

lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”—*Num.* vi. 24–26.

“Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”—*Matt.* xxv. 34.

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THE LANGUAGE USED BY THE APOSTLES.

DR. ALEXANDER ROBERTS'S recent volume, *Greek the Language of Christ and His Apostles*, is an excellent example of the service that may be done to New Testament criticism by continuous, we may almost say, life-long devotion to a single problem. He has collected with remarkable diligence every scrap of evidence bearing on the question. He has put forward his arguments with great candour and fairness; and maintains a tone of unvarying courtesy towards opponents, even where he is compelled to regard their views as inconsistent or extravagant. But it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he has at times encumbered his main contention by elaborate demonstrations of facts, which few would be found to dispute; and that, on the other hand, he has strained the faith of his readers by pushing inferences beyond the warrant of facts in the interests of the extreme form of his theory. It is manifestly unfair to pick holes here and there in a series of arguments which derive much of their force from their cumulative character. But at the same time it is impossible to deal adequately within narrow limits with those parts of his work which derive such cogency as they may possess from theories still strongly contested. For this reason a general estimate of his volume may be left for other critics or for some other occasion. The purpose

of the present paper is simply to examine the force of the arguments drawn from the Acts of the Apostles. We are here free from all the difficulties raised by such questions as the mutual relations of the Synoptic Gospels, or the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the persons to whom it was addressed. We are dealing with a work to which sober criticism assigns an early date, and which, by universal admission, at least contains a large amount of contemporary record inextricably embedded in the text. We can hardly find surer ground on which to stand in our examination of a question which is at least primarily of historical and not of controversial interest.

Let us define precisely the point at which Dr. Roberts parts company with the great majority of contemporary scholars. The evidence of a widespread and almost universal familiarity with the Greek language in Palestine is overwhelming, and has rarely been seriously challenged. The existence of a popular Aramaic dialect is not less positively demonstrated. Dr. Roberts admits that this was the language of domestic life and of familiar intercourse. The more cautious of his opponents readily allow that Greek was so far intelligible to the bulk of the Palestinian Jews that they could use it for business purposes and understand it when employed in legal proceedings. The question at issue is solely whether it would be naturally used among the Jews themselves for religious purposes. Any evidence bearing on the language used by Jews in their intercourse with Greeks, Romans, or other foreigners must be at once ruled out of court. It tends to prove only what has been already conceded.

The first discourse to be considered is that of St. Peter, recorded in Acts i. 16-22. It was addressed to "the brethren," about 120 in number. There is no reason whatever to believe that any "Hellenists" were included in this number. They were undoubtedly mainly Galilæans,

but it is by no means improbable that disciples from Jerusalem were among them. Is it then conceivable that Peter would himself have used the phrase, "that field is called in their tongue *Aceldama*"? ¹ It is not necessary to decide whether *vv.* 18, 19 are to be regarded as a parenthesis inserted by St. Luke. Readers of *THE EXPOSITOR* will not have forgotten Mr. Page's forcible arguments against this view. Whether we accept his contention or not, it is equally possible to take the words, which Peter cannot have used, inasmuch as the Aramaic was quite as much his language as theirs, as an explanatory addition incorporated by Luke. They are natural and almost necessary in the case of a Hellenist writing to a Greek like Theophilus. In denying that "Hebrew was in any form the language of Galilee," Dr. Roberts forgets that he had already described it as "the mother-tongue of the native land" of the deaf and dumb man of Decapolis, the vernacular language of his country. Unless therefore it is assumed to start with, that the language of St. Peter was Greek, there is nothing in this passage to indicate it. But what is the evidence given by the quotations? Had they been literally taken from the Septuagint, no conclusion could have been legitimately drawn as to the use of this version by Peter, unless this differed from the Hebrew on some point used in the argument. But they do not agree with the *LXX.* more closely than might have been expected in the case of an independent translation from the Hebrew. We have no means of knowing whether the report of this speech, be it written or, as was perhaps more probably the case, oral, used by Luke was in Aramaic or in Greek. In either case, is anything more natural to suppose than that, if there was any occasion for translation, the rendering of

¹ Dr. Roberts should not have ignored the fact that the evidence against the insertion of *ἀκα* is, in the judgment of the best critics, decisive. In spite of this, he repeatedly lays much stress upon the word.

the quotation would be given in the words of the version most familiar to the translator? In the newspaper accounts of the death of the late German Emperor the texts quoted by his chaplain were, as a matter of course, given in English in the words of the Authorized Version, unless there was some material difference in the sense. So far then the current view may be regarded as unshaken. If we do not say with Meyer, "It is self-evident that Peter spoke in Aramaic," we may at least say that there is no evidence that he did not, and that without such evidence, the great probability is that he did.

