BEFORE inquiring to what extent and for what purposes the optative mode is used in Hellenistic Greek, it is proper to ascertain its use in other Greek writings. And here we may remark that this mode plays a most important part in all the classic Greek writers from Homer to Plutarch; and while the subjunctive mode has four tenses, the present, perfect, and the two aorists, the optative has five, the imperfect, pluperfect, the two aorists, and the future.

The optative mode in classic Greek is used to express a supposition, possibility, purpose, wish, a mild command, and indirect discourse. But this wide use of the mode became greatly contracted in the degeneracy of the language, and has entirely disappeared from modern Greek.

Xenopho\textsuperscript{1}, in his first Book of Anabasis, consisting of about thirty-seven pages, uses the optative mode \textit{one hundred and three times}, while Arrian (about A.D. 150) in the first twenty pages of his Expedition of Alexander the Great, uses the optative \textit{nineteen} times, and Philostratus in the first twenty pages of his Life of Apollonius of Tyana (written in the first part of the \textit{third century}) has the optative mode forty-two times. On the other hand, the historian Polybius (who flourished in the second century B.C.) in the second book of his history, making about \textit{seventy-four} pages, uses the optative only \textit{thirty-three} times.

Leaving these heathen authors, let us examine those Christian writers called \textit{Apostolical Fathers}, respecting their use of this mode. We begin with Clement of Rome. In his \textit{Epistle to the Corin-}
(written probably about A.D. 85), containing about twenty-eight pages octavo, he uses the optative mode only six times —four of them as imperatives or prayers, once in the sense should, and once after ἵνα to indicate a purpose preceded by the first aorist indicative (Address; sec. xxxiii.; xl.; xliii.; xliv.; lvi.). In sec. xxxix. are two optatives in quotations from the Old Testament. The Epistle of Barnabas, written probably in the last part of the first century, contains about seventeen pages, but makes use of the optative twice only, viz.: Μὴ γένωται, sec. vi. 13; and δῴη (sec. xxi. 5), both expressing a prayer or wish. The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, belonging to the first part of the second century, and making five or six pages, uses the optative four times, namely: πληθυσθείη (in the Address); Δῴη (sec. xi. 4); Δῴη and οἴκοδομήται (sec. xii.); all expressing a prayer or wish.

The Epistle to Diognetus, written in the last part of the first century, or in the beginning of the second, making eight or nine pages, uses the optative mode eleven times (ii. 3, 4, 10; iii. 3, 4; iv. 5; vii. 2, 3; viii. 3). None of these express a wish.

The teaching of the Twelve Apostles, probably belonging to the same age, and making about ten pages, contains the optative mode in one instance, ἴνα θέλητε, may ye be delivered from (sec. 5).

The Epistles of Ignatius, consisting of twenty or twenty-five pages, use the optative mode in sixteen instances always as a wish or prayer. Justin Martyr in his First Apology (about A.D. 139), containing fifty-six pages, employs the optative mode thirteen times, but only once in the sense of an imperative when explaining the meaning of Ἀμήν as γένωται, let it be done.

In the Shepherd of Hermas (about A.D. 140), consisting of about sixty-three large octavo pages, the optative mode is found but once, εἰ μὴ λάβοι, if he do not receive (Sim. ix. 12, 4).

The Account of the Martyrdom of Polycarp (written about A.D. 160), containing about eleven octavo pages, the optative mode occurs seven times, as a prayer (Address; xiv. 2; xvii. 3); as indirect quotation (εἰ, ix. 2); as interrogative, indicating affirmation with μή (ii. 2); as a supposition (ii. 4); as an end or purpose after ἵνα (vi. 2).

