Concordia Theological Monthly

JANUARY · 1955

A New Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*

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University of Kentucky Foreign Language Conference
Friday, April 23, 1954

BIBLICAL scholarship in the English-speaking world at the present time has only one unabridged lexicon of the Greek New Testament at its disposal, Joseph Henry Thayer's "Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament," first published in 1886 and in a corrected edition in 1889. This was a translation, with many important additions, of the Greek-Latin New Testament lexicon of C. G. Wilke, thoroughly revised by C. L. W. Grimm. Arrangements for this translation were first made in 1864, so that a period of 22 years elapsed before the work was finished. This delay was partly due to Professor Thayer's many duties as a member of the divinity faculty of Harvard University.

Thayer's lexicon has given excellent service over a period of 68 years, but it had the misfortune to come out just before the papyrus discoveries of 1890 and thereafter. These and many other factors have made this book obsolete to such a degree that the need for something better has long been felt.

German-speaking Biblical scholarship has in the meantime produced a series of unabridged Greek-German lexicons which have made increasing use of the newer material to illustrate the vocabulary of the New Testament. The first modest beginning was made by Erwin Preuschen in 1910. Though it was justly criticized for many things, it marked an important advance by including (for the first time) the words of the Apostolic Fathers. Upon Preuschen's death in 1920 the revision of the book was entrusted to Professor Walter Bauer of Göttingen. The second edition, under the names of Preuschen and Bauer, came out in 1928, and it became evident at once that this was the best thing in its field.

Further additions and improvements were made in the third edition of 1937, issued under Bauer's name alone. Then, as the clouds of World

* [Readers will welcome the news that work on this project has advanced to the point that the completed manuscript is ready for the printer. — ED.]

War II began to gather, Bauer set himself the task of reading systematically every work in Greek literature from the fourth century B. C. down to Byzantine times. As he examined these works for parallels to the New Testament in word meaning and syntax, he gathered a great deal of material which he incorporated into a fourth edition of his lexicon. After many obstacles had been overcome, this fourth edition began to appear late in 1949 and was completed in 1952. In this book we may say that New Testament lexicography has reached its highest point; it presents the material for understanding the vocabulary of the New Testament more fully than any other book has ever done.

A few examples must suffice to illustrate the nature of the new material contained in Bauer's fourth edition. A good many new examples are presented of sentences or paragraphs ending in γάρ, as in Mark 16:8. The meanings "lawsuit" for κριτήριον in 1 Cor. 6:2, 4 and "crime" for μιάσμα in 2 Peter 2:20 are now supported by evidence outside the New Testament. It is no longer possible to regard μάκελλον, "meat market," as a Latin loan word, since Bauer has found it in an inscription from Epidaurus of 400 B. C. (1 Cor. 10:25).

It has long been recognized that an English translation of Bauer's *Wörterbuch* would be a highly desirable thing. Such a project was begun in the fall of 1949, when The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod and the University of Chicago Press entered into an agreement to produce a translation of Bauer, with such adaptations as seemed necessary or desirable. The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod has assumed all the expense involved in the preparation of the manuscript and the printing of the book.

The direction of this project is in the hands of Professor William F. Arndt of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He and the present writer, who is on leave of absence from Albright College at Reading, Pa., have been working on it at the University of Chicago Press since the fall of 1949. There is some hope that, *Deo volente,* the manuscript of the new lexicon may be finished by the end of this calendar year.

The problems that arise in a venture such as this are many and varied. Some of them involved English usage. We are endeavoring to use standard, contemporary American English in our work. Thus, for example, such words as "buffet" for κολαφίζω, "cleave" for κολλάω, and "mote" for κάρφος are not used at all. "Meek" for πραύς and "carnal" for σαρκικός are included only with a notation that they belong to older usage. "Grain" is never referred to as "corn," and a traveler's "wallet" is a "knapsack."

Our lexicon will contain references to various English works that are cited little or not at all by Bauer, including Moulton and Milligan's *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament,* C. D. Buck's *Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Indo-European Languages,* Field's *Notes on the Translation of the New Testament,* the grammars of Robertson, Moulton-Howard, and others.

We have been able to include a few words that are not in Bauer's work. Some of them, like the word ῥίς, "nose," occur in the fragments of Papias, whose vocabulary we are including for the first time. Others are found in the critical apparatus of editions of Nestle's text later than those available to Bauer. Among them are εὐπερίσπαστος, "easily distracted" instead of εὐπερίστατος in Heb. 12:1, and εὐσχημονέω in 1 Cor. 13:5 for ἀσχημονέω, both from Papyrus 46. Ξαίνω, "comb" or "card wool," was revealed by the use of ultraviolet light on the Sinaiticus at Matt. 6:28.

