

# The Unity of the Greek Language and Its Impingement on the Exegesis of the New Testament

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## 1. The problem

When in 1528 Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote his book on how Greek and Latin were supposedly pronounced in antiquity<sup>1</sup>, little did he realize that the line he struck out would determine not only the pronunciation but also the approach to the study of the Greek language and its literature for almost five centuries. For, not only did Greek since then come to be pronounced by European students in a novel way, but also its long, literary history was divided into two broad periods: ancient and modern. The fall of the Byzantine Empire on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 1453 was understood to imply the end of Greek history and existence. Having preached their funeral sermon over [Hellas](#), the various nations of Western Europe, not implausibly, considered themselves to be the legitimate heirs to the legacy of Hellas, since they had already

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<sup>1</sup> Erasmus, *De recta Latini Graecique sermonis pronuntiatione dialogus*, Basiliae 1528.

been the beneficiaries of her cultural heritage twice: first through Rome and more recently through the revival of Greek letters by Greek scholars active in the West.<sup>2</sup>

Henceforth European scholars concentrated their research interests on the classical literature, but because of their religious interest in the New Testament (and LXX) as well, they extended the scope of their purview as far as early Christian times. The rest of the history of the Greek language and its literature were considered unimportant, and were relegated to the dustbin<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> For a list of such scholars, see my *The Error of Erasmus and Un-Greek pronunciations of Greek*”, *Filologia Neotestamentaria*, no. 16, Vol. VIII, (1995), 151-85”, p. 154-5.

<sup>3</sup> Horrocks, too, speaks of the neglect of all post-classical Greek in his *Greek. A History of the Language and Its Speakers*, London-New York, 1997, Preface, xvi. Browning, has the following to say: “The study of Greek in England, as in most other countries, has traditionally been concentrated upon the classical language. The New Testament was left to theologians, and a nineteenth-century schoolboy who attempted to imitate it in his prose composition would have got short shrift from his teacher. The mediaeval and modern stages of the language were largely ignored. Today the situation has changed. There is widespread interest in Modern Greek....Classical scholars no longer regard it beneath their dignity to concern themselves with the Greek of the middle ages and modern times” (*Medieval and Modern Greek*, Cambridge: CUP, 1969, Preface vii.). This interest in Neohellenic is even clearer in F. A. Adrados, *Geschichte der griechischen Sprache. Von den Anfängen bis heute*, Tübingen-Basel: A. Francke, 2001. Adrados not only

One example of this attitude is Friedrich Blaß, whose *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* has nurtured NT scholars for more than one hundred years. Blaß regarded the Modern Greeks along with the Byzantines as μιξοβάρβαροι<sup>4</sup> (“half-barbarians”) and condemned *Neohellenic* as “barbarous”, “corrupt” and “worthless”,<sup>5</sup> despite the fact that the three editions of his book on the pronunciation of Greek, leave no doubt that he had no idea of the phonological laws operating in Neohellenic.<sup>6</sup> Nor does he appear to have been more

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gives about equal space to the various periods of the Greek language, but he also emphasizes the influence of the entire history of Greek on the European languages. In spite of certain inexactitudes about the modern period, his book shows clearly that he is aware of the unity of the Greek language from the beginning to the present.

<sup>4</sup> F. Blaß, *Über die Aussprache des Griechischen*, Berlin, (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1870, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1882, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1888), 1<sup>st</sup> ed. p. 8: “Wohl sind die Neugriechen und waren die Byzantiner μιξοβάρβαροι”. Adrados, *Geschichte der griechische Sprache*, 286, mentions the rejection by Friedrich II of Prussia of Voltaire’s suggestion to help the struggling people of Greece to free themselves from the Turks on this very ground, that the Greeks were “unwürdigen und erniedrigt” and their language was “vollkommen verdorben”.

<sup>5</sup> Blaß, *Über die Aussprache*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. pp. 7-8: “Die Sprache eines Homer oder Platon nach derjenigen der ... verkommenen Byzantiner umzuwandeln, wäre die reine Barbarei... Folglich ist die historische Grundlage (i.e. the Modern Greek pronunciation) eine *gänzlich nichtige und wertlose* (Blaß’s italics)”.

