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# The Minister and His Greek New Testament

(A CONFERENCE ESSAY)

By ERIC C. MALTE

## I

Languages differ radically among themselves, but while each of the modern nations is proud of its mother tongue and will dispute its supremacy with any of the others, scholars and competent authorities are generally agreed in conceding that the classical Greek is in many ways superior to all its successors and the well-nigh perfect medium for the utterance of genius and the expression of thought. The Greek language is a remarkable one in many respects and possibly the most noteworthy product of the Greek nation.

Professor Felton declares: "The Greek language is the most flexible and transparent body in which human thought has ever been clothed." Farrar in his *Greek Syntax* (page 1) says: "The Aryan family of languages is the most perfect family in the world, and the Greek is the most perfect language in this family; it is the instinctive metaphysics of the most intelligent of nations." The historian Grote adds his testimony: "The Hellenic language is the noblest among the many varieties of human speech."

Says Professor Harris: "It is a marvelous language, made for all that is great and all that is beautiful, in every subject and under every form of writing. The Greeks excelled in an instinct for beauty and in the power of creating beautiful forms, and of all the beautiful things which they created, their own language was the first and the most wonderful."

No one acquainted with the study of languages would wish to deny that the Greek language is one which in meter and music, in richness and variety, in fertility of inflection and delicacy of intricate expression, in flexibility and multiform capacity, in sweetness and strength, was, and is, unrivaled among the many tongues of the world.

The poet Shelley paid this tribute to this wonderful tongue: "The very language of the Greeks . . . in variety, in simplicity, in flexibility, and in copiousness excels every other language of the Western World."



Goethe said: "Study Molière, study Shakespeare, but before all study the ancient Greeks — always the Greeks." "As the most beautiful, rich, and harmonious language ever spoken and written," said Philip Schaff, it was worthy "to form the pictures of silver in which the golden apple of the Gospel should be preserved for all generations."

Now, if as Prof. A. T. Robertson said: "The chief treasure of the Greek tongue is the New Testament,"<sup>1</sup> then surely everyone who is called upon to expound the Scriptures, and who has the opportunity, will wish to be familiar with this, the most beautiful of languages, the Greek.

## II

But the Greek of the New Testament is not the classical Greek, the Greek of Pericles and Sophocles and Euripides and Homer. Until some forty years ago it was customary in many circles to call the New Testament Greek "Biblical Greek" or "Judean Greek" or to say that it was distinguished from classical Greek by the many Hebraisms and the Aramaic idioms found in it. Thayer in his Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1889) has fourteen columns of words which he terms "Biblical Greek."

In 1894 Friedrich Blass said that New Testament Greek was "to be recognized as something peculiar, obeying its own laws."<sup>2</sup> In 1889 Edwin Hatch wrote: "Biblical Greek is thus a language which stands by itself." In 1893 Cremer adopted the words of Richard Rothe and declared: "We can indeed with good right speak of a language of the Holy Ghost. For in the Bible it is evident to our eyes how the Divine Spirit at work in revelation always takes the language of a particular people, chosen to be the recipients, and makes of it a characteristic religious variety by transforming existing linguistic elements and existing conceptions into a shape peculiarly appropriate to that Spirit. This process is shown most clearly by the Greek of the New Testament."<sup>3</sup>

That was the way many scholars spoke a generation or two ago, but now, due to the many recent discoveries in the field of the Greek papyri, which constitute a dramatic and most important chapter in the history of Greek New Testament studies and which throw a flood of brilliant light on the manners and customs, the daily life and language, of the people in the



Graeco-Roman world of the New Testament period, the language of the New Testament is no longer considered so peculiar as it once was. Within the past five decades there have been countless discoveries of Greek papyri which have brought us into much closer touch with the ordinary speech of the people of the New Testament days than we ever had been before; and one of the first things which has been made clear is that the old-time distinction between common Greek and a special Greek created by the Holy Ghost can no longer be held valid. The peculiarities which earlier scholars were able to discover in the language of the New Testament are, in the light of the papyrological discoveries of recent years, regular features of the vernacular of the period.

