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

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

Greek and the Gospels.

By Professor Hubert Pernot, The Sorbonne, Paris.

The author of this article warns the readers that they will find many paradoxes in it. His excuse is, that, for him, they express the truth. He will try to justify his meaning, as far as this is possible in a short article, and if he does not succeed in making all his readers share his convictions, he will at any rate have directed the attention of the public towards some points of the Gospel problem which have not hitherto, according to him, been sufficiently brought to light.

Every one knows that our Gospels were originally written in Greek. What is Greek? Most people would answer: a dead language. This idea is erroneous, and has had disastrous consequences for the study and comprehension of the Gospels. As a matter of fact, the Greek language has been spoken and written without interruption for nearly three thousand years. From Homer to the present day, it is an uninterrupted linguistic succession. Foreign conquerors—Romans, Slavs, Franks, Turks—have occupied Hellas without causing the language to disappear, without even leaving a lasting impression behind them, and certainly without modifying it in its essentials, without taking from it its true Hellenic character. Modern Greek is the normal outcome of this evolution.

Modern Greek is extremely conservative. It still has four cases: nominative, vocative, genitive, and accusative. Only the dative has disappeared, The word ἄνθρωπος is declined thus: ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἄνθρωπε, τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τὸν ἄνθρωπο, οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ἄνθρωποι, τῶν ἀνθρώπων, τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. *I see the daylight* is, in modern Greek, βλέπω τὸ φῶς τῆς ἡμέρας. One would search in vain, through all the modern languages, for an instance of such durable and perfect stability.

Besides the oral tradition, a more learned one has been handed down to us. Most of the newspapers and books edited in Athens are written, not in the language the Greeks speak, but in a language much nearer to the ancient Greek and accessible to any Hellenist after a few hours' study. But a number of contemporary writers, thinking that a double language is pernicious to the growth of a nation, endeavour to write in the spoken language. The result is what is called 'the linguistic question.' It is extremely complex, because in practice these two languages cannot clearly be opposed to one another. They often are blended in different measure, according to social standards and circumstances.

Every Greek who has attended the primary school is able to read and understand the Gospels. An illiterate countryman only understands part of them, but in order to make them intelligible to him, a simple transposition, rather than a real translation, is needed. The Greek of the Gospels is nearer to spoken Greek than Montaigne's French to modern French; perhaps we might also add as a comparison, nearer than Shakespeare's comedies to modern English. One day I happened to count up the number of words of Mark's Gospel not to be found in Vlachos's *Modern Greek-French Dictionary*. There are about seventy. This dictionary contains the forms both of the written and the spoken language. The difference would, of course, be more considerable if only the latter were concerned, but even then the comparison would still be striking.

It is remarkable that the scholars who have studied the Gospels have taken as a rule very little notice of modern Greek. It may be due to the fact that the Occidental Neo-Hellenists have not yet brought forward enough the importance of this matter. However, they have not omitted it altogether. But their remarks have had a limited range. What interested them most was the question whether some form was to be considered as a Hebraism or as belonging to the normal evolution of the Greek language. The religious side of the problem prevented the linguists from approaching it as a whole; the theologians took little interest in what they considered accessory. Two methods, the one exegetical and the other philological, are confronted and have after all only a few common points. Enlightenment could have come from the East, but the Athenian linguists, although they pointed out the importance of the New Testament for the history of modern Greek, stood prudently on the reserve, for the same reason. As for the Greek exegetes, walled in by a long ecclesiastical tradition, and being by no means

philologists, the whole matter escaped their attention. For them, the Gospels remained above all liturgic books.

It is not to be wondered at, that, under these circumstances, the number of professional Hellenists who have studied the Gospels with a view to translating or commenting upon them, should be so small. Those to whom this task has been left are mostly priests or ministers, who certainly prepared for it as best they could, and whose efforts it would be unfair to disregard, but who necessarily lacked certain special knowledge. However strange it may seem, the one Greek text which has the greatest importance for mankind is one which, as far as Greek is concerned, has been studied the least seriously.

