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WILLIAM THE SILENT.*

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The sixteenth century was one of the most important epochs in the history of mankind. It was the age of Queen Elizabeth and Lord Bacon and William Shakespeare. It was the age of Martin Luther and John Calvin and John Knox. It broke the shackles of ignorance and superstition and tyranny which for centuries had bound down the human race. It introduced a new era in religious freedom and intellectual freedom and political freedom. The most powerful monarch in the world in the sixteenth century was Charles the Fifth. He had a vast empire. It included Germany, Austria and Lombardy, that is, the northern part of Italy. It included in the south also the kingdom of Naples, the kingdom of Sicily and the kingdom of Sardinia. It included the whole of Spain, at that time the richest and strongest country on the globe. It included Burgundy, that is, the eastern part of France. And it included the Netherlands, or what we now know as Belgium and Holland. It comprised, therefore, a very large part of the continent of Europe. Then, too, in the new world, it included the West Indies and Florida and Mexico, and also Peru in South America. The sun never set on his dominions. He was the autocrat of half the world.

* A Reformation Day Address to Young People, based chiefly on "The Rise of the Dutch Republic," by J. L. Motley.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

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We are accustomed to say that the New Testament was written in Greek, but such a statement is lacking in definiteness. Chaucer wrote in English, and so did Tennyson, but there is a difference, and as there are divers kinds of Greek we must specify what kind is intended by that general term.

The Greek belongs to the Indo-European family of languages, with a close affinity with other members of that family, such as Sanscrit, Latin and the Celtic languages. Of its origin and early history but little is known. It was already an old language in the days of Homer, 1,000 B. C. Its habitat was Greece, and other lands bordering on the Aegean and Ionian seas. By reason of the peculiar topography of Greece, with its mountain ranges running North and South, as well as East and West, there was comparatively little intercourse between the different sections, and at no time was there a strong central government, but a number of petty states, each jealous of the other. Under such circumstances it was inevitable that dialectical differences should arise.

But apart from local influences, there were other forces at work. Language is a living organism, a growth, and time brought many changes, just as in our own language. The language spoken by the Greeks to-day is a lineal descendant of that of Homer or Xenophon, but there has been both growth and deterioration, and we can hardly realize the connection between the two.

Leaving out of account the changes that have taken place in the language since the third century of the Christian era, the most important dialects or forms of the language that have come down to us are as follows:

(1) The Aeolic, at once the oldest, and the one with the closest affinity with the Latin and other Indo-Germanic languages, and known to us through the writings of Sappho, Alcaeus and Erinna.

(2) The Doric, a highland dialect, delighting in broad and rough sounds, and immortalized by the Odes of Pindar and the Idyls of Theocritus.

(3) The Ionic, a soft and vocal dialect, delighting in vowel sounds, and avoiding harsh combinations of consonants, exemplified in Homer and Herodotus.

(4) The Attic, being a modification of the Ionic, spoken principally by the inhabitants of Attica and the Ionian colonies in Asia Minor. In this dialect the Greek language attained its highest perfection in the fifth and fourth centuries B. C. It is represented in such works as the Tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripedes, the Histories of Thucydides and Xenophon, the Orations of Demosthenes, and the Dialogues of Plato. Gradually the Attic came to be the accepted standard to which all Greek writers aimed to conform.

(5) The Koiné or "Common" dialect. Under Alexander the Greek-speaking people, for the first time in their history, came under one central government, and so became unified as never before. His army of conquest was composed of Greek-speaking people of every description, but in this heterogeneous mass a process of assimilation in language, as well as in other respects, was inevitable. Into this great melting pot were thrown dialectical differences, and out of it came a composite language known as the Koiné, destined to become a veritable world-language.

Naturally the Attic, which was then in the ascendency, was by far the most important factor, but the other dialects contributed their share.

Properly speaking, the Koiné was not a dialect at all, but a *language*, the language of the Greek-speaking world. Not only was it the language of Greeks, but the army of Alexander carried it with them as they swept on from country to country, making it a *Lingua Franca* for the known world of that day,

and the work thus begun was carried on by his successors. Another element that contributed to the spread of the Greek language was the rise of the Roman Empire. The Greeks could not withstand the Roman arms, but the literature and language of the conquered gained the mastery over the conquerors. The Roman writers were to a great extent the copyists of the Greeks who preceded them. To a marvelous extent the Greek language supplanted the Latin. It became the medium of national intercourse throughout the whole empire, from the Lybian Desert to the Rhine, and from the Euphrates to the Straits of Gibraltar. It was the language of government, law, literature, diplomacy and trade. In the Eternal City itself it was spoken by nearly every one, and the Latin language was strange in the streets. Plutarch says that he lived in Rome without knowing a single word of the tongue of Cicero and Cæsar.

