only shared the strong preference

for Aramaic which was normal among Jerusalem residents,

and never troubled to acquire polish for a Greek which came

to him from conversation with other foreigners and with men

of the people. What are we to make then of the statement

that he "once acted as interpreter to Peter1"? Was Peter

more ἀγράμματος still? If he was, our acceptance of his

Epistle becomes very difficult. It is better to take ἑρμηνευτής

less strictly—cf. for instance its verb in Luke xxiv. 27—and

think with Dr Wright of a teacher or catechist who under-

took the instruction of enquirers drawn into further truth-

seeking by the stimulus of the preacher's appeal. There can

be no question that the catechetical lessons, on which the

written Gospel was ultimately based, were given first in

Aramaic; and they may well have become so fixed in that

form that when their author transferred them to Greek they

retained ubiquitous marks of too literal translation. It is of

great critical importance to observe how these Aramaisms

of translation were progressively smoothed away. Well-

hausen shews that D has most of them and B distinctly less.

Unless this is due (as Bishop Chase argued) to a Syriac

infection in D, we have here a most important source of

evidence as to the origin of the Western Text, of which in

this respect the "Neutral" becomes a revision. But this we

1 The exact meaning of Papias's was past. It is like βουλευτὴς

phrase may be found by comparison γενόμενος, which replaces such forms

with the papyri: its critical import- as βουλεύσας when no verb exists: it

ance justifies special care in render- is the ordinary way of saying that a

ing. We find that it clearly suggests man had held a certain office—"ex-

that Mark's association with Peter senator," etc.

492 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

must leave to the Semitists. As has been noted already,

there is plenty of revision of Mark's Aramaism to be seen in

Matthew and Luke. In a considerable number of little points

these Evangelists coincide in their amendments, a fact well

explained by Dr Sanday's suggestion that the text of Mark

had been polished by a cultured scribe before it reached

them: our Mark descends from the unrevised form. Of

Mark's Semitisms as a whole it will not be necessary to

repeat what has been said more generally before. They are

hardly ever really barbarous Greek, though Mark's extremely

vernacular language often makes us think so, until we read

the less educated papyri. Generally we recognize them by

their over-use of a possible though uncommon idiom, which

happens to agree with Aramaic. There is one peculiarity of

Mark which we must bring out, as having a lesson for other

purposes. It is too readily assumed, as it is constantly by

Harnack, that a free use of compound verbs is naturally a

sign of culture. But it seems to have been overlooked that

Mark has a very high proportion1. Sir John Hawkins's

figures (*Hor. Syn*. 142), when revised and brought into

relation with the length of the several Books, shew us that

*Hebrews* has 8.0 per WH page, Acts 6.25, Luke and

Mark 5.7, Paul 3.8, Matthew 3.55, while John (Gospel) has

only 1.972. Harnack does not draw the inference which

naturally follows from his statement (*Sayings*, p. 150—see

the German) that Luke and Mark have almost exactly the

same ratio of simple verbs to compounds3. Since there may

1 Sir John Hawkins writes (Jan. lations in Mark and John, and have

30th, 1909) : "The point you have struck out a number of verbs which

established as to Mark's habit is I do not regard as true compounds.

well illustrated by his using πορεύομαι The remaining statistics for the N.T.,

only once (ix. 30) if at all, while it is as given above, depend upon tables

so common in the other historical made for me by Mr H. Scott, after

books. . . ; but on the other hand he I had determined which verbs should

has it compounded with εἰς (8), ἐκ count as true compounds. (Εἷναι has

(11), παρά, πρός, σύν, and perhaps been omitted in the table of total

διά. This used to seem very strange." occurrences.)

2 *Proleg*. 237. The figures have 3 Unfortunately I only detected

been checked afresh, with the aid of the mistake in the English version

the author's lists, kindly lent me. I here after writing my criticism in

have omitted the two long interpo- the *Expositor* for May, 1909.

