

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

ointment to anoint her King beforehand for the burial that was to swallow up death in victory. They will thank the Father that He had one member of the race prepared to honour The Son against the last hour of His humiliation; and they will own that He found a fitting ministrant for the high office in this Hebrew maid, "as dewdrop pure and fair."

A. R. SIMPSON.

PS.—As the above was written at the seaside, where the writer had not access to any literature on the subject other than the article in the July EXPOSITOR, which made him take up his pen, he accepted a hint from the Editor that some of the acknowledged authorities might be consulted. His son sends him word from his manse at Kilcreggan that the ideas here advocated as to the separate individuality of the three women are confirmed by the arguments of Plummer in his *International Critical Commentary on Luke*. Plummer says: "The ἀμαρτωλὸς and Mary Magdalen and Mary of Bethany are three distinct persons"; and the writers on the Marias in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary* and the *Encyclopædia Biblica* come to the same conclusion.

The parenthetic reference in John xi. 2 seems to indicate that in the primitive Church, which had not yet been beguiled from the simplicity that is in Christ, the members continued to do what Jesus had said would be done wheresoever His Gospel should be preached through the whole world. They kept speaking to one another of what Mary of Bethany had done for the Lord's Anointed. So that it was quite natural for an evangelist beginning to tell the story of how the sorrow of "Mary and her sister Martha" was turned into joy by the raising of their brother from the dead to say, "It was the Mary of The Great Anointing we so often speak about, whose brother Lazarus was sick."

A. R. S.

### THE MEANING OF 'Ο ΚΟΣΜΟΣ IN JAMES III. 6.

Καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα πῦρ, ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας, ἡ γλῶσσα καθίσταται ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν, ἡ σπιλοῦσα ὅλον τὸ σῶμα, καὶ φλογίζουσα τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως καὶ φλογιζομένη ὑπὸ τῆς γέννης.

"THE tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue amongst our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell" (A.V.).

“The tongue is a fire; the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheels of nature, and is set on fire by hell” (R.V.).

As long as the Authorised Version of the New Testament was generally accepted as fairly representing the original Greek to the English reader, the rendering of ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας seemed to be little open to objection. The expression used could be paralleled by various colloquial phrases, such as “a world of troubles,” and by quotations from the poets, such as Dryden’s “A world of woes despatched in little space,” and Shakespeare’s “O what a world of vile ill-favoured faults Looks handsome on three hundred pounds a year.” To those, again, who could refer only to the Latin Vulgate, “a world of iniquity” appeared to be an adequate version of “Universitas iniquitatis,” as indeed it is, for the totality or sum total of a thing is the primary meaning of *Universitas*; the meaning of the whole world or universe being derived and secondary. But as the Vulgate rendering has had an enormous influence on subsequent versions, it may be well to observe at the outset that the meaning given to the Greek is misleading; for, apart from the necessary failure to express the Greek definite article, it is hardly competent to describe the tongue, however potent an instrument of evil it may be, as the sum total of iniquity.

Another Latin version (Speculum and Priscillian), quoted by Mayor, gives a better sense: “Mundus iniquitatis per linguam constat in membris nostris quae maculat totum corpus,” etc. A world of iniquity, a kind of sinful *microcosm*, is constituted in our members by means of the tongue, which stains the whole body. This, although it gives good sense, can hardly be called a translation of the Greek.

The difficulty for the average English reader began

when the Revisers of 1881 quite properly took due account of the Greek definite article, and rendered the expression "the world of iniquity." The new version at once removed the phrase from the region of ordinary colloquialisms. We speak of "a world of trouble," but we do not speak of "the world of trouble." Still, whatever difficulty the new version may create, the definite article is there and must be translated.

What then is the precise meaning of "the world of iniquity," and how can it be predicated of the tongue? Or, if we fail to discover a satisfactory answer to these questions, is there any other alternative rendering possible? In order to arrive at a conclusion on these points it is necessary to examine carefully the history and meaning of the Greek word *κόσμος* in the Classics and as used in the LXX and in the New Testament.

The derivation of *κόσμος* (*cosmos*) is uncertain, but it is probably connected with *κομάω*, to take care of, attend to, and so order. The primary meaning is therefore orderly grace or beauty, hence ornament, decoration, especially of women, *mundus muliebris*: from this came the meaning of, the world or universe from its perfect arrangement. In the LXX the prevailing meaning is that of ornament, but the word is also used of the host of heaven (Gen. ii. 1; Deut. iv. 19 and elsewhere), in the Apocrypha rarely of the inhabited world. In one passage, Proverbs xvii. 6, ὅλος ὁ κόσμος τῶν χρημάτων—a phrase not represented in the Hebrew text—the meaning may possibly be "the sum total of possessions," but this is by no means certain.