We now proceed to the discussion of the optative mode in Hellenistic Greek, the special subject of our paper, and begin with the

---

1 We use the edition of the Apostolical Fathers (except Justin Martyr) published by Gebhardt, Harnack, and Zahn.
Greek version of the Old Testament, the LXX. (executed between B.C. 280-150), and take, as fair samples of this version, Genesis, Isaiah, and Proverbs. We begin with Genesis. In this Book we find the optative mode used in the following passages: Ἡλία, Let God enlarge (ix. 27); Ἐλα, Let God judge (xvi. 5); Καθὰ ἀν ἀφέωκας, Just as it might please (xix. 8); Τί ἂν εἴη τοῦτο, What would this be (xxiii. 15)? Δῷ, May God give thee (xxvii. 28); Ἑνδογήσας ... ἀνέζησα ... πληθναία ... δώ (all aor. 3d sing.), May God bless ... increase ... multiply ... give thee (xxviii. 3, 4); Ἡνίοχος, May he look upon (xxxi. 49); Ἀλλὰ ... ἄλλα, Let him have pity (ver. 28); Ἔλθῃ ... ἐκεῖ ἔχων, As one might see (xxxiii. 10); Ἑρίωμαι, Might I find or Let me find (xxxiv. 11); Δῴη, May God give (xliii. 13); ᾿Ελεήσας, Let him have pity (ver. 28); Μή γένοετο, Let it not be (xliii. 7); Πῶς ἂν κλέψαμεν, How could we steal (ver. 8)? Μή γένοετο (ver. 17); Ἑνδογήσας ... πληθυνθήσασα, Let him bless ... and let them be multiplied (xlvi. 16); Ποιήσας, Let him make (ver. 20); ᾿Ελθὼν ... ἔρισα, Let not my soul come ... and let not my heart contend (xliii. 6); ᾿Ανέσωσαν (3d plu. 1st aor.), Let thy brethren praise thee (ver. 8).

In these twenty-four instances (all that we can find in Genesis) the optative mode expresses a wish or prayer in every instance except four.

In Isaiah we find the following optatives: Μή ἐφφανθείητε, May ye not be delighted (xiv. 29); Διέλθω, When the hurricane passes through (xxi. 1); γένοετο, Let it be (xxv. 1); Μή ἐφφανθείητε, May ye not be delighted (xxvii. 22); Εἰσαγοῦσα, Let the Lord thy God hear the words (xxxvii. 4); ᾿Επιλάθωσθαι, If a woman should forget (xliii. 15); ᾿Ανενέγκασαν, Let the children of Israel bring (lvi. 20).

It is thus seen that there are but seven instances of the optative in Isaiah, although the Book is nearly the same size as Genesis.

The Book of Proverbs contains but six instances of the optative, viz.: ὑπολείποντο, Let him leave it (xi. 26); Πῶς ἂν νοῆση, How could a mortal think (xx. 24)? Ἐἰ τίς καταπάτη, If any one should drink down (xxiii. 7); ᾿Εκκόψασαν ... καταφάγοισαν, Let ravens pick it out ... and let the eagle's brood devour it (xxiv. 52); Ἐὶ φράσῃσι καὶ λυμαίνοιτοι, If one should hedge up ... and destroy (xxv. 26).

We proceed in the next place to examine the Apocryphal Books of the Old Testament respecting the optative mode. The Wisdom of the Son of Sirach—written in the second or third century before Christ in Hebrew, and forty or fifty years later translated into Greek—contains about forty-four pages. In this work we find the follow-
ing twelve instances of the optative: Πῶς ἂν εὑροῖς, How couldst thou find (xxv. 3); Ἐπιπέρου, May the lot of the sinner fall upon her (ver. 19); Μεγαλονθείης, Mayest thou be magnified (xxxiii. 4); ᾿Εὑροῖσεν (2d aor.), Let them find (ver. 11); Ἐπιπέρου, Let him fall into (xxxviii. 15); Δψη, May he give (xliv. 26); ᾿Εὑρη, Let it be (xlvi. 11); ᾿Αναβάλω, May their bones bloom afresh (ver. 12); ᾿Αναβάλω, May the bones of the twelve prophets bloom afresh (xlix. 10); Δψη, May he give (l. 23); ᾿Εὑρανθείη ... μὴ ισορροπεῖτε, May your soul be delighted ... and may ye be not ashamed (li. 29). In every instance but one, the optative expresses a wish or prayer.