XIV] New Testament Greek 493

well be difference of procedure among three computers—

for instance as to the inclusion of a verb like ἀποδημεῖν,

which is not strictly a compound—it has been necessary to

complete the statistics independently. The ratio in Matthew

works out as 100 simple verbs to 69 compounds, while in

Mark it is 100 : 92. It will be noted that the very considerable

difference between Mark and Matthew comes out alike when

the total of compounds is reckoned in proportion to the length

a the Books, and when the ratio of simple and compound

erbs is examined. Since Mark is obviously not a cultured

Greek writer, there must be something wrong about the theory

that compounds and culture go together. This conviction is

confirmed by the papyri. We can test this well in Witkowski's

excellent little Teubner volume of private letters dated B.C.,

in which the editor has marked sixteen letters, amounting to

more than a quarter of the book, as of men not even "modice

pruditorum." In these letters the ratio of simple verbs to

compounds is 100: 102, a sufficiently close parallel to the

ratio for Mark. Since Harnack is inclined to regard double

compounds as specially significant, it may be added that

ἐγκαταλείπειν (Marcan) and συμπροσγίνεσθαι are in this list.

If we take the whole book, which contains also 34 letters of

men marked as "eruditorum" and 9 "modice eruditorum,"

the ratio becomes 100 : 128, a very moderate rise for the

purposes of Harnack's theory. We may try another test, that

of the number of actual occurrences: some supplement is

needed for a method which would place verbs like εἶναι and

μετεθρίζεσθαι on the same footing. Taking the totals for Mark,

we find the ratio of occurrences is 100 : 49.5. Compare this

with the figures for Acts, where we find it 100 : 66. In Luke,

however, it is 100 : 46, actually lower than Mark. Matthew has

100 : 41. This test agrees very well with the comparison of

Mark and Luke given above, based on the other method.

Applying the total occurrences test to papyri, we have the

ratio 100: 51 in the last half of Witkowski's collection, which

includes 11 educated letters, 4 classed as moderate, and 16 as

uneducated. On the other hand, the ratio is 100 : 27 in 18

494 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

miscellaneous letters from *Tebt. Pap*. H.—which shews that

there are wide differences here as there are among the

New Testament writers, and even in different works of the

same writer. The fact that these letters are much later

than Witkowski's, ranging up to cent. iii. A.D., does not account

for the differences, for some of the most illiterate have the

largest proportion of compounds. These facts will help us to

estimate Harnack's statement that in his reconstructed Q

there is a ratio of 100 *simplicia* to 50 compounds, or 475 : 168

(100 : 35) when reckoned by occurrences. This last is eight

per cent. higher than in the Tebtunis letters above. But

Harnack has constructed his text of Q on the axiom that if

either Matthew or Luke has a simplex it is (normally) original.

Now that we have seen that compounds are not at all

necessarily a literary feature, the axiom falls to the ground

and Matthew's preference for simple verbs may have altered

the original Q quite as often as an opposite preference in

Luke. The result is that "the near relation of this source to

the Semitic " does not follow either way. Two of Harnack's

examples should be noted. On p. 84 "οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιλελησμένον

is the language of literature." But in the uneducated letter,

P. Oxy. 744 (B.c. 1—no. 58 in Witkowski)—shewing by the

way 100 : 75 as its index of occurrences,—we read εἴρηκας  
Ἀφροδισιᾶτι ὅτι Μή με ἐπιλάθῃς· πῶς δύναμαί σε ἐπιλαθεῖν;

ἐρωτῶ σε οὗν ἵνα μὴ ἀγωνιάσῃς. Another letter (ii.—iii. cent.

A.D.), containing βλέπε μὴ ἐπιλάθῃ μηδὲν τοὺς στεφάνους κτλ,

gives us the correct middle, as does P. Par. 32 (132 B.C.), which

is one of Witkowski's illiterate documents (no. 28). On p. 86

Harnack says that Luke's παρεγενόμην "is a choicer word "

than Matthew's ἦλθον, and therefore less original. Even this

becomes less obvious when we note that παραγίνεσθαι occurs

some thirty times in Witkowski's little volume, containing

only 100 Teubner pages with a large proportion of fragmentary

lines, and commentary on each page : four of these are in the

illiterate section.