These plain, unpretentious scraps of papyrus found in the drifting sands of Egypt help us to reconstruct the background of the New Testament with a wealth of detail impossible of achievement before. "It is almost as though we were witnessing a talkie film of the first century," says Caiger, "a travelogue showing the contemporaries of our Lord and His disciples."<sup>4</sup> Through the lens of the papyri we see the message of the New Testament against the social and political background of that first century of our era.

For the lucid explanation and substantial proof of the real character and nature of New Testament Greek we are indebted to the mental alertness of the German scholar Adolf Deissmann. The story is an interesting one. In 1895 Herr Deissmann, at the time not a university professor or even a clergyman, but a young candidate for the ministry, a *Privatdozent* at Marburg, happened one day to be turning over in the University Library of Heidelberg a new section of a volume containing transcripts from the Berlin collection of Greek papyri. As he read, he was suddenly arrested by the likeness of these papyri words to the language with which he was familiar in his study of the New Testament. Further examination served to deepen the initial impression, and he realized that he held in his hand the key to the old problem. To Deissmann, accordingly, is attributed the honor of an inference "which is without doubt the greatest single discovery of an interpretative principle ever made in New Testament archaeology." (Cobern, *The New Archaeological Discoveries*, p. 30.)

With regard to the New Testament, Deissmann first saw



that while the language differs from classical Greek, it is neither "Special Greek," nor "Aramaic Greek," nor "Biblical Greek," nor yet "Sacred Greek"; still less "tired Greek" or "bad Greek"; he saw that it was just the common language of the time, the everyday parlance of the masses of workaday folk throughout the confines of the vast Roman empire in the first century of our era. Deissmann in his *Bible Studies and Light from the Ancient East* proved that the vehicle of the universal Gospel was the universal language of the first century, the spoken and written Koine. The Apostles, followers of One whom the common people heard gladly, wrote in the common language of living men and women of their day.

These facts can hardly fail to bring the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament nearer to us and to emphasize the personal, living background which underlies them. It is clear that Paul and Peter and John were sending living messages to living men and women, and the more clearly we are prepared to realize what their messages meant to their first readers, the more clearly are we prepared to realize what their message is intended to teach the needy world of our twentieth century.

Most of these papyri, now reposing in German, British, and American museums and libraries (Chicago, Michigan, Cornell, Princeton, Yale), were dug up from the rubbish heaps of buried cities or taken from the mummified bodies of men and crocodiles of Egypt. There they were thrown on rubbish heaps — old discarded office records, worn-out books, legal documents, leases, bills, receipts, marriage contracts, divorces, wills, decrees issued by officials, denunciations, suits for the punishment of wrongdoers, minutes of judicial proceedings, tax lists and papers in great numbers. Here were letters and notes and diaries, schoolboy exercises — all furnishing a vivid cross section of contemporary life as it was lived during the time when Christ and His Apostles were here on earth. These show us the people, their characters, the inner recesses of their minds and hearts, how they talked and how they lived. As Schubart says in *Einfuehrung in die Papyruskunde*:<sup>5</sup> "Mehr als andere Zeugen des Altertums oeffnen uns die Papyri einen Blick ins Leben der Familie und des einzelnen, so dass wir den Menschen auf seinem Lebenswege von der Geburt durch Kindheit und Schule, Ehe und Beruf bis zum Grabe begleiten koennen."



Now the hope and longing once expressed by Bishop J. B. Lightfoot while lecturing before his class at Cambridge, namely, "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 language of the New Testament generally,"<sup>6</sup> has been fulfilled and realized.

In view of the light and help which these recent discoveries shed on the right understanding of the New Testament language, no one can deny the truthfulness of Goodspeed's statement in his introduction to *A Greek Papyrus Reader*, namely: "The value of these studies for the language of the New Testament has become increasingly evident, and some acquaintance with such documents must now be recognized as an indispensable part of a thorough training for New Testament work."