In the New Testament *κόσμος* occurs frequently, and especially so in the Gospel and Epistles of St. John, where it signifies: (1) the world in which we live, "every man coming into the world," (πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον), i. 9. (2) The universe, "the world was made

by Him" (ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο), i. 10. (3) All who dwell in the world, "God so loved the world," etc. (οὕτω γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, κ.τ.λ.). (4) The evil world, the world as opposed to Christ and His teaching, "I am not of the world" (ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου), xvii. 14.

In the Pauline Epistles the same meanings are found, and in 1 Peter iii. 3, *κόσμος* is used in the prevalent Old Testament sense of adorning or ornament, "Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning (ὁ ἔξωθεν . . . κόσμος) of plaiting the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold or of putting on of apparel." With this compare 1 Timothy ii. 9, "In like manner (I will) that women adorn themselves (κοσμεῖν ἑαυτάς) in modest apparel," etc. Nowhere in the New Testament does the word appear to have the meaning of the mass or totality of things, and yet this is the signification attached to it in St. James iii. 6 by the majority of modern commentators.

Schleusner, citing the passage under consideration, renders the word by *magna copia*, *abundantia*, *multitudo*, and compares its use in 2 Peter ii. 5, "the world of the ungodly" (*κόσμῳ ἀσεβῶν*)—certainly not a parallel instance. Schoettgen in the same sense explains the word by *insignis aut infinita multitudo*, but illustrates the use only by 2 Peter ii. 5 and Proverbs xvii. 6 (see supra). Alford translates, "that world of iniquity," and quotes with approval a comment by Estius "*quia (lingua) peccata omnigena parit.*" So also Bishop Moberly, "It means that every sort of evil and mischief in the greatest abundance may be wrought by an ungoverned tongue."<sup>1</sup>

Of these renderings, which are typical of others, it may be remarked that the presence of the definite article seems to be ignored; and that a rare and possibly unsupported meaning is given to *κόσμος* (*cosmos*).

<sup>1</sup> S. P. C. K. Commentary.

But a more serious objection lies against these and other interpretations on the same plane. Dr. Plumtre puts the case thus, "As uttering all evil thoughts and desires, no element of unrighteousness was absent from it, and that which includes all the elements of anything well deserves the name of being its *cosmos*." <sup>1</sup> Is there not here a logical confusion between the utterance of evil of all kinds, and the evil itself or the source of evil? Undoubtedly the tongue, by its utterance, may become the instrument and source of many evils, but it would be contrary to the teaching of St. James himself in this very Epistle to assert that the tongue contained all the elements of unrighteousness. "It is lust that when it hath conceived beareth sin," i. 15. Again, "Whence come wars and whence come fightings among you? Come they not hence even of your pleasures that war in your members?" iv. 1. Here sin and unrighteousness are conceived of quite apart from the evils of the tongue, and are capable of existing unuttered in the silence of shame.

Another explanation which is much more definite is drawn from the conception of the whole constitution of man as a *microcosm*, or world in itself, an image in small of the whole universe. "*Frequens est a macrocosmo ad microcosmum metaphora*," says Bengel. In this *microcosm*, as in the larger universe, there is a world of unrighteousness as well as a divine element of righteousness and truth, and so, as Professor Mayor says, "in our *microcosm* the tongue represents or constitutes the unrighteous world." And the same view is taken by Dr. Knowling.

It is in favour of this interpretation that a well supported meaning is given to *κόσμος* (*cosmos*); but, on the other hand, as we have seen above, the tongue does not comprise either in the universe or in the *microcosm* of man the whole

<sup>1</sup> Camb. Bible, *ad loc.*

of unrighteousness. The tongue is an instrument of good as well as an instrument of evil. Moreover the conception of the nature of man as a *microcosm* seems to be foreign to the simplicity of St. James's style and thought.

If then it is difficult to accept the rendering of the word which we are discussing either in the Authorised Version or the Revised Version, is there any other possible interpretation which would be justified by classical and Hellenistic usage alike, and which would be free from the objections to which the other suggested interpretations are open ?

