



## The Evil that Results from Bad Hermeneutics; More Documentation that the New Testament is Koine Greek: Papyrology; Wallace: Stages of the Greek Language

### VII. The Evil that Results from Bad Hermeneutics

1. The purpose of our extended study of hermeneutics is two-fold: (1) the conflict between the literal and allegorical methods explains how the trends of the sinful nature can result in evil when the power of the Word of God is neutralized by a faulty system of translation, and (2) there has been an overwhelmingly positive response to this study and thus I have responded to this interest.
2. In our study it has been my goal to expose the root causes of so much of the religious confusion that saturates mainline denominations and its overflow into the national consciousness.
3. The reason for individual discipline to believers and the ultimate cause of national discipline to a client nation is because the truth of biblical orthodoxy has been distorted and the absolutes of doctrinal thought have been lost.
4. Buffeted by the two largest oceans in the world and benign neighbors to the north and south, the United States was able to skate for over a century while its religious institutions struggled to interpret Scripture accurately.
5. Nevertheless, there was the framework of religious freedom that allowed the debate to continue and during this time the grace of God sustained this country and protected it from predator nations.
6. The prominence and dominance of the United States in the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century coincided with the discovery of Koinē Greek as the language of the New Testament and a subsequent return to the literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutic.
7. The importance of establishing that the New Testament was written in Koinē Greek cannot be overstated. Since I brought these things to your attention earlier in our study I have found the following references that amplify this subject.

**Smith, Clyde Curry. "Papyrology." In *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Edited by J. D. Douglas. Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 746:**

**PAPYROLOGY.** The scientific study of *papyrus* [the pith of a papyrus plant, made into strips, and pressed into a material to write on. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed.], commonly narrowed to its use as a writing material and what is written thereon.

Of importance to the history of Christianity is the vast array of documentation illustrating nearly every facet of its inner life, as well as its conflict with the Roman state. The finding of fresh sources of *koinē* vocabulary and usage led not only to new understandings of the inherent meanings within the New Testament and other early Christian literature, but also to the obvious awareness that such literature could no longer be treated as an anomaly in the history of the Greek language. Papyrology had demonstrated that *koinē*, not academic Atticism, stood in the mainstream, more adequately representing the reality which was the ongoing, living speech of men.

**Wallace, Daniel B. "The Language of the New Testament." In *Grammar Beyond the Basics*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 14-15; 17-19; 20-22; 25: *Stages of the Greek Language***



**Pre-Homeric (up to 1000 B.C.).** As early as the third millennium B.C., tribes of Indo-European peoples wandered into Greece. The natural barriers there eventually created several dialects. That is, as they settled they were cut off from one another—consequently, a different dialect emerged from each local group. Unfortunately, because we lack literary remains, we know very little from this period about the Greek language.

**The Age of the Dialects, or the Classical Era (1000 B.C.-330 B.C.).** Geography and politics (e.g., independent city states) caused Greek to fracture into several dialects, four of which were predominant. There exist today few literary remains of the other dialects. (p. 14)

The main dialects were *Aeolic* \ē-ä' lik\ (whose extant remains are only poetic, e.g., Sappho \saf' ô\), *Doric* (also with only poetic remains, most notably of Pindar \pin' der\ and Theocritus \thē-äk' ra-tas\), *Ionic* (found in Homer, Hesiod \hē' sē-ud\, Herodotus \hi-räd' a-tas\), and Hippocrates \hip-äk' ra-tēz\), and by far the most influential, *Attic*. (pp. 14-15)

An offspring of Ionic, Attic was the dialect of Athens, during the “golden age” of classical Greek (4th-5th centuries B.C.). In this golden age, Athens was both the political and literary center of Greece. “Classical Greek,” though technically referring to all four dialects, is normally equated with Attic Greek, because of the proliferation of literary works that come from this dialect. Attic was thus a vehicle of refinement, precision, and beauty through which some of the world’s great literature was conveyed:

In it were composed the tragedies of Aeschylus \es' ka-las\, Sophocles \säf' a-klēz\, and Euripides \yu-rip' a-dēz\, the comedies of Aristophanes \ar-a-stāf' a-nēz\, the histories of Thucydides \thu-sid' a-dēz\ and Xenophon \zen' a-fan\, the orations of Demosthenes \di-mäs' tha-nēz\, and the philosophical treatises of Plato \plāt' ô\.

**Koīnή Greek (330 B.C. - A.D. 330).** When primitive tribes of Indo-Europeans moved into Greece, presumably they spoke a single language. Geography and politics caused it to fracture into a score of dialects, only to be united once again on the battlefield. Thus, ironically, the first military campaign in the third millennium B.C. brought confusion of tongues, while the last campaign not only restored linguistic unity, but forged a new language which was destined to become a world language.

The Koine was born out of the conquests of Alexander the Great. First, his troops, which came from Athens as well as other Greek cities and regions, had to speak to one another. This close contact produced a melting-pot Greek that inevitably softened the rough edges of some dialects and abandoned the subtleties of others. Second, the conquered cities and colonies learned Greek as a second language. By the first century A.D., Greek was the *lingua franca* of the whole Mediterranean region and beyond. Since the majority of Greek-speakers learned it as a second language, this further increased its loss of subtleties and moved it toward greater explicitness. (p. 15)

### **Koīnή Greek**

**Terminology and Historical Development.** Κοīnή is the feminine adjective of κοīnός (“common”). The feminine is used because it modifies διάλεκτος (*dialektos*: language), a feminine noun. Synonyms of Koine are “common” Greek, or, more frequently, Hellenistic Greek (which normally implies that Greek is a second language—i.e., the speakers have become Hellenized.).

The following are eight interesting historical facts about the Hellenistic Greek:

1. The golden age of Greek literature effectively died with Aristotle (322 B.C.).
2. The Koine was born with Alexander the Great’s conquests.
3. Hellenistic Greek began with Alexander’s troops who came from all the regions of Greece. The troops, then, produced a *leveling* influence.



4. It developed further as a second language of conquered peoples, when new Greek colonies sprang up due to Alexander's victories. The conquests, then, gave Greek its *universal* nature.
5. Koine Greek grew largely from Attic Greek (which, if you recall, was the dialect of the "golden age" of Greece), as this was Alexander's dialect, but was also influenced by the other dialects of Alexander's soldiers. (p. 17)
6. This new dialect, however, should not be perceived to be inferior to Attic. It was not a contamination of the pure gold of classical Greek, but a more serviceable alloy of the masses.
7. It became the *lingua franca* of the whole Roman Empire by the first century A.D.
8. When is Koine Koine? Though Koine had its birth in c. 330 B.C., this was its physical birth, not its linguistic. One should not suppose that all of a sudden, with the conclusion of Alexander's final battle, everyone began speaking Koine Greek! (Remember that Greece still retained its dialects while Alexander was conquering the world.)