Next comes the difficult incident of the "speaking with tongues." It has no direct bearing on the question before us, for whatever its nature it was clearly temporary, and in the view of the narrator, miraculous. Whether it is not possible to bring it into connexion with the unquestionably historical *glossolalia* of the Corinthian Church, by assuming that it consisted in an ecstatic utterance of religious emotion in the native dialect of the speaker, and that various nations were represented among the early believers, so that many of the strangers visiting Jerusalem were surprised to hear the tones familiar to them in their own countries, we are not then called upon to decide. Dr. Roberts finds an incidental confirmation of his theory in the fact that the devout Jews dwelling at (*κατοικοῦντες*) Jerusalem were able to express to each other what he oddly calls "their mutual wonder," and that therefore they must have had some common language in which to communicate with one another, which must have been Greek. That they were mutually intelligible is of course evident. What the language was in which they addressed each other must be decided by other considerations. But granting that it was probably Greek, this does not carry us one step beyond what is generally conceded, nor help Dr. Roberts to establish his own special thesis.

We come then to the speech of Peter. Dr. Roberts starts with assuming that "the conversion of no less than three thousand" was the result of this speech alone. But it is physically impossible that so large a number as this could have heard the words of Peter, even if we are rash enough to suppose that every one who came within the sound of his voice was at once converted by it. Besides, the text distinctly says that the converts came to "Peter and the rest of the apostles." The number of the baptized was the result of the teaching of the whole body of the Apostles—if we ought not rather to say, of the 120 disciples. If, therefore, there is any evidence that Peter spoke in Aramaic, addressing himself to the bulk of those present, to whom this would be a familiar language, there is nothing in the narrative to preclude us from supposing that other addresses were delivered in Greek to those to whom this might be unintelligible. Thus the only positive evidence is to be derived from a consideration of the quotations. These generally follow the LXX.; but for the reason already adduced, this fact is by no means decisive in favour of Dr. Roberts. He says, indeed, "there is no reason to doubt that the citations from the Old Testament were actually made as still set before us by his inspired reporter"; but this is to take a merely mechanical view of inspiration, which Dr. Roberts himself is elsewhere by no means willing to defend. St. Luke himself was certainly not present at the discourse; he must have used some one else's report, and whether the original report used by him directly or indirectly was in Greek or in Aramaic is just the question at issue. Now there is one piece of evidence, overlooked by Dr. Roberts, which points somewhat strongly in the direction of the latter language. Peter says, "God raised Him, having loosed the throes of death" (ver. 24). Many attempts have been made to show that *ᾠδῖνας* may here have the meaning of "bonds," but they are utterly unsuccessful. Is it not

far more probable that this strange expression is not due to Peter himself, who in all likelihood spoke of loosening the "snares" of death (חֲבֵלֵי מוֹת), and that his Greek reporter has substituted for this the erroneous version of the LXX., with which he would be more familiar? If so, we may agree with Meyer that this betrays the use of a Hebrew source. But if with Dr. Salmon we go so far as to say that Peter's discourse "must, from the nature of the case, have been delivered in Greek," what are we to say of the logic of Dr. Roberts's deduction from this assertion? The "nature of the case," *i.e.* the mixed character of the audience, made it necessary that Peter should use Greek. Therefore, says Dr. Roberts, this concession is of itself conclusive as to the point in question, "that Greek was the ordinary language of public address in Palestine," even where the audience was not mixed! That is to say, if Lord Salisbury, addressing a meeting at Carnarvon, where there may be a large number present from various parts of the United Kingdom, uses the English language, this is conclusive proof that Welsh is not used as the ordinary language for religious and political addresses to an audience of Welshmen. It does not even prove that there are not hundreds of thousands of Welshmen who follow spoken English with difficulty, and for whom their native language is a far more usual and effective medium of address.