Naturally enough, there are a few places where we differ with Bauer on some of the many debatable points in New Testament lexicography; there are other places where we make slight additions to his treatment. One of the most interesting of these involves the word πῶλος, "young animal," "colt." The only meaning which Bauer gives for it in his fourth edition is *Eselsfüllen,* "donkey's colt." Last December he published in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* a detailed study of πῶλος in which he comes to the conclusion that the word means "horse" unless there is some indication in the context that it is the young of another animal. We duly record his change of opinion and leave it to the reader to decide which meaning he prefers.

The word σιαγών means "cheek" in Matt. 5:39, where we are told to turn the other cheek. Bauer does not mention the fact that the earlier meaning of the word was "jaw," but we have included it as a matter of interest. Similarly, λῃστής means "robber," but there is good reason for translating it "revolutionary," "insurrectionist," when applied to Barabbas in John 18:40; we have added this possibility.

The usual meaning of ἁπλότης is "simplicity," but "generosity" seems not only well supported, but also quite appropriate to the context of Rom. 12:8, and so we have added it. A προσευχή, "place of prayers," is usually the same thing as a synagog, but the situation in Acts 16:11-16, where only women were in attendance, seems to us to exclude the possibility that a regular synagog was meant.

To a Christian the words of the New Testament are the most important words ever written. But even apart from its religious value the

vocabulary of the Greek New Testament has many points of interest. For instance, it borrowed some words as it needed them from Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin, Persian, and other languages.

In other cases the Christians took over certain words from the earlier stages of the Greek language and gave them new meanings. Perhaps the most famous of these is ἀγάπη, which was a kind of "nondescript" word denoting various kinds of love and was used very little indeed. The Christians took it over and used it to express the new kind of love that appeared and was manifested in their communities. Likewise, διαθήκη meant "last will and testament" until the Septuagint used it for a "covenant" or "declaration of God's will," and the New Testament owes its very name to this development.

Συνείδησις was rather a rare word, meaning mostly "consciousness" until it was adopted and extensively used in the New Testament in the sense "moral consciousness" or "conscience." Ἐκκλησία had meant "assembly" for a long time before the Christians appropriated it as their word for "church." They disregarded ἱερεύς as the word for "priest," whether Jewish or Gentile, and substituted for it πρεσβύτερος, "elder," which eventually gave the word "priest" to English and other modern languages.

Similarly διάκονος meant "servant" until the Christians made "deacon" of it, and ἐπίσκοπος was simply "overseer" until it was exalted to "bishop." Μάρτυς was only "witness" until the New Testament changed it to "martyr."

The early Christians even went so far as to invent some words of their own. At one time this list was thought to be much larger than it is now, but a good case can be made out for the proposition that such words as ἀντίχριστος, "antichrist"; εἰδωλολάτρης, "idolater"; ὀφθαλμοδουλία, "eye service," and προσωποληψία, "partiality," were coined by the Christian writers who first used them.

It is interesting to note that in some cases the New Testament foreshadows or actually begins a trend in the meaning of a word that goes all the way down to Modern Greek. That is the case with the old national name Ἕλλην, "Greek," which began to mean "Gentile" or "heathen" in certain New Testament passages; this sense came to be so firmly attached to it that it was dropped when the Greeks adopted Christianity and was revived only in modern times. Furthermore, the Gospel of John uses ὀψάριον, "cooked food," in the sense of "fish"; ψωμίον, "piece," in the sense of "(piece of) bread," and τρώγω, "nibble," in the meaning "eat." In each of these cases Modern Greek has adopted the meaning found in John.

There are many problems that beset the path of the New Testament lexicographer. He must decide, or give his reader the material to decide for himself, whether ἡλικία means "stature" or "age" in various New Testament passages (Matt. 6:27; Luke 19:3). He may try to combat the idea that John the Baptist ate the fruit of the locust tree instead of insects, or that it was a rope instead of a camel that could not go through the eye of a needle, or that βρῶμα means "filth" instead of "food" in Mark 7:19. Βρῶσις, usually translated "rust" in Matt. 6:19, may refer to the activity of a grasshopper, woodworm, mouse, or other "eater." The "moneybag" that Judas held is really a box (John 12:6). In addressing the Athenians in Acts 17:22 Paul probably referred to them as "quite religious," although it is possible that he meant to call them "too superstitious," as the King James Version has it. There is a good chance that πρῶτος in Eph. 6:2 refers not to the *first* commandment with a promise, but to a *commandment* of the greatest importance. Does Paul call himself an *old man* or an *ambassador* in Philemon 9? One letter will make the difference. In the concept of the ὀφθαλμὸς πονηρός, "evil eye," is "envy" or "stinginess" the main idea? And so on *ad infinitum.*

Chicago, Ill.