The subject just discussed may seem perhaps to have

received rather disproportionate attention, nor is it very

specially connected with the delineation of the Greek of our

XIV] New Testament Greek 495

oldest Gospel, which supplied the starting-point. But it is

intended as an object-lesson, with much wider consequences

than those concerning its own subject. That subject is indeed

of greater importance than would be inferred from our

existing grammars and dictionaries, as has been strikingly

shewn in recent years by many investigators in the new field

of comparative Indo-European syntax. It has been our

purpose to shew that the work of even our greatest masters

may need checking by methods which have naturally not yet

entered the technology of criticism. A set of papyrus collec-

tions, with their word-indices well thumbed, will assuredly

have to stand on the shelves of all future critics of the New

Testament; and they will in not a few cases make some

serious modifications of results supposed to be secure.

It remains to indicate in brief compass some further

consequences of the discovery of so much new material for

study, and of the new methods which research has developed

within the last two decades. First comes naturally the light

that has been thrown on the vocabulary of the New Testament.

Deissmann's pioneer results were achieved here; and from

the time of *Bibelstudien* to the present day the working of

this mine has produced a steady output. New volumes of

papyri continue to appear, our own great explorers and

editors, Drs Grenfell and Hunt, still retaining a long lead in

the quantity and quality of their discoveries, but with fellow-

workers from many lands laying us under obligation only less

considerable. The new material of course does not produce

the same wealth of surprises: the reader of the latest volume

from Tebtunis or Oxyrhynchus has not the recurrent tempta-

tion to catch the first post with some new and fascinating

illustration of a Biblical word. But though the first isolated

parallel may be of the utmost interest, clearly the second,

third and fourth occurrences of the word in vernacular

documents are of greater importance for establishing the right

of the word to stand in the vocabulary of common life: the

isolated occurrence might be a freak. And every fresh citation

gives us a new context from which we may get light as to the

connotation a word possessed on the lips of the people. We

496 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

are accordingly now entering on the less exciting stage of

consolidating results and focussing our material upon the

exegesis of the sacred writers1. The study of Deissmann's

newest work, *Licht vom Osten* (1908), shews very well how

we stand at the present time. The papyri continue to figure

very largely—as they may well do, when we reflect that our

shelves of papyrus collections contain some fifty volumes to-

day, as against under ten in 1895. But the massive work

now before us draws its material from inscriptions even more

conspicuously; and it makes large use of the ostraca, the

broken pottery on which the poor wrote from necessity, and

other people jotted receipts and other short documents that

were in no danger of being mistaken for literature.

It has sometimes been observed, by scholars properly

anxious that we should not too hastily depreciate older

methods, that we have not secured anything definitely new

by the ransacking of papyri. The criticism is not true in

fact, though we are not careful to answer in this matter. We

may give one instructive example. The adjective δοκίμιος, in

James i. 3 and 1 Pet. i. 7, was discovered by Deissmann in the

papyri, where it is a standing epithet of gold, etc., with the

meaning genuine: many additional citations are now available.

But in literary Greek the word had absolutely vanished (like

the noun λογεία collection, which T. C. Edwards supposed Paul

to have coined!); and translators inevitably went off on a track

which in the passage from 1 Peter landed them in absolute

nonsense. In a book of *Cambridge Essays* it is a peculiar

pleasure to recall confirmations of our greatest master's

divination : we look at Hort's precious fragment on 1 *Peter*

and find that "what is genuine in your faith" appealed to his

instinct as the needed meaning, though he had to alter the

text to get it. But it is no part of our claim that the

vernacular sources commonly reveal meanings which have

disappeared with the papyri beneath the sands of Egypt, and

1 It may be mentioned that Dr from our new material. A selection

George Milligan and the writer hope of this material has appeared in the

before long to complete a first essay *Lexical Notes* already referred to

in systematic lexical illustration (*Expositor*, 1908-9).