This fault was balanced in a way by the number of these workers—each one profiting by his predecessors' observations—and especially by the existence of the Latin translation of the Gospels, written in the fourth century by St. Jerome, and known as the *Vulgate*. The author used several more ancient translations. His is extraordinarily literal. For each Greek word he finds a Latin copy, even if it has a different meaning: λέγω ὅτι becomes *dico quoniam* or *dico quia*. This method has advantages, but there are also drawbacks. Of course the translation remains very near to the Greek text, which thus sometimes becomes clearer, but, on the other hand, it frequently leaves obscurities. It often happens that an expression only becomes intelligible in Latin when one thinks of the different meanings it can have in Greek. Ἵνα, for instance, is translated by *ut*, but that does not imply that the Greek word should mean 'so that,' like the Latin *ut*. Very often the Vulgate has thus caused mistranslations which would probably have been avoided by professional Hellenists translating directly from the Greek. I will give a few instances of this: Mt 3^{11} gives οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς τὰ ὑποδήματα βαστάσαι, Vulg. *cujus non sum dignus calceamenta ejus portare*. At this point I should like to make a general remark concerning the whole of this article. There is probably no one who can say that he has seen all the translations of the Gospels. Several times I happened to discover in one of them or in a commentary a meaning I thought was new. Since I have drawn the attention of the French public towards this passage, some translators may have altered the usual interpretation. However, the word is habitually translated *bear*. It is a strange idea. As a matter of fact, this verb ought to have had the meaning it has with several Greek authors (Atheneus), as in Jn 20^{15}, 'whose shoes I am not worthy to take off.' Cf. Jn 12^{6}, where the same verb probably means, as with Polybius, 'steal.' Matthew's text means the same as Mk 1^{7}. They only differ in a matter of style.

Mk 3^{4}: ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασιν ἀγαθὸν ποιῆσαι ἢ κακοποιῆσαι, ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἢ ἀποκτεῖναι; is translated: 'is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?' If the reader will think about it, he will see that it is pure nonsense. It ought to be read: 'is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, *rather than* to do evil? to save life, *rather than* to let perish?'

The same happens with the well-known passage (Mk $4^{11.12}$): 'unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: *that* seeing they may see, and not perceive . . .' All those who are familiar with the New Testament exegesis know what discussions have arisen about this passage. The Vulgate, translating ἵνα by *ut*, helped to spread the error. Now ἵνα here does not mean 'so that,' but *because*. The grammarians of the second century often enough attested this meaning. It is to be found in Epictetus and elsewhere (cf. Liddell & Scott's *Dictionary*). E. A. Sophocles pointed it out in his *Greek Lexicon*, edited in New York, and there are other instances of it in the New Testament. It seems, however, to have escaped the attention of translators and exegetes. Led astray by the classic meaning of ἵνα, and also by the corresponding passage in Isaiah, they neglected the enormous difference between the text of the Septuagint, the whole of which was quoted by Matthew, and the Hebraic text. Without any doubt whatever, ἵνα in this passage, is to be translated by *because*, and the meaning is, 'for those who are without' (*i.e.* those who remained in the street, for the crowd), all these things are done in parables, because they are looking and do not see, listening and do not hear, lest they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven them. That is to say, their hearts are hardened, as it is said in Mt 13^{15}, they will not be converted; they lack faith, do not understand at once the mystery of the Kingdom of God; that is why I have to use figurative speech. Cf. Mk $4^{33.34}$: 'and with many such

parables spake he the word unto them, *as they were able to hear it*, but without a parable spake he not unto them, but when they were alone he expounded all things to his disciples.' If this explanation is not yet considered satisfactory, the reader may look up the synoptical passage, Mt 13^{13}, where ἵνα is expressed by διὰ τοῦτο . . . ὅτι 'because.' Once more, the two Evangelists agree.