<sup>6</sup> See my “The Error of Erasmus and Un-Greek Pronunciations of Greek”, *Filologia Neotestamentaria*, no. 16, Vol. VIII, (1995), 151-85”, p.152, n. 2 , “Such inexactitudes

successful with regards to the morphological processes at work. The remarks of Hatzidakis, the founder of Linguistics in Greece, are apposite here:

“On account of their great ignorance of the linguistic development from post-classical times to the present as well as of the laws according to which this was accomplished, philologists are usually content to treat modern Greek as a sickly offshoot of ancient Greek or as corrupt and barbarous Greek, whose careful investigation and knowledge, it is claimed, is not worth the trouble”.<sup>7</sup>

Blaß’s unfounded statements<sup>8</sup> have played an important role in withholding from New Testament scholars the truth about *Neohellenic*.

Thus, the Greek language was atomized, and—what is of special importance for us—NT scholars, in so far as they advanced beyond the essentials of the NT,

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about Modern Greek abound in F. Blaß, *Über die Aussprache des Griechischen* ...2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 83 (= 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 97), 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 103, while his unacquaintance with Modern Greek phonology is seen throughout his book (cf. e.g. the 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 132 ff.)”

<sup>7</sup> Χατζιδάκις, *Μεσαιωνικά και Νέα Έλληνικά* (= *MNE*) Vol. I, 360.

<sup>8</sup> It is hardly necessary here to refer to Blaß’s contemporary, Falmereyer’s myth, according to which the entire Greek nation was wiped out, and Hellas was reinhabited by Slavs and Albanians (refuted long ago by K. Paparhegoroulos [*Περὶ ἐποικήσεως σλαυϊκῶν τινῶν φύλων εἰς τὴν Πελοπόννησον*, "Αθήναι 1843] and by G. Hatzidakis. Cf. also G. Babiniotis, *Ἡ γλῶσσα τῆς Μακεδονίας. Ἡ ἀρχαία Μακεδονική καὶ ἡ ψευδώνυμη γλῶσσα τῶν Σκοπίων*, "Αθήνα 1993).

concerned themselves with classical Greek, though during the past hundred years that interest was directed to the Egyptian papyri and some Hellenistic writings.

To be sure, toward the end of the XIXth century the German scholar, Karl Krumbacher, did much to establish Byzantine studies as an independent discipline, and a few other scholars, like A. Thumb and P. Kretschmer, showed interest even in the neohellenic dialects. However, for most NT scholars these areas of the language have remained exotic. Accordingly, when I once asked a NT Professor what he thought the relation of Neohellenic to the Greek of the NT was, he answered: “I suppose, something like the relation of Swedish or Norwegian to the Runic”!

Thus, although I am not oblivious of the great contributions to the study of Greek by, for example, German and British scholarship, Erasmus’ error in propagating his novel pronunciation of Greek and Blaß’s unfounded disparagement of Neohellenic have damaged NT studies not only because the pronunciation applied has obscured many facts and hindered us from interesting insights into the NT text and its text-critical problems, but, more significantly, because it has deprived us from important light that is shed on the morphology and especially the syntax of the NT by later literature<sup>9</sup>; and finally, by depriving

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<sup>9</sup> With regards to the Greek pronunciation in ancient times and Erasmus’s error and its consequences, see Chrys C. Caragounis, “The Error of Erasmus”, *Filologia Neotestamentaria*, no. 16, Vol. VIII, (1995), 151-85, and the more

scholarship of the proper parameters for its linguistic research.

This last point can be exemplified by the industrious work of Stanley Porter. Porter wrote an impressive book of 492 packed pages to teach us something that is simply not true. Porter applied certain insights from modern linguistics to his analysis of the Greek verb, and came to the strange conclusion that the Greek verb does not express Time—but only Aspect. He is of the opinion that not only the “Grammarians” but also that “the Greeks themselves were fooled”!<sup>10</sup> Porter’s denial of one half of the meaning of the Greek verb is the result of separating the ancient phase from the modern phase of the language, treating Greek as a dead language, misconstruing ancient authors who are unable to protest, and claiming that “there are no native speakers to give opinions about the use of their language”! Porter’s claim is, however, flatly contradicted *i.a.* by Neohellenic, which has the same verb system as the ancient phase of the language, and

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detailed discussion in my *The Development of Greek and the New Testament. Morphology, Syntax, Phonology, and Textual Transmission* (WUNT 167), Tübingen: Mohr 2006, pp. 339-96.