### III

To this Greek New Testament we pastors and preachers of the Gospel must go to find the precious truth often left untranslated, because no two languages are exactly commensurate, and it is impossible for the English or the German completely and adequately to reproduce the Greek. The single words of one language never can represent the single words of another language. The idioms of one language never are the exact equivalents of the idioms of another language. Of necessity all translations, even the best, are only approximations. To get at the original truth, the translation must be supplemented by paraphrase and exposition, and these are accurately possible only to the reader of the New Testament in the original.

William G. Ballantine in the introduction to his *The Riverside New Testament, A Translation from the Original Greek into the English of Today* (1923) says: "To translate from one language into another is like playing on the piano what was written for the violin. The fundamental melody may be faithfully reproduced, but many subtle effects which the composer intended are inevitably lost, and effects which he did not intend are added."

Shakespeare would not be Shakespeare in Latin. Tennyson would hardly be recognizable in French. Webster's orations could not be made to thunder in Italian. Goethe would



appear somewhat stiff in English. There never yet was a translation which did not leave much untranslated, because it is untranslatable. The Greek student, therefore, with his Greek New Testament in his hand, reading the very words written or spoken by the Apostles Peter or Paul, comes more nearly to the men themselves and to their meaning than anyone can hope in an English or German translation. "There are in every New Testament book," says Buel, "fervors, sighs, heart tones, tears half discernible, plays upon words, deft and delicate ironies, the impress of which the Greek alone has preserved. Translate them? Well, yes, when you can dig the fly out of the amber and write out on paper the song of the skylark."

Surely, then, anyone who is responsible for the exposition of the Scriptures and who has the opportunity ought to know the words and idioms in the original. Matthew, Luke, Peter, and Paul did not know English or German, and the only way to converse with these men on familiar terms is to know their language and to hear them speak their own tongues.

#### IV

We say that the Greek of the New Testament has riches and beauties which are untranslatable. Let us notice a few of these.

1. John records the words of the Lord: "In My Father's house are many mansions" (John 14:2). The Greek is *πολλαί*, from the Greek verb μένω as its root. Why our English translations should translate it "mansions" is difficult to say. We know, of course, that the "mansions" came into our English versions from the Latin in the Vulgate, "mansiones," but why that translation was carried over into the English and maintained there we cannot see. The Greek word really means "*abiding places*," "*resting places*"; the very heart of our English word "*home*" is in it. Mansions? There is no thought of mansions in the Greek word, no least suggestion of magnificence, or stateliness, or coldness, or servants, or formality, which we usually associate with the word "mansions." It is just the plain, simple, hearty, wholesome word for "*home*." Jesus meant to say, and He did say: "Let not your heart be troubled. In My Father's house are many resting places, just like in a comfortable, peaceful, quiet home," and the reader of the Greek Testament sees that meaning at the very first



glance. The student of the English versions is unable to see the full and rich meaning of these words.

2. Another untranslatable peculiarity of the Greek is that its verbs very frequently compound themselves with many different prepositions, any one of which when used gives to the verb its own somewhat new or entirely different shade of meaning. Our English and German versions can never fully reproduce these varying meanings, since they cannot be similarly compounded.

For example, in Hebrews 12:2 we have the phrase: "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith." The verb in the Greek is not the simple verb for looking, *ὁράω*, but the compound verb with the preposition *ἀπό*, which becomes then *ἀποράω*. This word according to Thayer in his Lexicon means: "turning the eyes away from other things and then fixing them upon something or someone." How much fuller that meaning than the one in the English of the King James translation! The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews meant to say, and did say: "You must *look away* from the cloud of witnesses, *away* from everything which would either distract your attention or disturb your faith; and then you must *fix* your eyes entirely upon Jesus. *Looking away* from all other things, you *look* to Jesus alone and keep your eyes riveted on Him, just as the runner in a race focuses his eye alone on the goal." The reader of the English New Testament gets only half of what the author of the Epistle intended to say.