One could multiply these instances. It is not rash to say that if profane texts, studied by professional Hellenists, had been concerned, these errors would either not have been made, or not have subsisted so long.

It is remarkable that, more than once, the authors of Greek dictionaries, confiding in translators and without daring to judge by themselves—the subject appeared to them too difficult for that—should have inserted in their books errors of the kind we have just mentioned.

However, we must go back to Byzantine and modern, much more than to ancient Greek, where the Greek of the New Testament, and especially of the Gospels, is concerned. Twelve years ago I wrote that the Gospels are our first texts in modern Greek; my researches since that time have only confirmed my opinion. The explanation is not so easy to make for the readers of this magazine, many of whom are probably unacquainted with modern Greek. I shall give a few examples, however, before approaching the point I consider the most important about the Gospel problem.

Lk 14^{23} gives ἔξελθε εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς καὶ φραγμοὺς καὶ ἀνάγκασον εἰσελθεῖν, ἵνα γεμισθῇ μου ὁ οἶκος, Vulg. *compelle intrare*. I believe D. C. Hesseling, Professor of Modern Greek at Leyden University, is the first to have pointed out, that ἀναγκάζω sometimes occurs in Byzantine texts with the meaning of 'to incite, to invite'; cf. Mk 6^{45}, Mt 14^{22}. This is interesting when one remembers the interpretation given to the passage.

Jn 10^{24}: ἕως πότε τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν αἴρεις; It is understood: 'How long dost thou make us to doubt?' Pallis, in a modern Greek translation edited in Liverpool, and to which sufficient attention has perhaps not yet been paid, translates this sentence by ὡς πότε μᾶς βγάζεις τὴν ψυχή. The verb αἴρω is often in modern Greek, βγάζω= ἐκβάλλω. It is a familiar and everyday expression meaning: 'How long will you bother us like this?'

Mk 14^{65}: καὶ οἱ ὑπηρέται ῥαπίσμασιν αὐτὸν ἔλαβον. For a long time, this expression was treated with suspicion. It was also thought to be the Latin *verberibus accipere*. The scholars greeted as a wonderful discovery an equivalent expression κονδύλοις (αὐτὸν) ἔλαβεν found in a papyrus of the first century. They would have been spared much trouble had they turned towards present-day Greek. Greek peasants usually say 'take somebody by the blows, by the stick' for 'to box his ears, to beat him.' It was at that time, and still is, a common expression.

As for Mt 5^{22}, one can only understand μωρέ, and consequently the whole passage, if one remembers that the vocative is still used at the present time as a familiar or slightly contemptuous expression. One hears it in Greece every moment.

Let us go back to ἵνα. This conjunction, in modern Greek, has become very important, under the form νά. Followed by the subjunctive, it has the same value as the infinitive. It can also denote the imperative, the future, and perhaps there is not one of these meanings which cannot be found in the Gospels, especially in John. I hope soon to examine this essential matter in detail.

When one reads Jn $17^{1.2}$, one finds: Πάτερ, ἐλήλυθεν ἡ ὥρα· δόξασόν σου τὸν Υἱόν, ἵνα ὁ Υἱὸς δοξάσῃ σε, καθὼς ἔδωκας αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν πάσης σαρκός, ἵνα πᾶν ὃ δέδωκας αὐτῷ δώσῃ αὐτοῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. These ἵνα's are usually translated 'so that,' and the passage runs: 'Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' I believe this is nonsense. Now, in a popular tale edited several times, the last being in the *Chrestomathie néo-hellénique*, by Hesseling and Pernot (Paris, 1925), a young girl says to her father (p. 130, l. 8 ff.): Πατέρα, βοήθα με, νὰ σὲ βοηθῶ, νὰ περπατοῦμε πιὸ γρήγορα, 'Father, help me, that I help you (*i.e.* and I will help you), that we go (*i.e.* and we will go) faster.' In this tale, it is an allegorical sentence. The girl always speaks in comparisons, and becomes, through this peculiarity, the wife of the Prince who meets her. What she means here is: 'Father, speak to me, and I will speak to you, and thus the way shall seem shorter to us.' This use of ἵνα is most ordinary nowadays and the examples are numerous. For instance, in a popular song we find: φάτε καὶ πιέτε, βρέ (another form of μωρέ) παιδιά, χαρῆτε νὰ χαροῦμε, 'eat and drink, fellows, enjoy yourselves that we enjoy ourselves (*i.e.* and