Throughout the empire the people as a rule were bi-lingual, speaking of course their native tongue, whatever that might be, but knowing the Greek as well. Whether in the cities of half-civilized Lycaonia, or in Jerusalem, the hot-bed of Jewish exclusiveness and of racial pride, Paul could address his audience in Greek, with the assurance that he was not speaking in an unknown tongue. He himself uses the terms Greek and Barbarian as correlative, and as embracing all mankind. It has been well said that "it was an epoch in the world's history, when the babel of tongues was hushed in the wonderful language of Greece." Christ came in "the fulness of time," and one of the most important elements in that fulness was the world-wide spread of the Greek language.

In every language there is a sharp distinction between the literary language and the vernacular: the language of the scholar as it appears in books and studied discourses, and the language of the street and of social intercourse. The lingo of the street Arab is all "Dutch" to the cloistered scholar, while his classic periods are equally unintelligible to the dwellers in the slums. Between these two extremes there is to be found every gradation, in some cases approximating to the one and

in other cases to the other. Even in the palmiest days of Attic supremacy, along side of the literary, there was to be found the vernacular Attic. We are not to suppose for a moment that the busy toilers spoke in the style of a Xenophon, or that the uneducated slaves were Platonic in their utterances, or conformed to all the rules of the grammarians. So in the days of the Koiné, the literary and the vernacular, the language of the scholar and of the peasant, existed side by side, with the various intervening gradations of speech.

The literary Koiné being a normal evolution of the literary Attic, writers sought with varying degrees of success to follow the Attic models. But books are intended for other readers besides scholars, and there is always a tendency upon the part of the literary language to become assimilated to the vernacular. In the case of the Koiné, by reason of the mingling of the dialects, and the influx of new ideas, there was a considerable development upon the part of the vernacular, and this in turn reacted upon the literary language, and as the result the latter differs considerably from the Attic models. Josephus is an example of the literary Koiné. He wrote his Jewish War in Aramaic, and then with the aid of Greek scholars translated it into Greek, but his Antiquities was written in Greek, probably with aid of a similar character, as some parts of it are decidedly Atticistic. Other writers of the literary Koiné are Philo, Plutarch, Polybius, etc., each varying in different degrees from the Attic, and conforming to the vernacular Koiné. But it is with the vernacular Koiné that we are chiefly concerned in this discussion. By the first century A. D. it had crystallized into a stable language, and for three centuries thereafter underwent but little change, as shown by the papyri. It was the spoken language of the Roman world at this time, and it was in this language that the apostles and others proclaimed among the nations of the earth the glad tidings of salvation.

We come now to the more specific question of the relation of the Greek of the New Testament to other forms of that language. Says Deissmann: "The modern conception of New

Testament Greek is not altogether a new thing: our advances in knowledge rarely are. Under the late Roman Empire, when the old learning and culture came into hostile collision with Christianity, Pagan controversialists spoke mockingly of the language of the New Testament as *a boatman's idiom*. The Christian Apologists accepted the taunt, and made the despised simplicity of that language their well-warranted boast. The hopeless attempt to prove the Bible as a whole, and the New Testament in particular to be artistically perfect was first made by Latin apologists." (Light From The Ancient East, p. 65.) This question came to the front again as one of the by-products of the Reformation. Under the leadership of Stephanus, the Purists vainly contended that it was classic Greek, upon the presumption that God would of course use the most perfect form of the language to convey His will, and even now there are those who are loath to admit that there is to be found in the sacred pages any faulty grammar, or mistakes in spelling, as this would be a reflection upon the Holy Ghost! Erasmus and the Hebraist however sought to account for all alleged divergencies by the influence of the Hebrew or Aramaic. The contention of the Purists was clearly untenable, but the Hebraists, having vanquished their opponents, had troubles of their own. No parallel for the language of the New Testament could be found in Josephus, Philo or any other writer of that period. The Septuagint was clearly translation-Greek, "a written Semitic Greek which no one ever spoke, or used for literary purposes either before or after." With the light they had before them, nothing was left for Winer and other grammarians of his school but to make the "Biblical Greek," as it was called, an essentially *isolated* language. Schaff, in his Companion to the Greek Testament (p. 25), defines "Apostolic Greek" as follows: "It belongs to the Hellenistic dialect, as distinct from the classic Greek, and it shares with the Septuagint its *sacred and Hebraizing character*, as distinct from the secular Hellenic Literature; but it differs from all previous dialects by its spirit and contents. It is the Greek used for the first time for a new religion. In

this respect it stands alone, and *belongs to but one period*, the period of the first proclamation and introduction of Christianity."