XIV] New Testament Greek 497

risen again only with their return to the light. The New

Testament writings were read from the first by men who

talked the very language of the apostles and evangelists, even

if in their own written composition they conformed to the book-

language of Hellenism. It would be little short of a miracle if

not one in the whole succession of diligent Greek commentators

had known and mentioned a meaning which in ordinary con-

versation he would instinctively give to a word in the sacred

text. He would of course be in constant danger of reading the

literary meaning into the vernacular words he found. Just

as the "Syrian" revisers pruned away vulgar forms and

solecistic phrases from a Book whose sanctity precluded its

deviating from "correctness," so the literary Greek Fathers

would tend to minimize colloquialism wherever an alternative

interpretation could be given. It is accordingly in the choice

between rival explanations that our new methods and

materials mainly find their exercise. Let us take two

examples, both of them words that have provoked much

controversy, an both in very common use in Hellenistic

vernacular. Διαθήκη in the Revised Version is always

covenant, except in Hebr. ix. 16 f. Ought the exception to be

allowed? Westcott and W. F. Moulton strenuously said no,

and the present writer has a natural predisposition towards

this view, despite all the difficulties of exegesis involved.

But then comes in the fact that in the papyri, from the end

of cent. iv. B.C. down to the Byzantine period, the word denotes

*testament* and that alone, in many scores of documents. We

possess a veritable Somerset House on a small scale in our

papyrus collections, and there is no other word than διαξήκη

used. Even the Rabbis borrowed this Greek word to express

a meaning for which they had no Hebrew1. We seem

compelled to ask therefore whether a writer who shews

strong points of contact with Alexandria, and is more vitally

linked with the Greek world than any writer in the Canon,

could have used this word for long without betraying the

slightest sense that it commonly bore a totally different

1 See Krauss, ap. Thumb, *Hellenismus*, p. 185.

498 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

meaning1. Our other example shall be ἡλικία, as used in the

Sermon on the Mount. It is needless to repeat the argument

for the R.V. *margin* which may be drawn from Wetstein's

excellent comment and literary citations: had some of the

moderns read and weighed that note, we might have seen

remarkable conversions! But the reader of the papyri and

inscriptions recalls with surprise that he cannot cite a single

passage in favour of *height* as a meaning of ἡλικία, while there

are scores for the alternative. (A glance at Liddell and Scott

will shew how comparatively rare the meaning *height* is even

in the literary Greek.) The inference would seem to be that

there is a strong presumption in favour of *age, term of life*,

unless (as in Luke xix. 3) the context provides decisive

arguments against it, which the ἐλάχιστον in Luke xii. 26

somewhat emphatically fails to do.

What has been advanced more than once in this Essay

prepares the way for a generalization taking us to the very

foundation of New Testament exegetical research. Do not

the facts now known force us to recognize that we have

hitherto allowed preponderant weight in all our discussions

to a mass of sources which should take the second place and

not the first? To vary a comparison used before, we are

seeking to interpret a popular writer of the twentieth century

by means of parallels laboriously culled from Chaucer and

Shakspere, and sometimes even from Caedmon, where it

might be more profitable to listen to a schoolboy's slang.

Let us illustrate with a word on which we have nothing to

quote from our new sources, and it is a question simply of

interpreting the evidence we had already. Λόγιος in Acts

xviii. 24 is eloquent in the A. V. (following the Vulgate),

learned in R. V., according to the prevailing sense in classical

writers. But there is a page of Lobeck's *Phrynichus* (p. 198),

which would have probably given pause to the majority that

carried the change, had they lived under the new dispensation.