3. In Romans 8:19 we read: "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." Expectation? That does not begin to express the full picture in the Greek compound word. A recent English writer has suggested that the compound word expressed the physical manifestation of eager expectancy in the head bent forward to catch the first glimpse of an advancing pageant or procession in the street. The Greek term which we translate with the word "expectation" is one of those admirable words which the Greek language easily forms. It is composed of three elements: *ἀπό*, from; *κάρα*, head; *δοκέω*, to watch, so that the word *ἀποκαταδοκία* means to wait with the head raised and the eye fixed on that point of the horizon from which the expected object is to come. What a representation!

The verb in the same sentence in Romans 8:19 *ἀπεκδέχεται*.



which we translate "waiteth for," is no less interesting. It is composed of the simple word δέχομαι, to receive, and the two prepositions ἐκ, out of, out of the hands of, and ἀπό, from, from afar; so that it means: "to receive something from the hands of one who extends it to you from afar." Put that Greek verb and substantive together, and you have the picture of the suffering, groaning, sin-cursed creation, standing on tiptoes, as it were, and looking eagerly out through the ages toward the dim horizon of time for the first faint token of the day dawn of its deliverance and stretching out its weary, empty hands in uttermost reach toward Him who on the Last Day will hand down for the sons of God their full and complete salvation and deliverance; but that picture comes altogether out of the Greek and not at all from the weak expression in the King James translation, "expectation," which, as it were, simply sits down and folds its hands and waits for the revelation of the sons of God. (The Revised Standard Version of 1946: "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.")

4. In Hebrews 11:35 we read: "Others were tortured, not accepting the deliverance." That translation in the English leaves us in the dark as to the mode of the torture endured, but when we come upon the sentence in the Greek, we see not only *that* they were *tortured*, but *how* they were *tortured* as well.

The verb is ἐτυμpanίσθησαν, from the noun, which means a drum or drumstick, then a cudgel or heavy club of any kind; and it means: "They were beaten to death with clubs, but under that slow and terrible torture their faith never failed them. They never accepted the deliverance and opportunity for life which was offered them with each blow and was possible at any stage in that slow, brutal murder, for they were sure that they would obtain a better resurrection." The real heroism of their endurance and the extraordinary triumph of their faith becomes apparent to us only in the Greek.

5. That word recalls another in our Greek New Testament, one found in 2 Peter 3:16. There we read: "Our beloved brother Paul wrote his Epistles, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." They wrest the scriptures. The



Greek word is στρεβλοῦσιν, and it represents an act of willful torture. Its root is στρέβλη, the instrument of torture which we call the rack, upon which the criminal was stretched and by which his limbs were twisted until in his agony he was forced to say anything his tormentors may have desired him to say. We all know how worthless confessions may be under such circumstances. To escape the pain and torture, any but the most indomitable spirits will agree to anything the Grand Inquisitors may demand. The rack in ancient times twisted lies out of people as often as it twisted the truth.

That is the picture of the Greek text. These persons to whom Peter refers put the words of Paul and of the other scriptures upon the rack and there tortured them and twisted them until they said anything their tormentors desired them to say. The plain sense was distorted, and the sense thus extracted was crippled and unreliable. It was more often false than true. How much fuller the meaning of that text becomes when we see the picture suggested by the Greek!

6. Take the word ὑπακοή, which we translate "obedience, submission." The picture of the Greek is that of one sitting under the feet of the Master and listening eagerly and sympathetically to all He has to say. One scholar has suggested a golden phrase by which it might be translated when he said: "Our one need is to obey, and by *lowly listening* we shall hear the right word, the word that gives us life." *Lowly listening!* That is the picture of the Greek, submissive listening which leads to obedience, the listening of Mary at the feet of the Master.