The Wisdom of Solomon, consisting of about sixteen pages, contains the optative in one instance, namely, Δψη, May God grant (vii. 15). The Book of Tobit, consisting of about twelve pages, has the optative mode in twelve instances, viz. : Μὴ ἰδομεν, May we not see (iii. 9); ᾿Εὐδοκίσασα, Let them bless (iii. 11); ᾿Ος ἐπάρχει, as it may belong to thee, i.e., according to what thou hast (iv. 8); ᾿Εὐθος, Mayest thou go (v. 14); ᾿Εὐδοκισε, May ye be prospered (ver. 17); Φθάσαν, Let it not come to; Γενοῦτο, Let it be (ver. 19); Δψη, Let him give (vii. 17); ᾿Ακούσαμι ... ἀποκαταστήσαν, May I hear ... may he restore ... and may he give (x. 12); ᾿Εὐθος, Mayest thou go (xii. 16).

The Book of Judith contains nineteen pages, and has the optative mode in the following eight instances: Κρίναι, Let God judge (vii. 24); Δψη ... τελιώσῃ, May God give ... and may he accomplish (x. 8); Πουναῖ, May God perform; Γενοῦτο, γενοῦτο, Let it be done, let it be done (xiii. 20); ᾿Εὐδοκίσαν, May God be well pleased; Γενοῦτο, Let it be so (xv. 10). The Book of Baruch, consisting of six pages, has no optative; but the Epistle of Jeremiah, containing seventy-two verses, has a single optative, Κληθεῖσαν, Could be called (ver. 29).

1 Esdras contains about nineteen pages, but has not a single passage in which the optative is used.

The first two books of Maccabees make sixty-eight pages, and contain the following optatives: Γενοῦτο, May it be ...; Μακρονθείη, Let it be far away (I Mac. viii. 23); Μὴ γένοῦτο, May it not be (ix. 10); Μὴ μοι γένουτο, May it not be to me (xiii. 5); Μέλοι, That it may be a concern (xiv. 42); Μέλοι, with the same meaning (ver. 43); Ἀγαθοποιήσαν, May he do you good ...; Μησοθείη ... δῴη ... διανοιγα ται ... πουκόνται ... ἐπικούρεσαι ... καταλλαγεῖν ... μὴ ἐγκαταλίθησαι, May he remember ... give ... open ... make ... listen to ... be

---

1 This passage is probably spurious.
reconciled... and not leave you (2 Mac. i. 2-5). He asked Πῶς τοις εἰς ἐπιτήδειος, What sort of a person was suitable (indirect quotation) (iii. 37). He abused Onias ὡς αὐτός τε εἰς τὸν Ἡλιόδορον ἐπισκεψιῶς, On the ground that he had attacked Heliodorus (iv. 1); Εἰπὲ δὲν, would be (x. 28); ᾧν κρυφεῖ, would be decided (xv. 21).

3 Maccabees contains thirteen pages, but has no optative mode.

In the story of Susanna, the optative mode does not occur; but it is found five times in the prayer of Azariah, viz.: Μὴ παραδῶς, Do not give us up (ver. 10); προσδεχθῆσθαι, May we be accepted (ver. 15); Ἐντραπέσθαι... κατασχυθῆσαι... συντριβεῖ, Let them be put to shame... be disgraced... and let their power be crushed (vers. 19, 20). The hymn of the three Hebrew children has no optative, but it is found once in the story of Bel and the Dragon, viz.: Μὴ ἐπηρεῖ, If you do not tell me (ver. 8).

We shall in the next place inquire to what extent Philo and Josephus use the optative mode.

The first of these writers, a philosophic Jew of Alexandria (born B.C. 20), makes a quite frequent use of the optative mode in his works. Taking up the first volume of these writings, we find that in the first twenty pages he uses the optative sixteen times. In two of these instances the optatives form a protasis and an apodosis, making a hypothetical period, just as we often find in Attic Greek. In the first twenty pages of his sixth volume, he uses this mode seven times, two of which are quotations from Plato.