In the same strain, Cremer, in the introduction to his Theological Lexicon, quoting Rothe with approval, says: "We may appropriately speak of *a language of the Holy Ghost*. For in the Bible it is evident that the Holy Spirit has been at work, moulding for itself a distinctively religious mode of expression out of the language of the country which it has chosen as its sphere, and transforming the linguistic elements which it found ready to hand, and even conceptions already existing, into a shape and form appropriate to itself, and all its own" (p. iv). Even Thayer, in Hastings' Bible Dictionary, insists upon defining it as Hellenistic Greek, i. e., Greek as spoken by the Jews; and as late as 1895 Moulton defined it as Hebraic Greek. It thus appears that the language of the New Testament was regarded as being "neither fish, flesh nor fowl," a dialect spoken by a certain class only, and for a limited period, and one in which no other book was ever written, a Jonah's gourd which came up in a night and perished in a night, a mere eddy in the stream of human language.

But while this view was very generally held, there were not wanting misgivings as to its correctness. In 1850, Professor Robinson, in the preface to his Lexicon of the New Testament, while defining it as "the later Greek language, as spoken by foreigners of Hebrew stock, and applied by them to subjects on which it had never been employed by native Greek writers," goes on to say that it was "*the spoken language of common life, and not that of books* with which they became acquainted, but they spoke it as foreigners, as Hebrews." He was right in identifying it with the vernacular, but did not recognize the fact that it was the vernacular of the Greek-speaking world. In 1863 Bishop Lightfoot, in one of his lectures, with prophetic vision, said, "If we could only recover letters that ordinary people wrote to each other, without any thought of being literary, we should have the greatest possible

help for the understanding of the New Testament generally." That wish has been abundantly fulfilled, and thousands of such letters and documents have made us acquainted with the language used by the common people of that day, not by the Jews alone, but by every Greek-speaking people of that age. Let us now turn our attention to those writings which this renowned scholar longed to see, but died without the sight.

Paper made from the papyrus plant was used "from the days of old." According to Kenyon, the oldest papyrus writing known to be in existence is an account sheet which is conjecturally dated about 3360 B. C.

The use of this writing material can be proven to extend over a period of 3,500 years, and is still made on a small scale in Sicily to-day.

The sheets were about the size of ordinary writing paper, but for literary purposes they were joined together in a roll, sometimes as much as forty-five yards in length. In the dry climate of the East, often in the rubbish heap, covered by the sand of the desert, thousands of these sheets have been preserved. The first recorded purchase of them by visitors was in 1778, when a dealer in antiquities bought a roll, and looked on while fifty or more were burned for the sake of the aromatic odor. Since that time enormous quantities, in almost every language, varying in age from 1,000 to nearly 5,000 years, have been brought to light. Some of the greatest finds have been in the rubbish heaps of Fayum and Oxyrhynchus. Says Deissmann: "The papyri are almost invariably non-literary in character. For instance, they include legal documents of all possible kinds: leases, bills and receipts, marriage contracts, bills of divorce, wills, decrees by authority, denunciations, suits for punishment of wrong-doers, minutes of judicial proceedings, tax papers in great numbers. Then there are letters and notes, school-boys' exercise books, magical texts, horoscopes, diaries, &c. As regards their contents these non-literary documents are as many sided as life itself.

Those in Greek, several thousand in number, cover a period of, roughly, a thousand years. The oldest go back to the early

Ptolemaic period, i. e., the third century B. C.; the most recent bring us well into the Byzantine period. All the chequered history of Hellenized and Romanized Egypt in that thousand years passes before our eyes on those tattered sheets." (Light From the Ancient East, p. 29.)

These writings take us back to the days of the apostles, and introduce to us the people among whom they moved. They lift for us the veil which has so long hid them from our sight. We see them not on dress parade, but while off guard, wholly unconscious of being photographed.

We hear, not their set speeches on formal occasions, but their familiar intercourse one with another, as they unburden themselves in their letters. Take as a single illustration this letter, written about the second or third century by an obstreperous youth to his father, whom he boldly charges with cheating him out of a coveted visit to Alexandria.

"Theon to Theon his father, greeting. Thou hast done well. Thou hast not carried me with thee to the town. If thou wilt not carry me with thee to Alexandria, I will not write thee a letter, nor speak thee, nor wish thee health. But if thou goest to Alexandria, I will not take hand from thee, nor greet thee again henceforth. If thou wilt not carry me, these things come to pass. My mother also said to Archelaus, 'he driveth me mad: away with him.' But thou hast done well! Thou hast sent me great gifts—locust beans! They deceived us there on the 12th day, when thou didst sail. Finally, send for me, I beseech thee. If thou sendest not, I will not eat nor drink. Even so. Fare thee well I pray. Tybi 18."