7. In the first chapter of First Peter we read of "things which the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:12). "Look into" is a rather feeble expression whereby we render παρακύψαι. In the Greek is pictorially expressed the bent body and the outstretched neck of one who is stooping and straining to gaze on some sight which calls for wonder. Now, except in the Epistle of James, where the same word is used for the earnest gaze of the believer into the perfect law of liberty, this verb is employed here and in the two accounts of the visit of Peter and John to the sepulcher on the morning of the Resurrection. Both Luke and John employ the same word, and its use may be due to Peter's narration of what took place to the rest of the disciples. (Luke 24:12; John 20:5, 11.)



The word is descriptive of what Peter had seen as John reached the sepulcher before him and had paused there to look in. It was the most pictorial and expressive word he could apply to the bowed head and earnest gaze of his fellow disciple as he stooped down and looked into the empty tomb. In that empty tomb John saw what angels had longed to see. Its vacancy was the seal of man's redemption, the keynote of the Gospel proclaimed through that resurrection that the believer would rise to eternal life. In thought, Peter seems to have gone back to that scene by the grave of the Lord on Easter morning and to have before him John's eager and astonished act and gaze while he bent down that his eyes might make sure of the truth of such things as the angels desire to see. The vivid verb makes the picture clear.

8. Peter says (1 Peter 2:21) that Christ has left us an "example," and the word he uses is a "writing copy," ὑπογραμμός. As a copy is set at the head of a page and the school-boy writes under it his awkward attempts at reproduction and does it over and over again until his imitation begins to look something like the example the teacher set before him, so we are to see in Christ the perfect example for our lives, and we are to endeavor to reproduce His life in our own, and however imperfect our first attempts may be, we are to keep at it patiently until at last we can approximate more and more the model He has given us. This is all suggested in the Greek word used, and the sharpness of the picture is entirely lost in the translation.

9. Luther once said: "The science of theology is nothing else than grammar exercised on the words of the Holy Spirit." And again he said: "There is often a great divinity in prepositions." The attentive reader of the Greek New Testament will note the use of the preposition πρὸς in John 1:1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." Why did John use this preposition πρὸς and not παρά or σύν or μετά, any one of which would have been adequately translated "with"? Can it be that John intended to say more than that the Word was with God? Exactly! Πρὸς, like εἰς, is used with the accusative where direction or motion is implied. Under such circumstances it is quite appropriately translated: "And the Word was face to face with God." Thus here the Word, the Logos, was face to face with God, in con-



ference with God, in intimate fellowship with God. John has evidently passed by μετά, παρά, σύν, because he desired to bear witness to the distinct personality of the Word and His intimate union and fellowship with the Father. A. T. Robertson in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. V,<sup>7</sup> p. 4, says: "Though existing eternally with God, the Logos was in perfect fellowship with God; πρὸς with the accusative presents a plane of equality and intimacy, face to face with each other. In 1 John 2:1 we have a like use of πρὸς: 'We have a Paraclete with the Father.'" Then Robertson quotes from a reference found in the papyri where this same preposition is used in a similar manner, and says: "It is not a classic idiom, but this is Koine, not old Attic (Greek)."

10. Again, the Greek emphasizes important words by their position in the sentence. The translation of the Greek as a rule emphasizes nothing. Surely, it is worth while to know what words Jesus and Paul emphasized, and the Greek will tell us that.

A. The English student of the Bible does not know how to emphasize Peter's question at the Last Supper: "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" Shall we put the emphasis on the word "my" or the word "feet"? The reader of the Greek text sees at once that neither of these words is emphatic and that the only proper reading of the sentence will put the emphasis on the word "Thou." "Dost *Thou* wash my feet?" (John 13:6.)

B. In John 8:46 the emphasis is on the pronoun "you." "Which of *you* convinceth Me of sin?"

C. In John 14:6 the emphasis is on "I." "*I, Myself*, am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

11. Again and again the reader of the Greek finds some flash of light on some passage with which he has long been familiar in the English or the German, but the English or German of which never had suggested the new truth the original has made plain.