<sup>10</sup> PORTER, *Verbal Aspect* 81. One may rightly wonder – if PORTER’s position were correct, namely, that the Greeks, too, mistakenly thought that they expressed time through their verbs – do not their texts, therefore, express the time they intended whether they were right or wrong? Moreover, what other final court of appeal than the natural speakers of a language is there to settle an issue such as this? Can a modern theory falsify the witness of the natural users of a language?

shows that from the time of Homeros to the present there has not been a day when Greeks have not used their verbs to express Time (as well as Aspect), and that both of these elements are equally accentuated<sup>11</sup>. Porter's work, therefore, is an excellent example of how far a scholar may stray who does not take seriously the unity of the Hellenic language and how its later stages can elucidate its earlier stages.

## 2. The Phases of the Greek Language

The Greek language is the oldest continuously spoken and written language in Europe. Its written documentation takes us back to 1500 B.C., while its spoken form is much older. Unlike Latin, which today lives only through its daughter languages,<sup>12</sup> Greek is still the same language, having sustained the changes imposed by time, culture, religion, science and world-view. If we were to indicate the various phases of the Greek language, we might do it by means of the following table:

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<sup>11</sup> I have given a detailed critique of this viewpoint in *The Development of the Greek and the New Testament*. pp. 316-336.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. French, Italian, Romanian, Spanish, Portugese.

## I. Ancient Greek (1500 B.C. - A.D. 600)

*Linear B* = Mycenaean (XV-XII B.C. Linear B tablets)

*E* = Epic (800-500 B.C.: Homeros, Hesiodos, etc.)

*A* = Classical (mainly Attic) 500 - 300 B.C.)

*P* = Post-classical (300 B.C. - A.D. 600)

*H* = Hellenistic (300 B.C. - A.D. 300)

*EH* = Early Hellenistic (300 B.C.-1

B.C.)<sup>13</sup>

*LH* = Late Hellenistic (A.D. 1-300)

*PB* = Proto-Byzantine (A.D. 300 - 600)

## II. Modern Greek (A.D. 600 - Present)

*B* = Byzantine (A.D. 600 - 1000) (Early Neohellenic)

*LB* = Late Byzantine (A.D. 1000 - 1500) (Middle Neohellenic)

*N* = Neohellenic (A.D. 1500 - 2000) (Late Neohellenic)

*K* = *Katharevousa* (official till 1976: puristic, atticistic or literary MGr)

*D* = *Demotike* (following the popular oral tradition)

*NK* = Neohellenic Koine (official since 1976: blending *K* and *D*)

To exemplify the lexical continuity, I might perhaps mention that such NT words as ἄγγελος ('angel'), ἀγρός ('field'), σῖτος ('wheat'), τέκτων ('carpenter'), and τόσος ('so much') are found in the oldest written form of Greek, the so-called Linear B tablets (XV-XII

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<sup>13</sup> The division of Hellenistic into *early* and *late* is made in order to facilitate the registration of changes in regard to the NT.



B.C.), and are still used today in Greece, after 3,500 years unchanged!

### 3. Why is the Diachronic Approach Important?

As was mentioned above, the written tradition of the Greek language stretches over a period of 3,500 years. During this period the language has been constantly subjected to slow change, though, at the same time, it has been able to retain its basic structure intact. The NT makes its appearance somewhere in the middle of this long period. Beginning with Alexander's Empire, which brought almost all the Greeks under its umbrella, the Attic dialect, which had previously become the official language of Makedonia, began to receive elements from the other dialects. It entered a course of simplification: austere Attic elements began to fall away and to be replaced by equivalents from the other dialects; irregular Attic forms gave way to more regular ones; complex Attic constructions were substituted for by simpler compositional patterns; the vocabulary was expanded and neologisms were created.<sup>14</sup> In other words, this was a time of

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<sup>14</sup> For the time being I content myself with presenting a few indications: for example, Attic (=A) γλῶττα, θάλαττα, λεός, νεός, τήμερον gave way to γλῶσσα, θάλασσα, λαός, ναός, σήμερα (all in NT and *Neohellenic* [= N] ). Irregular forms such as μαθητρίς gave place to the more regular form μαθήτρια (Acts 9:36, so N ). A certain regularization took place with

momentous changes in vocabulary, morphology and syntax. This process went on for 900 years, from Alexander (335 B.C.) to Justinian (A.D. 565), which may thus be called the period of transition from ancient to modern Greek. During this period Greek laid aside its ancient, classical garb and assumed a modern one. It was during this period that the foundations of *Neohellenic* were laid, and it was during this period that the New Testament was composed. This implies that the new formations, the neologisms and the post-classical constructions of the NT cannot be explained by reference to the older Greek. This is so, because the new data either appears for the first time or become more frequent during the period of transition, while