The discourse in iii. 12-26 bears no clear traces of the language in which it was spoken. The quotations are loosely from the LXX., and where they depart from that, they depart equally from the Hebrew. To say that "it would be mere perversity to suppose that they were uttered in any other than the Greek language," is to regard as proved what we have seen to be by no means proved. Dr. Roberts assumes that *πᾶς ὁ λαός* here addressed was the same audience as that addressed at Pentecost. He ignores the fact that whereas stress was laid on the mixed charac-

ter of the former audience, nothing of the kind is indicated here.

In iv. 8-12 we have the report of a speech delivered by Peter before the ecclesiastical rulers at Jerusalem. This would be a crucial instance in favour of Dr. Roberts, if he could prove that it was delivered in Greek, for here we have a Jew addressing Jews. But he contents himself with asserting, instead of proving. "It bears every mark of having been delivered in the Greek language." But if we ask, "what single mark does it bear?" we are left unanswered. *ἐνώπιον ὑμῶν* does not come into evidence on either side; for although it is not classical Greek, it is common enough in the LXX. as a rendering of a Hebrew idiom; and the same may be said of *ἐξουθενηθεῖς*, which is not found in this passage in the LXX., but occurs often enough elsewhere. The "unmistakeable reference to the language of the LXX." which Dr. Roberts discovers, is found only in the words *κεφαλῇ γωνίας*, and it is hard to see what other rendering of the Hebrew would have been more natural.

In the same chapter the prayer of the disciples contains a literal quotation from the LXX., but the interpretation of this fact depends entirely upon the view which we take of the relation of Luke to his sources. If we assume that the "inspired reporter" was incapable of reproducing a passage from a Hebrew psalm in the form most familiar to himself, this is strong evidence that Greek was used in devotional gatherings. But the assumption is one which seems fatal to all sober criticism.

We now come to an important term, the current interpretation of which strikes at the very basis of Dr. Roberts's contention. It is therefore essential for his purpose that he should succeed in disproving it. The Christian Church at Jerusalem appears in vi. 1 as divided into two classes, the *Ἑλληνισταί* and the *Ἑβραῖοι*. To what distinction does this division point? Tradition and critical authority

are clear enough in their verdict. The Ἑλληνισταί are the Jews who spoke Greek as their native language; the Ἑβραῖοι are those who, as natives of Palestine, spoke Aramaic as their native tongue. This definition is implied in the Peschito version of ix. 29, and it is supported by a catena of authorities, from Chrysostom downwards, of overwhelming weight. It must be carefully noticed, however, that it does not imply that the Ἑβραῖοι had *no* knowledge of Greek; this assumption would involve us in very serious difficulties: but it does assert that there was a broad distinction in language (as, doubtless, in other respects also) between the two classes. Now this is an assertion which Dr. Roberts is imperatively required by his theory to refute. His contention is that the Ἑλληνισταί were marked by their acceptance of Greek culture and usages, the Ἑβραῖοι by their adherence to the strictest Judaism; that this distinction existed before and outside of the Christian Church, and continued to remain within it; and that the Hellenists were a small minority in the Church at Jerusalem. He would further identify the Ἑβραῖοι with "them of the circumcision who believed" of x. 45 and xi. 2; and similarly with the Judaizing party in the Churches of Corinth, Philippi, etc. He has no difficulty in showing that Ἑλληνίζω *might*, on the analogy of similar formations, mean "to favour Greek usages"; but there is no attempt to show that the word has this force, as against the weighty authority of Lobeck, who limits it to language. But let us observe what follows from Dr. Roberts's identification of "those of the circumcision" with the "Hebrews." We are compelled to suppose that even before the foundation of the Christian Church there was a body among the Jews, so considerable as to constitute one of two parties into which the nation might be—unequally, it is true, but without evident absurdity—divided, who made light of the distinctive rite of their religion; and that this division was