we also will enjoy ourselves).' These two quotations help us to understand the passage from John: 'Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, and thy Son shall also glorify thee. Thou hast given him power over all flesh [=over every creature], he shall give eternal life to all thou hast given him.'

The exegetes have been discussing for centuries about Mk 2^{10}: ἵνα δὲ εἰδῆτε ὅτι ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ, translated, 'but that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, he saith to the sick of the palsy.' Are the words, 'he saith to the sick of the palsy,' to be attributed to Jesus or to Mark? If to the former, the sentence is not satisfactory. If to the latter, there is a strong anacoluthon. But if that is the case, how is it that Mt 9^{6} and Lk 5^{24} give exactly the same sentence? It is to be questioned whether one should read here εἰδῆτε or ἴδητε. I am rather inclined to admit the second hypothesis. Whatever the truth may be about this special point, I believe we see here another use of ἵνα, well known to all those who have studied modern Greek a little: 'well, you will realize (or see) that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins (since he is going to do the more difficult task of the two).' The sentence stops there, it is complete. Mark then takes up the rest of his narrative: 'he saith to the sick of the palsy.'

I could give any number of examples. A Hellenist would discover scores, no, hundreds of mistranslations in our present-day renderings of the New Testament. Some are not very important, but others are very serious.

I have already referred to the 'linguistic question,' the γλωσσικὸ ζήτημα. It is as old as Hellenism itself. Never do the Greeks seem to have been troubled by the differences between their literary and their spoken language. As far back as antiquity, literary dialects belonged to a different sphere from the spoken ones. It depended on the kind of work it was, more than on the country or on the author. Hesiod, although a Beotian, wrote in the language used in the Homeric poems, and, in the second century, Oppianus uses the same in his *Poem on Fishing*. The question was not less vital in the first few centuries after Christ than it is now. The school of the Atticists recognized the use of the Greek language as it was spoken in Athens under Pericles, and the authors of the New Testament did not in the least lack interest in this quarrel.

Mark was a simple man who wrote almost, not quite, as he spoke. Matthew seems to have been more learned. He was very strict where doctrine was concerned, but with regard to the language he rather kept to the golden mean. Luke shows more scholastic influence. He aims at what was then considered correct and elegant, and he resolutely puts aside those forms of his predecessors which he thinks too vulgar. John does not seem to trouble much about these grammatical matters. He sometimes uses rather learned verb forms, but on many points his syntax is more popular than Mark's. He is the only Evangelist who writes popular words like ψωμίον (modern Greek ψωμί), 'bread'; ἀρνίον (modern Greek ἀρνί), 'lamb'; ὀψάριον (modern Greek ψάρι), 'fish'; he makes a distinction between fish in general (ἰχθύς) and fish served on the table (ὀψάριον). When we get to the Epistles, the language becomes more affected and differs more from spoken Greek.

Some of these facts have already been noticed, but the whole of them does not seem to have been brought to light sufficiently. Most of our translations do not make these differences of language apparent, and are monotonous and uniform. On the other hand, it often happened that a pompous and bombastic style was given to passages which in the original text are simplicity itself, and in which vulgarity is by no means avoided but on the contrary intended. Besides, the exegetes have not yet fully realized the importance that discoveries of this kind have for the synoptic problem.