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regards to personal endings. Thus, the 1<sup>st</sup> Aorist endings -α, -ας, -ε, -αμεν, -ατε, -αν and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Aorist endings -ον, -ες, -ε, -ομεν, -ετε, -ον were combined to give the endings -α, -ες, -ε, -αμεν, -ετε, -αν (e.g. εἶπα, εἶπες, εἶπε, εἶπαμεν, εἶπατε, εἶπαν, ἦλθα, ἦλθες, ἦλθε, ἦλθαμεν, ἦλθατε, ἦλθαν [later Gr and N]). Circumlocutionary expressions, such as *A* φύλαξ τοῦ δεσποτηρίου becomes δεσμοφύλαξ (NT: 3 x, also *N*), *A* καλὸς κάγαθός becomes καλοκάγαθος (*N*), *A* νοῦν ἔχων becomes νουνεχής (*N*), *A* νοῦν ἔχόντως becomes νουνεχῶς (Mk 12:34, also *N*), *A* αἰχμάλωτον λαμβάνω/ἄγω becomes αἰχμαλωτεύω (Eph 4:8) and αἰχμαλωτίζω (NT 4 x; so *N*), *A* αἰχμάλωτον γίνεσθαι becomes αἰχμαλωτίζομαι (Lk 21:24; so *N*), *A* οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς becomes (οἱ) Στωϊκοί (Act 17:18, so *N*). New formations include: προκοπῆν (NT 3 x, so *N*) (< προκόπτω), not in *A*; ζυμῶν (NT 4 x [*N*: ζυμώνω]) for *A* φύρω / φυρῶ; ἔστακα / ἔστηκα (intrans., NT) (< ἵστημι) instead of *A* στήσας ἔχω,

occasionally the NT presents the first instance.<sup>15</sup> All such forms and syntax can be understood by reference to the later material (late Hellenistic, Byzantine, Mediaeval and Modern Greek), in which the form or the construction has become common, and multiple examples of it can elucidate the meaning.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, inasmuch as *Neohellenic* preserves intact a large part of the linguistic treasure not only of post-classical, but also of classical times, how a NT linguistic phenomenon (term, construction or expression) is felt or perceived in Neohellenic ought to be of significance. Yet this resource has, to my knowledge, never been really exploited for the NT., apart from a few, second-hand references to *MGr* mainly in *MM*.

One clarification is in order. Judging from the great cultural languages of Europe, whose current form is quite different from what they were a few centuries ago, one may be tempted to think that current *Neohellenic*, too, ought to have hardly any resemblances with the Greek of the New Testament. This was, indeed, the position of Krumbacher's address to the Bavarian Academy on the 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1902. Now,

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<sup>15</sup> See e.g. such neologisms as ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος, ἀνεξίκακος, ἀνθρωπαρεσκέω, ἀπαύγασμα, ἐλαχιστότερος, ἐπιούσιος, συμμιμητής, σύσσωμος, σύμμορφος, ὑπερεντυγχάνω, ὑπερεκπερισσῶς, ὑπερλίαν. See also e.g. Jn 8:25 τὴν ἀρχὴν, treated in my *The Development of Greek and the New Testament*, Tübingen: Mohr, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> An instance of this is the text of Jn 21:5, treated below.

as true as the first part of this reasoning is, so untrue is the second part. Greek is in a category all of its own. The main reasons for this are its early literary development and its literature. Having reached the highest degree of its development in the Vth and IVth centuries B.C., and having at that time produced works that became classic for all subsequent times, Greek was, so to speak, 'set'. This coincided with momentous developments in its orthography and pronunciation. Thus, the 24-letter alphabet, which was ratified in Athens in 403 B.C., and the consequent orthography have remained unchanged to the present day, – 2409 years! An ancient Greek word, whether occurring in literary Neohellenic, that is, *Katharevousa* or in colloquial *MGr*, that is, *Demotic* (except where Demotic has developed its own forms), is still spelled exactly as it was spelled at the time of Aischylos, Platon or Demosthenes.