The reading of the New Testament in Greek is sometimes, as compared with the reading of commentaries, an economy of time and effort. What the commentary attempts to explain in many words and long paraphrases, the Greek itself often flashes directly and graphically upon the mind. Indeed, it may be said that the tersest, wisest, and most helpful of com-



mentaries on the English or German New Testament is the New Testament in Greek.

We are reminded of that old Scotch woman, a lifelong student of the Bible, to whom her pastor loaned some commentaries. She returned them after a time, saying: "They are good books. I find that the Bible throws much light upon them." The Greek New Testament throws much light upon the meaning of the word—light often not found in the commentaries and not to be expected, because impossible in any translation.

In Acts 17:18 the King James translation tells us that the Athenian philosophers called Paul a "babbler." The King James translation of this word, *σπερμολόγος*, goes back through all the previous Protestant versions to Tyndale (1525), though the translations made from the Vulgate rendered it: "this sower of words" (Wycliffe, 1382) or "word-sower" (Rheims 1582).

The word meant "picking up seeds," as a bird does, and as a noun it came to mean one who "hung about" the bazaars in Athens and markets and picked up scraps and odds and ends to live on; hence "one who picks up and retails scraps of knowledge" (Liddell-Scott-Jones). Goodspeed suggests that today we would call such a person a "ragpicker." It was Athenian slang for one who had picked up bits of wisdom here and there and everywhere. The point of the slur is that Paul seemed to these wise men of Athens to have a miscellaneous collection of fragmentary ideas, picked up from here and there, in no system, and not rightfully his own. How stinging this slur cast by the Athenian wise men when we read it in the Greek!

## V

Before we close, we shall call attention to a few examples of words from the New Testament which have also been found in many of the papyri, unearthed and deciphered in recent years.

1. In Colossians 2:14 Paul tells us that "Christ hath blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us." The word for "blotting out" is a technical term in the papyri, used again and again to denote washing out, or erasing, the writing from a papyrus sheet or roll. The Greek verb is *ἐξαλείφω*.



The word for "handwriting," χειρόγραφον, also occurs frequently in the papyri and means a bill, a bond, signed with our own signature; it is the technical term found in many business documents for bill or bond, duly signed and owed by the individual who signed it. So complete is the forgiveness which Christ has procured for us that it completely canceled, wiped out, the old bond, signed by us, that had hitherto been valid against us because it bore our signature.

2. In 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; and Ephesians 1:14 we find the word "earnest." "The Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." We have been taught that by the "earnest" of the Spirit we are to understand a part given in advance of what will be fully bestowed in the future. Now, how increasingly clear this becomes when we read, for instance, in one of the papyri of a woman who is selling a cow and receives a thousand drachmae as an "earnest," ἀρραβών, on the total purchase money or when certain dancing girls at a village entertainment receive so many drachmae by way of "earnest" on their promised salary. The Holy Spirit, given to the believers here and now, is the down payment, as it were, the guarantee, that the full payment of our salvation will be made in due time. Ἀρραβών is regularly used in the papyri, denoting caution money, money deposited by the purchaser and forfeited if the purchase is not completed.

3. In Hebrews 11:1 we read: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." The Greek word translated "substance" had a technical meaning in the business world of the first century. Ὑπόστασις referred to one's property or effects. It was used in such expressions as "out of this estate I declare that my husband owes." It was also used to refer to the whole body of documents bearing on the ownership of a person's property, deposited in the archives and forming the evidence of ownership.

Moulton and Milligan in their dictionary say of these uses: "These varied uses are at first sight somewhat perplexing, but in all the cases there is the same central idea of something that underlies visible conditions and guarantees a future possession." Thus they translated: "Faith is the title deed of things hoped for."