On the verso the address: "Deliver to Theon from Theonas his son."

(Light From the Ancient East, pp. 188, 189.)

What a picture of himself is drawn by this boy in this slovenly-written letter, with all its insolence towards an indulgent and cringing father, over whom he lords it in true twentieth century style! Is it any wonder that the apostle felt constrained to write, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right"?

But important as the papyri are, they are not our only source of knowledge of the vernacular of that day. Broken pieces of pottery, technically known as "ostraka," were quite frequently used as writing material, especially by the poor. Many of these, too, have been collected and studied, not without profit. Still a third source is to be found in the numerous inscriptions of that age, and more particularly those of a Christian origin. Naturally, these inscriptions being more formal and lasting, the language appears in them in its best clothes, while "in the papyri it appears in its corduroys."

Even after these writings became known to scholars, for a considerable period, but little attention was given to them, and their bearing on the New Testament was not realized. In the closing decade of the nineteenth century Deissmann began to point out clearly their true significance, and their bearing on the New Testament, and he was the first to break away entirely from the old theory of the isolation of the language of the New Testament. In this he was quickly followed by J. H. Moulton, W. M. Ramsay, A. T. Robertson and others, so that in the last ten or fifteen years there has been an almost complete revolution among scholars on this point, and it may now be regarded as conclusively proven that the language of the New Testament is none other than the vernacular Koiné, the language of the common people.

Thayer, in his *Lexicon*, gives a list of 767 words, which he claims as "Biblical," i. e., New Testament Greek, but marks 76 of them as "late," and 89 as "doubtful," leaving 604 as strictly "Biblical." The study of the papyri and the inscriptions has steadily reduced this list, until now Deissmann admits only 50 out of 5,000, only one per cent., as belonging to this class, all the rest having been found in common use. Thayer also gives a list of 322 words in common use, but with strictly "Biblical" significations. Obviously there are very many words which differ in signification as applied to different subjects, and the fact that a word has a special sense when used with reference to religion does not by any means show that the language of religion is a distinct dialect. But

more than this, many words and expressions which were once supposed to be used in a peculiar sense in the New Testament, have been found in the papyri with precisely the same meaning. Robertson, in his *Historical Grammar*, gives a list of 157 such words, and the list is by no means complete, as new words are added to it continually.

The minor question of the extent of the Semitic element in the New Testament is still under discussion. The older view that it was Hebraistic to such an extent as to constitute it a distinct dialect is no longer tenable, and the only question is the amount of that influence.

Deissmann admits only a "negligible" amount, while Moulton admits none outside of translation Greek, as in quotations from the Septuagint.

This latter is perhaps an extreme position, but the few Semitisms that undoubtedly occur, especially in Syntax, are insufficient to differentiate this language from the vernacular of that day.

The Koiné differs from the classic Greek in its vocabulary, forms and Syntax, and a grammar and Lexicon of it, and especially of the vernacular, would throw more light on the New Testament than all the classic grammars and Lexicons in existence.

While the New Testament writers without exception wrote in the vernacular, it by no means follows that they used the language of the slums, or indulged in slang and vulgarisms. They were decent men, with varying degrees of education, men refined and uplifted by more or less contact with the peerless man of Galilee, and they wrote in language that all could understand, without resorting to the favorite device of some moderns, who imagine that they cannot make themselves understood without resorting to the language of the slums.

That there are literary elements in these writings is undeniable. Indeed it would be passing strange if men like the author of Hebrews or Paul or Luke did not show literary affinities. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews was evidently a scholar, and his sentences show a finish which is un-

mistakeable. Luke's introduction to his gospel is in the style of Thucydides. Paul, too, again and again, shows that "while his bodily presence was weak, yet his letters were weighty and powerful," and while he discarded the philosophical style and the specious rhetoric of the sophists, he shows himself a master of both logic and rhetoric.

The most popular language is to be found in the Synoptics, and even Luke makes constant use of colloquial forms. James and John, Peter and Jude show the vernacular very distinctly, though James shows a surprising acquaintance with Greek, for a thorough-going Jew, while Revelation shows a wider divergence from accepted forms and usages than any other portion of the New Testament.

To sum up, then, the language of the New Testament is not a peculiar type of Greek, except in so far as the peculiarities are due to the subject treated, and the idiosyncracies of the individual writers.

"It is the language of men's business and bosoms. It is the language of life, not of the study or cloister," says Robertson, and in the language of Deissmann, "The book of the people has become, in the course of the centuries, the book of mankind."