I believe we can accept as a principle that not one author would have thought of modifying at that time an older text to make it more common or, as they used to say then, more incorrect. It is only much later that such facts appear in the history of the Greek language. They are easily explained. Some works written in ancient or very learned Greek were no longer accessible to the public, so versions were made in spoken Greek which are real translations. Nothing of the kind happened for the New Testament, and especially the Gospels. If Mark writes such simple Greek, it is almost certainly because his learning does not allow him to go any further.

Let us now take a passage common to both Mark and Matthew, but showing differences of style, as, for instance, Mk 1^{7}: οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς

κύψας λῦσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ= Mt 3^{11}: οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς τὰ ὑποδήματα βαστάσαι. Either these passages depend on one another, or they go back to a common origin. In the first case it is hardly likely that Mark should depend on Matthew. One, ten, twenty passages of this kind would not give one a certainty. But when one sees the same proceeding running through the whole of the two Gospels, one cannot doubt any longer. Admitting the first hypothesis, we know it was Matthew who had access to Mark's text, and who modified it. Is it possible that, for passages of this kind, they may have had a common Hebraic or Greek source which each of them altered according to his own habits of language and style? I do not think that the hypothesis of a common Hebraic source is compatible with the two texts as they exist, but to discuss the details a whole book would be needed. As for the Greek source, if one admits its existence one must also admit that in passages of this kind it was, except for a few points, identical with the text of Mark we possess now. That is only putting the problem further back; besides, it is not very likely. Many critics admit nowadays that Matthew depends on Mark. Arguments taken from the language confirm this opinion.

As far as Luke is concerned the question has been much more adversely discussed. The same method will, I believe, allow us to say that Luke had access to Mark's text when he wrote his Gospel —and I will even add that he also had Matthew's, a fact very few critics admit at the present time. It would take me too long to discuss this point of view, but I shall give two instances, so as to show the readers what the principle of the method is.

I will not choose the first on purpose to suit my theory, I shall simply take the same as before:

Mk $1^{7.8}$.	Mt 3^{11}.	Lk 3^{16}.
	ἐγὼ μὲν ὑμᾶς βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι εἰς μετάνοιαν·	ἐγὼ μὲν ὕδατι βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς·
ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου ὀπίσω μου,	ὁ δὲ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἰσχυρότερός μού ἐστιν,	ἔρχεται δὲ ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου
οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς κύψας λῦσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ·	οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς τὰ ὑποδήματα βαστάσαι·	οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς λῦσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ·
ἐγὼ ἐβάπτισα ὑμᾶς ὕδατι, αὐτὸς δὲ βαπτίσει ὑμᾶς ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.	αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί.	αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί.

In this passage Luke's version is simply a mixture of Mark and Matthew. He suppressed Matthew's εἰς μετάνοιαν because he did not think it a good addition to Mark's text. Matthew probably hesitated over Mark's vulgar expression: 'of whom I am not worthy to unloosen the latchet of his shoes'; therefore τὰ ὑποδήματα αὐτοῦ βαστάσαι. But why has not Luke, who usually avoids vulgarisms, rather followed Matthew than Mark in this case? Partly because he disliked βαστάσαι in the meaning of 'to take off.' Like Matthew he considers that κύψας is an unnecessary word, a fault in style, and consequently he suppresses it.

The second example will be the well-known sentence ὕπαγε Σατανᾶ, 'get thee hence, Satan,' which is to be found in Mt 4^{10}, but which Luke does not give in the synoptical passage. This difference has been explained in many ways. Did these words figure in the source Q, which many of the critics admit for Matthew and Luke? Did Matthew add them to the source? Did Luke suppress them? It seemed impossible to find any definite means of bridging the difficulty. Once more linguistic arguments can solve it. We are still examining Greek grammar. Luke uses different forms of the verb ὑπάγω, 'to go,' the imperative plural ὑπάγετε, 'go,' but never the imperative singular ὕπαγε. Each of the eight times when he finds this imperative in Mark and Matthew, he replaces it either by a synonym or by a word having quite a different meaning, or else he suppresses it. When one is used to his way of writing, the idea which immediately strikes one is, ὕπαγε must have had a vulgar meaning. It is not due to chance that the two instances of this form given by our lexicons should be taken, one from Euripides' *Cyclops*, the other from Aristophanes' *Nubes*. Another imperative, very near to the former, ἄπαγε, was taken up by the Latin as an interjection: apage! The form ὕπαγε, accepted without hesitation by Mark