prominent in the earliest days of the Church. But where is there evidence of any such party before the conversion of St. Paul, and the interview of Peter with Cornelius? Dr. Roberts's assertion, "it is certain that almost from the beginning there was a liberal party in the Church, who did not imagine that the peculiar forms of Judaism were to be preserved under the gospel," needs much more support than he finds for it in the accusation brought by the false witnesses against Stephen, even though Baur and Zeller here take much the same view. Dr. Roberts is further compelled by his theory to assume that the Hellenists were a very small section of the Church, that the seven deacons, whom he takes to have been all Hellenists (a view very doubtful in itself), attended only to the wants of the poor "in that party with which they were themselves connected," and that the needs of the great majority of the poor Christians were "doubtless" seen to by "the officials of the Hebrew party," who still continued to exercise their functions. On this it is enough to remark that there is not a hint in the text of any pre-existing system of relief for the poor, other than that directed by the Apostles, nor of the limitation of the functions of the deacons now appointed to the Hellenists; and further that it would have been a very strange way of maintaining the unity of the Church to establish a distinct set of officials to give charitable relief to one small section of the believers, differing from the rest, according to Dr. Roberts's contention, not in language or in origin, but in the breadth of their religious views. We may observe too that the seven were elected by the *πλήθος τῶν μαθητῶν*, surely an unnatural course, if they were to be so limited. Indeed it is far from certain that all the seven were in any sense Hellenists.

But again with Dr. Roberts's interpretation, what are we to make of the *Ἑλληνισταί* of ix. 29? It is not explicitly asserted, but it is most natural to suppose that St. Paul's

discussions were carried on, like those of Stephen, in the synagogues of the Hellenists. We can understand why St. Paul, trained in all Greek learning, should have preferred to discuss with those whom he was specially fitted to meet; but why there should be synagogues of the "liberal party among the Jews," or why Paul should have addressed himself solely to these, we are unable to imagine.¹ The distinction then between Hebrews and Hellenists remains a formidable difficulty in the way of Dr. Roberts's theory, and one which he has by no means removed.

With regard to the speech of Stephen, we need find no difficulty in admitting that it was almost certainly delivered in Greek. It would be by no means inconsistent with the mediating theory which this paper is defending, that Stephen should have been unable to use any other language with facility, and that the Sanhedrin should have readily followed it. But the former supposition at once does away with what Dr. Roberts calls the decisive nature of the case. If Stephen, a Greek by name, and very probably brought up in a Greek city, could use no language but Greek, this surely does not prove that Greek was the regular language of public intercourse in Palestine.

A similar remark applies to the two speeches of St. Peter (chap. xi.) and St. James (chap. xv.) before the Church at Jerusalem. In both cases there were special reasons why Greek was the more appropriate language. On the other hand it is hard to see why any one *εἰ μὴ θέσιν φυλαττόμενος* should contend that a letter from a Roman soldier to his official superior was written in Greek rather than in Latin. In the case of the Jerusalem Council, Dr. Roberts has himself given the reason why Greek must have been used. "It would

¹ There seems to be very little in favour of Archdeacon Farrar's view (*St. Paul*, i. 126 note), that these Hellenists were *Judaic* Greek-speaking Christians (Halachists). St. Paul would surely be more likely to "dispute" with Jews than with Christians.

have been truly strange if the deputies [from Antioch] on coming up to Jerusalem . . . had found themselves precluded, by the use of Hebrew in the assembly, from understanding one word of what was said." But the greater the stress which we lay upon the special cause for the use of Greek on this occasion, the less weight can we attach to it as evidence of the ordinary practice. It proves the possibility, which few now care to deny; it leaves untouched the probability in other quite dissimilar cases, which is just the point at issue.

Nothing now arises until the twentieth chapter, where Dr. Roberts maintains, with some plausibility, that the Jews from Asia must have used Greek in raising an outcry against St. Paul, and that this must have been understood by the ἄλλοι of Jerusalem. This may be readily admitted as probable, though not demonstrated, for it is rash to deny altogether any knowledge of Aramaic even to Jews from the province of Asia. But he seems to strain a point in dealing with the demand of the chief captain to know the reason of the uproar: "Some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude," therefore they must have understood his demand, and have been able to answer it. In this "we again find evidence of the thorough acquaintance with Greek which was then possessed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Does this show more than that in a mixed multitude there were many who could to some extent use the language?

The question of Lysias to St. Paul, "Canst thou speak Greek?" raises difficulties, not removed by Dr. Roberts's somewhat forced hypotheses, but only indirectly bearing upon our question. We may notice, however, that on Dr. Roberts's own showing it was quite natural for a man, whether originally from Jerusalem (as he thinks) or not, to be supposed to know no language but Aramaic. If a knowledge of Greek was absolutely universal, Lysias would

not have assumed, even hastily, that the man before him knew nothing of it.