To substantiate this usage, there is in *Living Yesterdays*,



an interesting and fascinating brochure from Australia on the story of the papyri, the story of a woman named Dionysia.<sup>8</sup> She is described as a "woman of set jaw and grim determination." It seems that she had lost a case in a local court in Egypt over a piece of land to which she laid claim. Not satisfied with the decision of a lower court, she determined to take her case to a higher court in Alexandria. She sent her slave to that city with the legal documents safely encased in a stone box. On the way the slave lost his life in a fire which destroyed the inn where he had put up for the night. For two thousand years the sands of Egypt covered the ruins of the inn, the charred bones of the slave, and the stone box. Papyrologists recently uncovered these remains. In the box they found the legal documents. They read the note which this woman had sent to the judge in Alexandria: "In order that my lord, the judge, may know that my appeal is just, I attach my ὑπόστασις." That which was attached to this note she designated by the Greek word translated "substance" in Hebrews 11:1. The attached document was translated and found to be the title deed to the piece of land which she claimed as her own possession, the evidence of her ownership.

What a flood of light is thrown upon this teaching regarding faith! If we are not at once permitted to enter upon the full enjoyment of our eternal salvation, let us rest content with the title deed which God has given us, namely, faith in our hearts worked by the Holy Spirit. We may be absolutely certain that our God will honor this title deed at the right time.

## VI

We close with a few words from Luther, taken from his pamphlet *To the Mayors and Aldermen of All the Cities in Germany in Behalf of Christian Schools*, as translated by F. V. N. Painter in his *Luther on Education*. It is difficult to select a statement or two from this important document without omitting others equally important and valid.

Luther said: "In the same measure that the Gospel is dear to us should we zealously cherish the languages. For God had a purpose in giving the Scripture in only two languages, the Old Testament in the Hebrew and the New Testament in the Greek. What God did not despise, but chose before all others for His Word, we should likewise esteem above all others."



"It is evident that where the languages are not preserved, there the Gospel will become corrupted. . . . But many of the Church Fathers, you say, have become saints and have taught without a knowledge of the languages. That is true. But to what do you attribute their frequent misunderstanding of the Scriptures? How often is St. Augustine in error in the Psalms and other expositions, as well as Hilary, and indeed all those who have undertaken to explain the Scriptures without an acquaintance with the original tongues! And, if perchance they have taught correct doctrine, they have not been sure of the application to be made of particular passages. When the faith is thus defended with uncertain reasons and prooftexts, does it not seem a disgrace and mockery in the eyes of such adversaries as are acquainted with the Greek and Hebrew? And they are only rendered the more obstinate in their error and with good ground hold our faith as a human delusion."

"What is the reason that our faith is thus brought into disgrace? It is our ignorance of the languages; and the only remedy is a knowledge of them."

So much for Luther. Yes, as A. T. Robertson in his book *The Minister and His Greek New Testament* says: "The Greek New Testament has a message for each mind. Some of the truth in it has never been seen by anyone else. It is waiting like a virgin forest to be explored."

Yours will be the delight and joy to enter and explore this virgin forest by a diligent study of the Greek New Testament.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

#### REFERENCE NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*. See his introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Adolf Deissmann in *The New Testament in the Light of Modern Research*, p. 76. Hodder and Stoughton. London. 1929.

<sup>3</sup> Rothe, Richard, *Zur Dogmatik*, p. 238. Gotha. 1863. Quoted by H. Moulton and G. Milligan in their *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. xi.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by H. R. Minn in *Living Yesterdays*, p. 17. A. H. and A. W. Reed. Dunedin and Wellington. 1939.

<sup>5</sup> Schubart, Wilhelm, *Einfuehrung in die Papyruskunde*, p. 456. Weidmannsche Buchhandlung. Berlin. 1918.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by George Milligan in *Here and There Among the Papyri*, p. 61. Hodder and Stoughton. London. 1922.



<sup>7</sup> Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Vol. V, p. 4. Harper and Brothers. New York and London. 1932.

<sup>8</sup> Minn, H. R., *Living Yesterdays*, page 5. A. H. and A. W. Reed. Dunedin and Wellington. 1939.

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