

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 *Journal of Biblical Literature* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jbl-01.php

pretation of their translation, "and for the half of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." The Hebrew is **וַחֲצִי הַשָּׁבוּעַ יִשְׁבֹּת זֶבַח** translated in the LXX *καὶ ἐν τῷ ἡμίσει τῆς ἑβδομάδος κ.τ.λ.* Of course the choice between the translations turns upon the meaning of **וַחֲצִי**. The word itself is quite capable of either sense, and is frequently rendered in both ways in the A.V. and the Revision alike. As examples, the translation *in the midst* is retained by the revisers in Jer. xvii. 11; Zech. xiv. 4. In later Hebrew, in the Masoretic notes at the end of the several books, it is the ordinary word for "the middle." The choice of translation in Dan. ix. 27 must be determined by the interpretation of the prophecy. Fidelity to the Hebrew did not require a change in the Authorized Version, which is sustained by the LXX.

Εἰμί and γίνομαι with Participles in the New Testament.

BY PROF. G. H. SCHODDE, PH.D.

PROBABLY, with the sole exception of the strange use made of the conjunction *ἵνα* by the New Testament writers, no syntactical peculiarity of Biblical Greek is more striking than the construction of *εἰμί*, and less frequently of *γίνομαι*, in connection with a participle, as auxiliary verbs, or at least with the virtual force of auxiliary verbs. The instances in which this occurs are so frequent, especially in the gospels and the Acts, that the mere mention of the fact will suffice to make clear what is meant.

An analysis of the cases here under consideration shows that not in all instances is the auxiliary force of the verb equally pronounced. The clearest instances are those where *εἰμί* is used with the participle as a mere circumlocution for a finite form of the verb. Thus, *e.g.* with the pres. part. *ἐστὶ προσαναπληροῦσα . . . καὶ περισσεύουσα*, 2 Cor. ix. 12; much more frequently of the imperfect and aorist, as *ἦν πράγων*, Mark x. 32; *ἦν κοθιεύων*, iv. 23; *ἦσαν καθήμενοι*, Luke v. 17; *ἦν ἐκβάλλον*, xi. 14: then of the future, as *ἔσονται πίπτοντες*, Mark xiii. 25; or with the perfect, as *ἦν ἐστώς* for the aorist; and very frequently with the part. perf. pass., as *ἦν ἡ ἐπιγραφὴ ἐπιγεγραμμένη*, Mark xv. 26, etc.

Somewhat different from these instances are those where the writer evidently intended that this construction is to express continued or

habitual action, and thus gives to the participle more of a predicate value, e.g. ἦν κηρύσσων, Mark i. 36, Luke iv. 44; ἦσαν νηστεύοντες, Mark ii. 18; ἦσαν συλλαλοῦντες, Mark 9, 2, etc. Cf. on this construction the grammars of Winer, § 45, 5, and especially Buttmann, § 144, 24-12, as also Grimm's edition of Wilkies, *Clavis Novi Testamenti*, under εἰμί II. 4.

The use of an auxiliary verb, or of a verb in an auxiliary sense, seems, at first glance, to be so un-Greek in character, that the reader will naturally think of tracing this peculiarity of New Testament Greek to some extraneous source. Especially will this be the case when he recalls to mind that the language of Palestine in Christ's day, the idiom in which the New Testament writers undoubtedly did their thinking, and the moulding influences of which, whether this was consciously done or not, is seen in many peculiarities of this branch of Hellenistic Greek, had developed this construction to a remarkable degree, and allowed it even to usurp the place of the finite verb. But yet this construction was not alien to the Greek genius, although it is found but rarely in the classical literature extant. Greek grammarians and lexicographers agree that this construction does at times occur in the best of Greek authors. Cf. the exhaustive grammar of Krüger, § 56, 1 sqq., who cites also the verb ὑπάρχω as used in this manner, especially by Demosthenes; then, Hadley-Allen, § 981; Winer, § 45, 5, and Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon*, under εἰμί B. 2, for such examples. An examination of these passages shows that while some of them would admit of another and different interpretation, yet in the majority of cases we have here the same grammatical phenomenon that we find so much more frequently in the pages of the New Testament, and that the verb εἰμί is to all intents and purposes an auxiliary verb.

But when we ask the next question, namely, why the New Testament writers, at least some of them, make such frequent use of a construction which was of such rare occurrence in classical Greek, the answer undoubtedly is to be found in the fact that in their times the Semitic tongues had already made this idiom a matter of everyday usage among the people, both in speaking these tongues as also in employing the Greek as the learned language of the times. In Old Testament Hebrew this construction is also much more the exception than the rule. The most satisfactory discussion of the use of יהיה with the participle in this sense is found in Ewald's *Heb. Grammatik*, § 168, c. 2, who cites such passages as Gen. xxxvii. 2; Zech. iii. 3; Job i. 14 f.; 2 Sam. iii. 6; 1 Kings xii. 6; Deut. ix. 7; xxii. 24;

Ps. x. 14; cxxii. 2, and others. Cf. also Gesenius *Thesaurus, sub verbo*, 3, aa, and Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Grammatik*, § 134, 2, c. Among the extra-Hebraic tongues this construction seems to have been very common, at least at a later date. In Biblical Aramaic it occurs again and again. In Kautzsch's recently published grammar of Biblical Aramaic, § 76, 2 f. (p. 139), is found a classification and full discussion of the instances found in Ezra and Daniel. The early adoption of this construction in Hellenistic Greek is seen from the fact that the Septuagint translation has it as a fixed *usus loquendi*, as is also the case in the Targumic and Talmudic idioms. Cf. the examples in Buxtorf, *Lexicon Chaldaicum*, etc., under **הוה** or **הוה**. In the Syriac, or East Aramaic, a dialect in kind virtually identical with the Biblical and Targumic Aramaic, this construction has in many places crowded out the regular finite forms of the verb. In the Peshito the use of the verb *h'vo* with the participles is even more frequent than that of *εἶμι* in the Greek New Testament.

In the South Semitic languages virtually the same construction is found, but with the marked peculiarity that here the participle used with the auxiliary verb is supplanted by some form of the *verbum finitum*. In Arabic the equivalent of **הוה** or **הוה** is not used, but its place is taken by *kāna* (Heb. **כָּן**), and this verb is regularly used with the perfect and the imperfect of the verb in an auxiliary sense, just as are auxiliary verbs in the English and other modern languages. Cf. Wright's *Arabic Grammar*, Vol. II. §§ 3, 9, 10. In the Ethiopic the copulative verb is *halava*, which is generally used with the imperfect of the verb to express a continued action in the future; like *amaturus est*, but frequently also in a purely auxiliary manner. Cf. Dillman's *Äthiopische Grammatik*, § 88, 2 (p. 138 sq.).

The facts here stated seem to show conclusively that the use of this peculiar construction in the New Testament is capable of a good historical and philological explanation; that it is at least not un-Greek in its character, but was probably developed to its extensive employment by the influence of the Semitic way of thinking, to which the New Testament writers were given.