Thus, although with the passage of time the language changed from classical to the simpler Koine, and later was further modernized in Byzantine and Mediaeval Greek, till it reached its present stage of evolution in *Neohellenic*, the classical norms have at all times functioned as checks, restraining uncontrolled change<sup>17</sup>. Nor was there much need for radical modifications, since the language had already been fully developed. Thus, the early development of Greek and its literature explain why Greek has not changed to

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Hatzidakis, *Μεσαιωνικά και Νέα Ἑλληνικά* (= *MNE*), I, 360).

the same degree as the other European languages have since their first written records.<sup>18</sup> It may, therefore, be said with confidence that since the NT was written, Greek has changed far less than, for example, English or German have during half the length of that period. In support of this claim I quote two scholars, one German and one British.

In his *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft*, Heinrich Steinthal writes:

“Die neugriechische Sprache ist eine der verwundersamsten Erscheinungen in der Geschichte der Sprachen. Man darf sie nicht bloss nicht neben die romanischen Töchter Sprachen stellen; sondern ihr Verhältniss zum Alt-Griechisch ist auch noch ein anderes als das des Neu-Deutschen zum Alt-Deutschen. ... so kann doch die neuere Sprachforschung nicht umhin, in der Sprache der heutigen Griechen eine Gestaltung anzuerkennen, die sich ... enger an die alte Sprache anschliesst, als das heutige Deutsch an das Karls des Grossen...”<sup>19</sup>

With regards to English, R. Browning says:

“Since then [the time of Homeros] Greek has enjoyed a continuous tradition down to the present day. Change there has certainly been. But there has been no break like that between Latin and the Romance languages. Ancient Greek is not a foreign language to the Greek of today as Anglo-Saxon

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<sup>18</sup> The NT may also have played a part in arresting uncontrolled linguistic change.

<sup>19</sup> Steinthal, H., *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft bei den Griechen und Römern*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Berlin, 1863, 411

is to the modern Englishman (vii). Perhaps connected with this continuous identity over some three and a half millenia is the slowness of change in Greek. It is still recognizably the same language today as it was when the Homeric poems were written down... The continuity in lexical stock is striking (2)... Earlier stages of the language are thus accessible to speakers of later stages, in a way that Anglo-Saxon or even Middle English is not accessible to speakers of modern English (3) ...a brief survey of the vocabulary...will throw further light on...the peculiar situation created by a long and continuous literary tradition which makes all elements of Greek from antiquity to the present day in a sense accessible and 'present' to any literate Greek (13)."<sup>20</sup>

In fact, Hatzidakis goes so far as to say:

"The language generally spoken today in the towns [of Greece] differs less from the language of Polybios [203-120 B.C.] than this last differs from the language of Homeros [VIII B.C.] (my tr.)".<sup>21</sup>

The unity of the Greek language is of such a nature that it is methodologically pernicious to isolate a particular period and to investigate it without reference to its other periods. The reasons for this have been lucidly presented by Hatzidakis in his *Linguistic Researches*:

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<sup>20</sup> R. Browning, *Medieval and Modern Greek*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, Preface vii, 2-3, 13.

<sup>21</sup> G. Hatzidakis, "La question de la langue en Grèce", *Revue des Études Grecques*, Paris, 16 (1903) 210-245, p. 220: "De tout cela il est résulté que la langue communément parlée aujourd'hui dans les villes diffère moins de la langue commune de Polybe que cette dernière ne diffère de la langue d'Homère".

*“Because the characteristics of Modern Greek go back to ancient times, and the main characteristics of ancient Greek are preserved to this day, it is scientifically impossible to put an exact boundary between them. [Hatzidakis’ s emphasis]. In this way, on the one hand, very many elements of ancient Greek have come down through Mediaeval Greek to Neohellenic, and on the other hand, the main characteristics of Neohellenic go back to ancient times. On account of this, ancient Greek is in many ways supplemented and better comprehended by Modern Greek, and Modern Greek is clarified and better understood by means of ancient Greek. Thus, any distancing of the one from the other, any separate treatment of either of them from the other, not only of necessity leads to error, but is actually impossible.<sup>22</sup>*

This quote from one of the greatest linguists shows, on the one hand, the oneness of the Greek language from Homeros (today we would say already from Mycenaean times) to today, and on the other, the intricate interconnection of its several periods, and hence the impossibility of separating the various phases of the language from one another.