Phrynichus says "The ancients do not use λόγιος as the

multitude do, of the man who is skilful and lofty in speech,

1 Some further suggestions as to will be found in *Lexical Notes*, s. vv.

the usage of both noun and verb (*Expositor*, Dec. 1908).

XIV] New Testament Greek 499

but of one who can expound as an expert the native customs

in each several nation." Lobeck's note contains a number of

passages from Hellenistic writers in which *eloquence* is clearly

intended. (Add to them Strabo, p. 712.) Lobeck adds the

remark that Thomas and Moeris argued for πολυΐστωρ as

the Attic connotation, while the mass of writers used it as

λεκτικός. Field (*Notes*, p. 129), after quoting two of Lobeck's

passages, says "The other sense, ὁ τῆς ἰστορίας ἔμπειρος, is

chiefly found in Herodotus and the cultivators of the Attic

dialect." Now it is true, as Liddell and Scott will shew, that

Hellenistic writers sometimes remembered to use the word

"correctly." But—and here is the main reason for choosing

this particular example—the testimony of the Atticist gram-

marians is always of special value for us. They may be right

or wrong in their statements of Attic usage centuries before

their own time. But the words and uses which they banned

were unmistakeably in use around them; and their unwilling

testimony constantly helps us to discover the "bad Greek"

which interests us more than the Atticists' "good Greek." It

is a fair working rule that a meaning condemned by these

*modistes* of literature, Phrynichus and his company, may be

accepted as probably intended by the New Testament writer.

So though we desert the R. V. with great reluctance, we feel

bound to conclude that Lobeck's authors (including the

Jew Philo) were lapsing into the colloquial from which Luke

was not tempted to stray, and that Jerome (and consequently

the A. V.) gave the more probable meaning.

The orientation of our present attitude towards Grammar

must not detain us, in view of prolonged discussions elsewhere.

A few very general observations will suffice. Firstly let us note,

in continuation of what has just been said, that in grammar

even more than in vocabulary the difference between classical

and Hellenistic needs perpetual watching. The statement is

of course the veriest truism, and like many other truisms it

needs repeating only too obviously. Would Westcott, one

wonders, have been so insistent on pursuing the ghost of a

purposive force in ἵνα throughout the Fourth Gospel, had he

not been a Senior Classic and spent years in teaching Greek

500 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

composition? Had his presuppositions been drawn from

Epictetus instead of Plato, from the papyri instead of the

dramatists, the motive for such scrupulousness would have

vanished. Taking this point as typical, it may be noted that

the blunting of the old use of ἵνα does not reduce the resources

of the language as an instrument for expressing thought with

exactness. Our own infinitive covers the whole range of

meaning which ἵνα clauses had acquired in the Κοινή—noun

sentence, final, consecutive, jussive; but how often are we

conscious of ambiguity? It is safe to say that we never have

any difficulty in the use of ἵνα except when we are trying to

force it into one of the old categories which are too familiar

to us from our classical grammar. Let the classics go, and

come to the difficulty with Hellenistic alone in the mind, and

the passage becomes clear at once. The same may be said of

other points in which Hellenistic has decidedly moved away

from the standards of the Attic golden age. The delicate

precision of the use of the optative commands our admiration

as we see it in the great writers of Athens. And yet we may

remember that, except to express a wish, the optative has

really no function which other moods cannot express equally

well, so that by practically dropping the rest of its uses

Hellenistic has lost no real necessity of language. Indeed the

fact that all the Indo-European dialects have either fused

these two moods into one (as Latin) or let one of them go (as

post-Vedic Sanskrit) is evidence enough that classical Greek

was preserving a mere superfluity, developing the same after

its manner into a thing of beauty which added to the resources

of the most delicate and graceful idiom the world has ever

seen. But we are not belittling the masterpieces of Hellas

when we say that their language was far less fitted than

Hellenistic for the work that awaited the missionaries of the

new world-faith. The delicacies of Attic would have been

thrown away on the barbarians whom Paul did not disdain to

seek for the Kingdom of Christ. If much of the old grace

was gone, the strength and suppleness, the lucidity and

expressiveness of that matchless tongue were there in un-

dimmed perfection. They are recognized still when travellers

XIV] New Testament Greek 501

master the unschooled "jargon" of the peasants in modern

Hellas, the direct descendant of the Greek of Mark and Paul.