It will have been seen in the survey which we have made of the use of *κόσμος* that the meaning which lies most near to the root idea of the word is that of beauty as expressed in order, as in the order of the universe or the orderly array of an army, and so generally "ornament" or "embellishment," and that this is the predominant use of the word in the LXX version of the Old Testament.

If then we render this passage, "the ornament or embellishment of unrighteousness is the tongue, defiling though it does the whole body," we give it a meaning which makes the definite article intelligible, and which removes the difficulty of regarding the tongue as the totality of evil, and which is most natural in a writer whose thoughts and mode of expression are so deeply affected by his familiarity with the Old Testament Scriptures.

There is, moreover, another reason which strongly favours this interpretation.

This is the *locus classicus* in the New Testament on the subject of the evils which rise from the unbridled use of the tongue ; and it is hardly conceivable that in a description of so much weight and importance, conveying warnings of the utmost moment to his disciples at a distance, the Bishop of the Church in Jerusalem should have omitted to particularise or even to hint at the one most glaring and

perilous offence of the tongue which the Psalmists and Prophets of the Old Testament never failed to denounce in this connexion, the offences of guile and deceitfulness.

A few instances may be cited: "Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue" (Job xx. 12); "Under his tongue is mischief and iniquity" (Ps. x. 7); "With flattering lip and with a double heart do they speak" (Ps. xii. 2), and so *passim*; "He that hideth hatred with lying lips" (Prov. x. 18); "He that hateth dissembleth with his lips" (Prov. xxvi. 24); "Their tongue is deceitful in their mouth" (Micah vi. 12). But it is unnecessary to multiply examples. It is hardly too much to say that where sin is mentioned in connexion with the tongue that sin is deceit and falsehood. The character of the Israelite indeed is that of one in whom there is no guile (John i. 47); and of the Master Himself it is said: "Neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. ii. 22).

It is to be observed in all these, and numberless parallel passages, there is no attempt to fasten on the tongue the whole mass or totality of wickedness, but the special characteristic of deceitfulness is attributed to it over and over again.

The Greek dramatist notes the same besetting sin of the tongue, and uses almost the same language as St. James :

οἱμοι κακούργους ἄνδρας ὡς ἐγὼ στυγῶ  
οἱ συντίθεντες τᾶδικ' εἶτα μηχαναῖς  
κοσμοῦσι.—Eur. Ion. 832

So also Shakespeare, in the *Comedy of Errors* :—

Look sweet, speak fair, become disloyalty,  
Apparel Vice like Virtue's harbinger.

Indeed so characteristic of the tongue is this evil that to 'gloze' or 'gloss' words directly derived from the Greek γλῶσσα signifies to deceive or cheat. "Glozing the evil that is in the world" (Jer. Taylor). "So glozed the tempter" (Milton). "Lay these glozes by" (Shakespeare).



Considering this consensus of indictment, whereby the tongue is accused of this predominant sin of deceitfulness, it is reasonable to expect to find the same indictment conveyed by *ὁ κόσμος* in this passage—the adorning (see 1 Tim. ii. 9, R.V.) that is the fair-seeming screen or cloke of iniquity, the embellishment of unrighteousness.

An objection raised against this rendering of *κόσμος*, cited by Alford from Huther, seems hardly worthy of consideration. *Κόσμος*, he says, “never signifies that which actively adorns, but that wherewith a thing or person is adorned.” The distinction is certainly not obvious, and the proposed interpretation is not without good authority. Mayor quotes Gesner, Wetstein, Semler, Storr, Ewald, and others as giving it their support. It is paraphrased in Cramer’s catena as: *ἐγκαλλώπισμα [δοκεῖ] τῆς ἀδικίας*. Compare with this *ἐπικάλυμμα τῆς κακίας* (or cloke of maliciousness) (1 Pet. ii. 16).

“Thus interpreted the sentence might have been written *ἡ γλῶσσα . . . κοσμοῦσα τὴν ἀδικίαν καὶ σπιλοῦσα ὅλον τὸ σῶμα*. The tongue adorning and embellishing iniquity, and yet defiling and staining the whole body and personality of a man.”<sup>1</sup>

ARTHUR CARR.

## STUDIES IN THE PAULINE THEOLOGY.

### X. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

(1) THE purpose of God is fulfilled in the individual believer by the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. This conception is not new in the Christian revelation, still less new in the teaching of Paul; although the filial relation between God and Man constituted in Christ gives to this

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the present writer’s notes on St. James, *Cambridge Greek Testament*.