#### **4. The New Testament and Neohellenic**

I will now undertake to show more concretely the relation between Neohellenic and the New Testament. In 1908-09 Hatzidakis undertook an examination of the

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<sup>22</sup> Γ. Χατζιδάκις, *Γλωσσολογικαὶ Ἔρευναι*, τόμ. 1, "Ἐν Ἀθήναις, 1934, σελ. 488 [my tr.].

vocabulary of Homeros and of the New Testament.<sup>23</sup> With regards to Homeros, his object was to discover how many of Homeros's words were in current use among the Ionian and Athenian prose writers of classical times, and how many are still spoken or are understood by modern Greeks. With regards to the NT, the object was to discover how many of its words are still spoken today, how many are understood when read or heard, and how many have become completely obsolete.

Hatzidakis' results are quite striking<sup>24</sup>.

Of Homeros' total vocabulary of 6,844 words, Attic-Ionian prose writers, four centuries after Homeros, use 3,617 words (while 3,327 words have become obsolete). Now of the 3,617 Homeric words current in classical times, Neohellenic, 24 centuries later, still uses 1,979 words, i.e. 54.71% .

The figures for the NT are even more striking: of its total vocabulary of 4,906 words, 2,300 words are still spoken today, 2,226 are well understood when read or heard, and only 380 words are not understood. This

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<sup>23</sup> Χατζιδάκι, “Περὶ τῆς ἐνότητος τῆς ἐλληνικῆς γλώσσης” in *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρίς*, “Ἐθνικὸν Πανεπιστήμιον, τόμ. Ε΄, ἐν Ἀθῆναις, 1910, 47-151.

<sup>24</sup> The following figures have been somewhat modified by me following a fresh comparison with the most recent Lexicon of Neohellenic. For Homeros, Hatzidakis figures are: classical times: 3,515 words; to these I added 100 words; Neohellenic: 1,267 words, to which, following a check in Babiniotis' *Lexicon*, I added another 612 words. For the NT, I have added another 26 words, either spoken or understood today.



means that 92.25 % of the vocabulary of the NT is either spoken or understood in Neohellenic.

The following table presenting the text of Jn 3:3 in parallel columns,

NT (Original)	Nonnos fl. 450-470	Katharevousa 1851	Neohellenic 1967
<p><b>3.</b> ἀπεκρίθη "Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, "Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννηθῆ ἄνω-θεν, οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν βασι-λείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.</p>	<p><b>3.</b> "Ἰησοῦς δ' ἀγόρευεν ἀσημάντῳ τινὶ μύθῳ· εἰ μὴ τις μετὰ κέντρα τελεσιγόνοιο λοχείης θνητὸς ἀνὴρ τίκτοι το δεύτερον, αἰθέρος ἀυλῆς οὐ δύναται βροτὸς οὗτος ἰδεῖν αἰώνιον ἀρχήν.</p>	<p><b>3.</b> "Απεκρίθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπε πρὸς αὐτόν, "Ἀλληθῶς, ἀλη- θῶς σοὶ λέγω, ἐὰν τις δὲν γεν- νηθῆ ἄνωθεν, δὲν δύναται νὰ ἴδῃ τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ.</p>	<p><b>3.</b> Ὁ "Ἰησοῦς τοῦ ἀπεκρίθη, "Ἀλήθεια, ἀλή- θεια σοῦ λέγω, ἐὰν δὲν γεννηθῆ κανεὶς ἄνωθεν, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ἰδῆ τὴν βασι- λείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ".</p>

shows that not only the *Katharevousa* paraphrase of 1851, but even the Neohellenic tr. of 1967 is closer to the original text than the paraphrase of Nonnos, who lived only 400 years away. The reason for this is that Nonnos wrote not in the Greek of his day, but in the Greek of Homeros. Once again we see that Greek has changed less during the past 2000 years, than during the 800 years separating Homeros from the NT.