As one of the most accomplished of them, Dr W. H. D. Rouse,

well says, "The most abstruse and abstract ideas are capable

of clear expression in the popular speech. The book-learned

will often hesitate for an expression, the peasant never. He

spends all his days in talking, and has plenty of practice; and

his vernacular is not only vivid and racy, it is capable of

expressing any thought. . . . His language has the further advan-

tage of being able to form new words by composition."

Assuredly a language which had all these characteristics three

thousand years ago, and has them to-day, is scarcely likely to

have lost them awhile during the great period when Greek

was spoken and understood by a far larger proportion of

civilized mankind than it had ever been in the period of its

greatest glory, or has ever been again since East and West

parted asunder and let the dark ages in.

We have wandered far from our Optative text, but that

or any other characteristic of New Testament Greek will

illustrate well enough the thesis that the grammatical losses

of Κοινή vernacular are abundantly compensated by qualities

which make this dialect an absolutely ideal one for proclaim-

ing great spiritual truths to all sorts and conditions of men

all over the Roman Empire. There are other things that

would be worth saying as to the gains we have won from the

study of non-literary papyri and cognate material. As might

be expected, contemporary documents like these have plenty

to teach us as to the *Realien* of our subject. The Census of

Luke ii.—"They disfigure their faces"—an invitation to feast

in an idol temple—the Number of the Beast—the Emperor as

"Son of God"—"In the Name"—Emancipation by enslave-

ment to a god—Purity, ritual and moral—the uses of chaff—

here are a few miscellaneous headings on which something

new and interesting might be said, and they are only the first

topics which happen to strike us without refreshing the

memory out of a book. For most of them we may refer to

the fascinating pages of *Licht vom Osten*: in this Essay they

must obviously remain samples of headings and nothing more.

502 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

There is one more topic under the head of Grammar which

calls for a few words. To judge from a sentence in Dr

Nestle's review, referred to above, it would seem that even

scholars of the first rank in a different line are not yet alive

to the practical importance of modern research in comparative

syntax. Yet it is certainly a most fruitful innovation in

Greek scholarship that the language is no longer isolated, but

receives light on the meaning of its categories from develop-

ments in kindred tongues. Linguistic science occupies a

curious position in the open between the rival camps of

literary and scientific studies. On the one side it is constantly

liable to abuse from every amateur: no untrained man would

venture an opinion on the technical ground of botany or physics,

but everyone who can spell, and some who cannot, will pro-

nounce *ex cathedra* on an etymology. And on the other side

we notice a strange antipathy towards its claim to rule in its

own house, born apparently of the fact that it is a science, and

that men of the literary temperament revolt against it as such.

But its results are there, for all that; and never have they been

worked out with such scientific accuracy as during the past

thirty years. "The terminology of our modern philology" in

the important subject of the action denoted by verbal tenses

and conjugations, to which Dr Nestle objects, is simply the

systematization of knowledge now gathered from languages

ancient and modern in the Indo-European family, enabling us

to understand, as we never could from Greek study alone,

the precise meaning of the most complex elements in Greek.

To realize what the comparative method has done for us, we

Should try to make a beginner comprehend the functions of

the Aorist, or what is the unifying principle which can bind

together the different uses of the Genitive. No teacher who

has tried it, with the modern equipment, will fail to grasp the

value of the work that has opened up the structure and history

of the sister languages, and so made clear the central principles

of each of them.