Josephus (born A.D. 37), whose vernacular was Aramaic, in his Greek writings makes frequent use of the optative mode. In the first twenty pages of the sixteenth Book of his Antiquities, he employs it twenty-five times; and in the first twenty pages of the fifth Book of The Jewish Wars, he uses this mode seventeen times. None of these instances in Philo and Josephus express a prayer or command.

The Optative Mode in New Testament Greek.

In discussing this part of our subject, we will give all the instances of the use of the optative mode that we can find in Westcott and Hort's edition of the Greek Testament.

In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark we find no passage in which

---

1 In this investigation we have used Tischendorf's edition of the LXX. and Apocrypha.
2 Josephus uses the hypothetical period with the optative both in protasis and apodosis. Vol. V. 254.
the optative occurs. The Gospel of Luke, however, has the optative in eleven instances, as follows: She was troubled at the remark, and was considering ποιεσεν ἵναι ὁ ἐσπασασθῇ οὖν, what this salutation was (i. 29). Here ἵνα is the optative of indirect discourse. Γένοντ' οὖν κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπων τὸν Ἰησοῦν, what he would wish it (the child) to be called (ver. 62). While the people were in expectation and all were considering in their minds μὴ ποτε αὐτὸς ἐν ὁ χριστός, whether perhaps he was the Christ (ii. 16); optative of uncertainty. And they conversed together about τί ἐν ποιήσατε τῷ Ἰησοῦν, what they should do to Jesus; optative of deliberation (vi. 11). They asked him τίς αὐτή ἐν ἡ παραβολή, what this parable was; indirect discourse (viii. 9). There arose a dispute among them, τίς ἐν ἐν μελέτην αὐτῶν, who of them would be greater (ix. 46). And having called one of the servants, he inquired τίς ἐν ἐν παραβολή, what these things could (or might) be (xv. 26). This is the reading of B; but Ν A omit the ἐν, which Tischendorf follows. Then the optative would be indirect discourse, and the rendering should be, What these things were. Tregelles agrees with Westcott and Hort. He inquired, τί εἰσε ἐν οὐδεν, what this thing was (xviii. 36); indirect discourse. Having heard (these things), they said, μὴ γένοιτο, let it not be so (xx. 16). And they began to question each other, τί τις ἐφανερώσε ἐν αὐτῶν, who then it was of them (xxii. 23); indirect discourse.

In the Gospel according to John we do not find a single passage in which the optative mode is used. This is presumptive proof that its author was a Palestinian Jew.


In this Book the optative mode occurs seventeen times in the following passages: When the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were in doubt concerning them, τί ἐν γένοετο τούτο, what this would (prove) to be (v. 24). Τὸ ἄργυριον τοῦ συν σῶν σαΐ ἐν ἐν ἄπωλεν, Let thy money be (go) with thee to perdition (viii. 20). He said, Πώς γὰρ ἐν διενάμενην, For how could I be able unless, etc. (viii. 31); the interrogative with the optative to express impossibility. But when Peter doubted in himself, τί ἐν εἰς τὸ ὅραμα, what the vision would be, i.e., what might be its intent (x. 17). Searching the Scriptures daily, ἐν ἔρχεται ταῦτα ὅταν, if these things were so (xvii. 11); optative of indirect discourse. Some were saying, Τί ἐν θέλω ... λέγετο, what would this babble wish to say...
THE OPTATIVE MODE IN HELLENISTIC GREEK. (ver. 18). To seek God, εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὑρομαι, if perchance they should grope after him and find him (ver. 27) ; optative expressing a supposition. Ἐσπενδέα γάρ εἰ δυνατὸν εἰη αὐτῷ, For he was making haste, if it were possible for him (xx. 16). Ἐπιθυμάντερο τίς εἴη, He inquired who he was (xxi. 33) ; indirect discourse. Who ought to have been present before thee and to have accused me, εἰ τι ξέοιν πρὸς εἰμε, if they had anything against me (xxiv. 19) ; indirect discourse. Before the accused, Ἐχοι τοὺς κατηγόρους τόπον τε ἀπόλογος λάβοι περὶ τοῦ ἐγκλήματος, Have the accusers face to face and have an opportunity for a defence concerning the charge (xxv. 16) ; optative of indirect discourse. Ι, being in doubt, inquired, εἰ βούλομαι πορεύεσθαι, if he was willing to go to Jerusalem (ver. 20) ; indirect discourse. Paul said, Εὐδαιμόν ἂν τῷ θεῷ, I could wish to God, etc. (xxvi. 29). The most of them advised that they should put to sea from that point, εἰ πως δύναυτο...παραχειμάσαυ, if they were able in any way to winter in Phœnicia, etc. (xxvii. 12). A bay into which they were deliberating, εἰ δύναυτο ἐκσώσαυ τὸ πλοῖον, if they should be able to save the ship (ver. 39).