And now what conclusion are we to draw from the fact that St. Paul addressed the people in Aramaic? Unquestionably we may assume that it was an agreeable surprise to them, and that they expected to be addressed in Greek; otherwise the words "they kept the more silence" would be meaningless. But then, was this expectation due to their knowledge of the usual practice, or to the conceptions which they had formed of the character and position of the speaker? The second alternative is ignored by Dr. Roberts, but it is surely well worth consideration. What did the populace of Jerusalem know of St. Paul? We may certainly say that he was an utter stranger to almost all of them; very few, even of the Christians of Jerusalem, can have known him by sight. The Jews knew nothing more than this—that he was a man whom their fellow countrymen from Asia accused of teaching all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and the temple, and that he had polluted the holy place by bringing into it Greeks. Whatever might have been the custom with others, how could they have expected him to address them in their native language? Just in proportion therefore to their previous suspicion of his Hellenistic character was their gratification at hearing the accents of their national tongue, and the wise tact of St. Paul in employing it. No deduction appears to be legitimate except that a Jew who had long lived abroad might have been expected to speak in Greek rather than in Aramaic, and that he would have been understood, though possibly with little pleasure and not without difficulty. But another point may be put forward as worth consideration. Dr. Roberts insists more than once upon the entire absence of evidence that Aramaic was ever used by the Jewish colonies living outside Palestine. Now at least twenty,

possibly five-and-twenty years had passed since Paul had made any stay in Jerusalem. Let us suppose the case of an Englishman who has been away from all English-speaking society, with the exception of a very few days, for twenty years. He has had no English literature, not even an English Bible. He has been using during all this time a foreign language. Can we imagine him, immediately after his return, addressing in English with fluency and force a tumultuous public meeting? Yet this is what we must suppose in the case of St. Paul if we accept Dr. Roberts's views as to the entire disuse of Aramaic among the non-Palestinian Jews.

It is unfortunate for the purpose of this inquiry that the speech of St. Paul contains no quotation from the Old Testament. It would have been of extreme interest to see whether Luke, in reporting passages cited in an Aramaic speech, assimilated them, as we have seen is quite conceivable, to the LXX. version.

The speech in chap. xxiii. was delivered in the presence of Lysias. Dr. Roberts is therefore evidently right in assuming it to have been made in Greek, and as being additional evidence, if any were needed, that this language could be understood by the Sanhedrin. Further than this it does not take us.

Whether Tertullus pleaded before Felix in Latin or in Greek is a question which has no bearing on the language used by Jews in their intercourse among themselves: that St. Paul's speeches to Felix and to Festus were in Greek may be assumed as a matter of course. But it may be of some significance that the words from the Old Testament employed by our Lord in addressing Paul in the Hebrew tongue exactly agree with the LXX. version.

The remaining speeches in the Acts were delivered under circumstances which made the employment of Greek inevitable.

It may now be left to the judgment of the reader whether the evidence of this book is, as Dr. Roberts contends, absolutely decisive on the question at issue. Let it be repeated that this question is not whether Greek was very commonly understood, and used in intercourse with foreigners. It is whether it was the fitting language of popular address, and therefore that *usually* employed by Christ in His recorded discourses, as well as by His Apostles. I have of necessity only examined a small portion of the series of arguments on which Dr. Roberts bases his conclusions; but it is a portion which he regards as absolutely decisive. I venture to submit that it falls very far short of this; and that if his thesis cannot be otherwise established, it certainly will not be proved from the Acts of the Apostles.

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CRITICAL NOTES ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

THE object of the following notes is to submit to the consideration of Biblical students certain facts, which, so far as I know, have not hitherto received much attention. I have endeavoured to avoid all those extraneous questions which so often mar and perplex exegesis, and I have written as briefly and simply as I could, because the subject is so interesting that I should regret if I had given any rhetorical "colour" to my arguments.

The Lord's Prayer is given in two places of Scripture, Matthew vi. 9-13 and Luke xi. 2-5, the version of Matthew being much fuller than that which the correct text of Luke presents. Apart from minor variations, the latter commences with the single word "Father," instead of "Our