With this we must close. If the thesis of this Essay has

been made only plausible, it would seem to follow that a

neglected element ought to be brought into the training of

XIV] New Testament Greek 503

those who are to study and expound the New Testament, even

if it means displacing something that is already there. Most

of our Greek Testament scholars, in the highest and in the

lowest ranks, have come to the Book through the door of

classical Greek. When we think what it means to have Greek

enough to read Plato's Apology, we are not likely to make

light of such a preparation. But it is surely not enough.

Should not the Greek, literary and vernacular, of the period

contemporary with the rise of Christianity be reckoned among

the subjects necessary for a Theological Tripos candidate to

study? The elevation of Hellenistic Greek to the dignity of

a Tripos subject would not be a step without precedent. A

beginning has been made in a small way in the University of

Manchester, where the subject stands among the options for

the final B.A. examination. Students who are going on to

Theology are encouraged to take it, and have thus an excellent

linguistic preparation for the studies that are to follow.

Biblical texts stand side by side with works of Plutarch,

Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and so on, chosen from year to

year, and there is always a selection of papyrus texts and other

vernacular material. Composition and historical grammar

complete the scheme. The new syllabus is only in its second

year, but there is every reason for hoping that it will have

good results.

It is not only Tripos candidates however who are in our

minds when we speak of New Testament students. Classical

studies in general are, as we all know, seriously threatened in

our day by the reaction from conditions under which they

held an absurd and harmful monopoly in education. It is

likely enough that candidates for the ministry, who have had

a good education but were not conscious of their call till after

leaving school, will come forward more often than not with

Greek yet to learn. And there is another recruiting-ground

for the ministry, from which the Church of England is

expecting to secure able and devoted men, as we of other

communions have long rejoiced to do. Men who have had no

educational advantages, called to the work after many years

away from school—how shall we best train them for service

504 Cambridge Biblical Essays [XIV

in which experience shews they may be surpassingly useful?

The urgency of the question is recognized in a recent Report

which has deeply interested us all. Perhaps the writer may

contribute his own experience of some years, concerned as it

is vitally with the subject of this Essay. Hellenistic proves a

far shorter road than the classical grammar which the writer

used in schoolmaster days. A short and simple grammar

and reader in New Testament Greek, written for the purpose,

supplies the forms and syntax needed for intelligent reading

of the sacred text; and with this basis it is found that students

with an aptitude for languages can go on to classical Greek

when they have become proficient in the far easier Hellenistic.

It may fairly be claimed that there is much to be said for a

method which, for men who have little time to spare and a

great object to attain, reduces to a minimum the initial

drudgery of language-learning, and in a few months enables

them to read with profit greater books than ever Plato penned.

And Hellenistic is worth learning. The mere student of human

history may find his blood stirred by the spectacle of its

achievement. In days when all that was great in Hellenism

seemed to be dead, when brute force from outside and

dissension within had reduced to subjection the proud people

who had once hurled back the East that thundered at its

doors, we see the old greatness rise again in new forms.

Literature that could inspire Shakspere's creations, philo-

sophy instinct with fervour and life, science and history that

in faithful search for truth rivalled the masterpieces of

antiquity, humour and satire that Aristophanes might be

proud to own—all these we see in the books of the Hellenistic

age. And then we find that this wonderful language,

which we knew once as the refined dialect of a brilliant people

inhabiting a mere corner of a small country, had become the

world-speech of civilization. For one (and this one) period

in history only, the curse of Babel seemed undone. Exhausted

by generations of bloodshed, the world rested in peace under

one firm government, and spoke one tongue, current even in

Imperial Rome. And the Christian thinker looks on all this,

and sees the finger of God. It was no blind chance that

XIV] New Testament Greek 505

ordained the time of the Birth at Bethlehem. The ages had long

been preparing for that royal visitation. The world was ready

to understand those who came to speak in its own tongue the

mighty works of God. So with the time came the message,

and God's heralds went forth to their work, "having an

eternal gospel proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth,

and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people."

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt: [ted.hildebrandt@gordon.edu](mailto:ted.hildebrandt@gordon.edu)  
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