In the Epistle of James, we find no instance of the optative mode.

In the First Epistle of Peter, we find three passages in which the optative mode is used, viz.: Πληθυνθείη, Let grace and peace be multiplied (i. 2) ; Ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ πάντας, But even if ye should suffer; optative protasis (iii. 14) ; Εἰ θέλω τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, If the will of God should desire it (ver. 17).

In the Second Epistle of Peter, we find the optative in one instance, viz.: Πληθυνθείη, Let grace and peace be multiplied (i. 2).

In the Epistles of John, no optative occurs, but this mode is found in one instance in Jude, Πληθυνθείη, Let be multiplied (ver. 2).

The Epistles of Paul.

In the Epistle to the Romans, the phrase Μὴ γένουτο, May it not be, let it not happen, occurs ten times, namely: in iii. 4, 6, 31 ; vi. 2, 15 ; vii. 7, 13 ; ix. 14 ; xi. 1, 11. He also uses Δόῃ, May God grant (xv. 5) ; and Πληρώσας, May God fill you (ver. 13). In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the optative is found in three instances, namely: Μὴ γένοερο, May it not be (vi. 15) ; and Εἰ τῶν, If it should happen, perchance (xiv. 10 ; xv. 37). 2 Corinthians contains no optative.

In the Epistle to the Galatians, we find the optative, Μὴ γένουτο, used three times, namely: in ii. 17 ; iii. 21 ; vi. 14.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, the optative occurs once, Δόῃ, That he may give, after ἵνα preceded by a prayer (i. 17).
In the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, the optative does not occur. In the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, the optative occurs five times, namely: Κατευθύνατε...πλεονάζατε καὶ περισσεύσατε, May our Lord Jesus direct...may the Lord increase, and make you abound (iii. 11, 12); Ἀγάπατε...τηρήσει, May God sanctify you...and may your spirit and soul and body be kept (v. 23).

In 2 Thessalonians, we have the optative in four instances, namely: Παρακαλέσατε...στηρίξατε, May he comfort your hearts and establish you (ii. 17); Κατευθύνατε, May the Lord direct (iii. 5); Δώση, May the Lord give you (ver. 16).

The First Epistle to Timothy has no optative, but 2 Timothy has three instances of this mode, namely: Δώση, May the Lord grant, twice in i. 16, 18; Μὴ ποτὲ δώση, Perhaps God may grant (ii. 25).

The Epistle to Titus contains no optative, but that to Philemon has one instance of it, Ὀναίμην (2 aor. mid.), May I have joy of thee (ver. 20).

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find one instance of the optative, Καταρτίσατε, May God make you perfect (xiii. 21). This is presumptive proof that an Alexandrian did not write this epistle, as it is not likely that the use of this mode in but one instance would have satisfied his fine Greek taste.

The closing book of our New Testament Canon, the Apocalypse, contains no optative, which is not strange when we consider the Hebraistic style of the book.