## 5. A Few New Testament Cruces which are Illustrated by Later Greek

The relevance of later Greek for the exegesis of the NT has been discussed in detail in my investigation, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament: Morphology, Syntax, Phonology, and Textual*

*Transmission.* Here I will illustrate with a few brief examples:

1. The first example is Lk 16:25. Abraham tells the rich man: “Son, remember that in your lifetime you *received* (ἀπέλαβες) your good things, while Lazaros [received] bad things”. A check of some 25 European translations showed that ἀπέλαβες has been understood uniformly as “received”. The Commentators interpret similarly. This is the normal meaning of the verb ἀπολαμβάνω. What, however, has not been observed is that around the time of the NT the verb ἀπολαμβάνω begins to be confused with the verb ἀπολαύω ‘to enjoy’, a verb that does not occur in the NT. In some of the tenses the two verbs exhibit almost identical forms, which are pronounced identically. By a process which I cannot go into at present, but which I have explained fully in my above-mentioned work, the verb ἀπολαμβάνω ‘to receive’, in time came to assume also the meaning of ἀπολαύω ‘to enjoy’. The evidence for this semantic development is found in literature from the time of Plutarchos, a contemporary of Luke, continuously to the present day. In the Papyri I have found only one instance. This development led to the state of affairs, whereby in Neohellenic ἀπολαύω has two basic meanings, (1) ‘to enjoy’, and (2) ‘to be recipient’ (e.g. of honors). Under its first meaning, it completes the verb ἀπολαμβάνω in its various tenses, whose primary meaning now is ‘to enjoy’. It is important to note that ἀπολαμβάνω, ‘to enjoy’, may also be used of negative experiences, in which case, we

might be inclined to render with ‘to experience’. This detail is particularly important for our text, as it shows how the same verb, ἀπολαμβάνω, can be used for two different experiences, the enjoyment of the rich man and the bad experience of Lazaros. By “remember that in your lifetime you ἀπέλαβες your good things, and Lazaros likewise [ἀπέλαβεν] bad things”, Abraham is not drawing a contrast between the *facts* of riches and poverty of the rich man and Lazaros respectively, but emphasizes the *personal involvement* in what each experienced in his lifetime: the rich man *enjoyed* his good fortune, whereas Lazaros *enjoyed* (i.e. *experienced*) bad things in his misfortune!

2. The well-known text in John 15, of the ἄμπελος and the κλήματα, has never been seen as problematic, simply because commentators have taken it for granted that these words are used in their old, well-established meanings, and, thus, have been unaware of any alternative meanings attaching to these words. This explains why the fact that the conventional interpretation is so fraught with difficulties and the exegesis of the details of the passage is so forced, do not appear to have raised any questions. Neohellenic, on the other hand, apprises us of the shifts of meaning that took place with regard to these terms. The evidence shows that these shifts in meaning took place already in pre-Christian times. Ἄμπελος came to signify ‘vineyard’ instead of ‘vine’ and κλήματα came to signify ‘vines’ instead of ‘branches’. Thus, Neohellenic bears witness to changes that took place in

the period before Christ, and its testimony (together with other diachronic evidence) is of first importance for exegeting the above passage correctly in all its details: “I am the vineyard; you are the vines”. For the exegetical significance of this in the pericope of Jn 15, see my *The Development of Greek*. pp. 247-61.

3. According to Jn 21:5, following a whole night’s fruitless fishing endeavor, Jesus addresses the exhausted and disappointed disciples with the words: Παιδιά, μή τι προσφάγιον ἔχετε; — usually translated: “Children, do you have any breakfast?” Commentators of John have generally treated the word παιδία as an ordinary plural, that is, as a usual diminutive: “children” or “little children” (as in 1 Jn 2:18), without any special overtones.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> E.g. Lindars, *John*, 626, The same is essentially true of Morris, *John*, 862, Beasley-Murray, *John*, 394 and Barrett, *John*. 579, in spite of their referring to Moulton’s *Prolegomena*, 170, who cites a *MGr* example. The reason for this is that Moulton himself has not explained the *MGr* use, which he in turn cited from Abbott. It is thus symptomatic that Brown, *John*, II, 1070, confuses the expression with τεκνία. How much this word has been misunderstood can be gauged by the following quote from a semantic discussion: “the word παιδία (‘children’) denotes persons who are between infancy and adulthood. Yet Jesus’ use of the word in John 21:5 seems to imply that the persons concerned (his disciples) are also likely to be awkward, immature, obstinate, and impulsive” (D. Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*, 131). Needless to say, one will search in vain for such connotations in this particular context.