and Matthew, seemed to Luke a vulgar word which he could not allow to pass the lips of Jesus. So he suppressed it in Matthew's text. I shall not examine here the other alterations he made in the temptations, as his predecessor had given them, and I shall only refer the reader to the article I wrote on the subject in the *Proceedings of the Amsterdam Academy*, 1924, div. Letterkunde, part 57, series A n°=5). The suppression of ὕπαγε indicates that Luke used Matthew, but I believe this fact is also made clear by the way he treated the whole passage.

The more I study the Synoptics, the more I am convinced that many of their differences can be explained by literary or grammatical arguments. It happens often enough that linguistics show harmony between the Synoptics where hitherto discord had been seen. But the striking point about it all is that every Evangelist used the text of his predecessor or predecessors very freely. This statement will, no doubt, upset many ideas, but one fact is certain: if there are books about which the truth may not be hidden, whatever the consequences may be, it is most decidedly the Gospels.

Literature.

MR. MIDDLETON MURRY'S LIFE OF JESUS.

The worst way to estimate such a book as Mr. Murry has written—*The Life of Jesus* (Cape; 10s. 6d. net)—is to lay down a 'Catholic' standard and weigh this 'life' by that. More than with most books, we need to bring sympathy and understanding if we are to appreciate the new interpretation of Jesus. Mr. Murry is one of the foremost literary critics of to-day. It is a surprise (though why should it be?) to find a man of his prepossessions dealing with the greatest of all problems: Who was Jesus Christ? He tells us why he has done so. 'I do not propose to offer an apology for this book. I wrote it because I needed to write it. The time had come when it had become urgent upon me to make up my mind about Jesus. For reasons which concern myself alone I desired, if I could, to make him wholly *real* to myself. The Jesus who is presented in these pages is simply the Jesus who is real to me—the Jesus in whose real existence I can, and in whom I do, *believe*.' Who could read sentences like these without sympathy? Here is a literary critic of uncommon ability and insight who confesses that he *must* come to a decision about Jesus. No one could go very far with such an inquirer without feeling that, whether the interpretation is right or wrong, at least he will have the company of an earnest, lofty, and deeply religious spirit.

Mr. Murry naïvely claims that his training as a literary critic may be the equivalent of the more specialized training of the professor of divinity. We are afraid there is good evidence in the book that this claim is not wholly justified! But this training has at least had one good result in this connexion. It has shown him the arbitrariness of a certain type of 'advanced' criticism of the Gospels. It 'repels me as a man, and irritates me as a critic.' Indeed, one of the features of the 'Life' is the persistent effort of the writer to keep as close as possible to the narrative as we have it. When there is miracle, indeed, like the feeding of the five thousand, he skilfully and gracefully eludes it. He does not believe in miracle in the ordinary sense. He thinks Jesus' repudiation of it at His Temptation means that He never worked or professed to work miracles. The writer's training as a literary critic doubtless enables him to follow faithfully the narrative of the evangelists while quietly eliminating the miraculous. His method is ingenious but far from persuasive. At the same time Mr. Murry frankly asserts that Jesus had powers and wrought deeds which 'it would tax modern medical science either to deny or to explain.'

It would be easy to lay one's finger on mistakes, or on views which will not easily be accepted. It is difficult to imagine how, for example, Mr. Murry reached the extraordinary conviction that Jesus arranged with Judas for His arrest. Again, the writer in concluding his chapter on the Temptation says that the spirit of evil 'left him and never