We thus find that the optative mode occurs but sixty-six times in the entire Greek Testament of Westcott and Hort. But it is interesting to inquire how far these instances rest upon our oldest Greek manuscripts. We find upon examination that our two oldest codices, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, and also the Alexandrian, in every instance except one or two, support the text of Westcott and Hort in this matter. The Alexandrian has δόναται in Acts xxvii. 12, instead of δόνατο; and Vaticanus has δῷ (sub.) in Ephesians i. 17, where Westcott and Hort have δώσῃ (opt.). Vaticanus lacks that part of the New Testament containing the three optatives in 2 Timothy, the one in Philemon, and the one in Hebrews.

We have seen that in nearly all the cases in which the optative occurs in the New Testament, it is used to express a wish or prayer except in the writings of Luke. This use of the optative is also most common in the LXX, and in the Apocryphal writers of the Old Testament. The reason for using the optative so often in the third person, instead of the imperative,—as is the general usage in Classic prose
Greek, — becomes obvious upon a little reflection. As this person is generally used to express a wish or prayer to God to perform something for others, — in cases where the petitioner has no special claims upon the Almighty, — or to deprecate certain things, it is proper that the optative, a mild imperative, should be used.¹ Also in the phrase μὴ γένοετο, there may be an implied reference to God to prevent what is wrong or unpleasant to the deprecator.

Here the question arises, Why did the Hellenists generally make so little use of the optative mode? We would answer, that as Jews they had been accustomed to the use of Hebrew or Aramaic, languages that have but two tenses, a perfect and a future (or imperfect, as the grammarians now generally call it), and possess no distinct forms to indicate finite modes; and co-ordinating their sentences rather than subordinating them, they did not feel the need of the delicate optative. Greek syntax certainly requires, as a general rule,² that the primary tenses should be followed by the subjunctive, and the secondary tenses by the optative when a purpose is to be indicated. But the Jew had never been accustomed to any secondary tense in his vernacular, so that the optative seemed almost useless to him to express a purpose, and the subjunctive seemed most natural. In indirect discourse, the Hellenist found it admissible to use the indicative mode, and as this harmonized with his vernacular, he naturally followed it. Hellenistic Greek uses hypothetical periods where the supposition is contrary to reality. Thus in John xi. 21: Κύριε, εἰ ἐσθιεῖς ἢ δὲ οὐκ ἄν ἀπέθανεν ὁ ἀμφελός μου, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died. But if the thought had been that Christ's presence might be a reality, it could have been expressed in Classic Greek by an optative both in the protasis and apodosis. But Martha would have said in the style of New Testament Greek, Ἐὰν ἦς (or εἰ εἶ) δὲ οὐκ ἀποθανεῖται ὁ ἀμφελός μου, If thou wilt be (or art) here, my brother will not die. In Mark iii. 2, it is stated that they were watching (him to see) if he will heal (εἰ θεραπεύσει) on the sabbaths. But in Luke vi. 7, the text is, ἢ εἰ ἱλαστήριον εἰς αὐτῷ, if perchance he will find something on it. Classic Greek would most likely take the optative ³ instead of the indicative in such a statement.

¹ But when God wishes a thing done, he commands it (Gen. i.).
² Thucydides in many instances violates this rule.
³ Thus Arrian, B. I. 2, 5: Alexander ordered the archers to shoot their arrows, and the slingers to hurl their missiles, into the barbarians, εἰ τοὺς πρωταλίσκατον, if by any means he might call them forth from the woods into the open ground.
The Greek language possessed such a great variety of construction of sentences, both in regard to modes and tenses, that the Hellenist had generally but little difficulty in finding some form of admissible expression in which to clothe his thoughts and facts.

We have already stated that in Modern Greek the optative mode is entirely wanting. In accounting for this, we may observe that it is a well-known fact that language reflects the thoughts and feelings of the people among whom it has sprung up and by whom it has been developed. Nothing but the optative, with its nice shades of thought and expression, could satisfy the subtle, skeptical intellect of the ancient Greeks, especially the Athenians. But when once their intellectuality and culture declined, they no longer had use for the delicate optative, and the subjunctive mode met all their wants. It is not at all probable that the Latin subjunctive contributed much to the elimination of the optative from the modern Greek.