Neohellenic, which has preserved what must have been an oral form of address (i.e. a Demotic element) to persons of inferior or equal social station, offers the only evidence in existence. It makes it clear that Jesus does not address his disciples with the endearing form ‘little children’, but with a colloquial expression which means ‘lads’, ‘boys’, ‘fellows’, ‘friends’, and which is used only in addressing persons of lower social rank or of the same rank by way of familiarity<sup>26</sup>. This gives a special twist to Jesus’ address to his disciples. The expression obviously existed in the time of the NT, but being a colloquial expression, it was not preserved in writing.<sup>27</sup> It has, however, been preserved on the lips of the Greek people for two thousand years<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Χατζιδάκις, *Γλωσσολογικαὶ Μελέται*, I, p. 212: ἡ λέξις *παιδιά* περιῆλθεν εἰς τύπον προσφωνήσεως, ὥστε σήμερον δι’ αὐτοῦ προσφωνοῦμεν ἀνθρώπους πάσης ἡλικίας καὶ παντὸς γένους (“The word *παιδιά* came to be used as a form of address, so that today we address through it persons of all ages and [both] genders”). Jn 21:5 had, obviously, escaped him.

<sup>27</sup> Here we must recall the Greek *dimorphia* of Hellenistic times—one Greek form for speaking but another for writing—that has deprived us from many forms, syntactical structures, idioms and expressions in use in the first century A.D. It is obvious that recourse to *N* can salvage part of that loss.

<sup>28</sup> Perhaps I might be permitted to relate the following incident that took place on the Good Friday of 1996. I stood outside the Church of St. George on Lykavettos, the hill opposite the acropolis of Athens, when the *Epitaphios* (the funeral procession symbolizing the burial of Jesus’ body) was being carried around. The priest, a strong, staunch man, who

4. The much-vexed problem of 1 Cor 7:21, on whether Paul counsels remaining in slavery or snatching the opportunity to become free, receives important light from diachronic developments. Exegetes have been divided<sup>29</sup>. Understanding the phrase εἰ καί concessively, the latest Swedish tr. renders: “Var du slav när du blev kallad, så fäst dig inte vid det. Och även om du kan bli fri, så förbli hellre vad du är”. My investigation showed that already during classical times, besides its concessive sense ‘even if’, εἰ καί not infrequently carried the sense of “if too”, “if also”. Further developments during Post-classical times led to the partial loss of the concessive meaning also for the other concessive phrase, καὶ εἰ, which thus was reduced to the meaning of its component parts: “and if”. These developments in the use of καί εἰ and εἰ καί, taken together with the other details in the sentence, determine the meaning of the text that enjoys the support of grammar. The sentence may be paraphrased: “Were you called as a slave? Do not let that trouble you. But if you (also) can gain your

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exuded a clear consciousness of leadership and fatherly initiative, in a brief moment’s pause, afforded by the musical notation of the lively procession hymn, addressed parenthetically a rapid exhortation to the throng gathered around him (men, women and children) with the words: ὅλοι μαζί, παιδιό!, (“all together, lads!”), meaning: “boys/lads, let’s all sing together” [i.e. ‘join me in the singing’]) and then he went on with the hymns’s next stanza.

<sup>29</sup> One commentator (Fee, *First Corinthians*, 316) thought that grammar cannot solve the issue.

freedom, do so by all means and use it all the more to serve God”.

5. Finally, the crucial text of Mt 12:28, has been used by C. H. Dodd as one of the pillars for his doctrine of Realized Eschatology – a major position in New Testament research. This position with regard to the central teaching of Jesus on the Kingdom of God is very widespread today. Here, the aorist ἔφθασεν has been interpreted woodenly in the ordinary way of a past action, and thus, its idiomatic use, whereby it expresses a ‘future’ action (!), although sufficiently documented even in ancient times (since Euripides and Aristophanes), has been totally missed. Neohellenic, which preserves this ancient usage with this particular verb as well as with many other verbs, and has even increased its incidence, throws important light on the ancient evidence, which leads to another meaning in this logion, one that contradicts the idea of realized eschatology.

The above discussion, and the examples presented, show the importance of taking into account the whole evidence, that is, the later developments of Greek, in order to interpret the NT more accurately. Abandoning the error of Erasmus and approaching the Greek language as a unity, receiving the beneficial insights of later Greek, will, undoubtedly, open up exhilarating prospects in understanding the text of the NT, which, after all, is the basic presupposition of all research into the New Testament.

