

**THE GREEK PREPOSITIONS:
STUDIED FROM THEIR
ORIGINAL MEANINGS AS
DESIGNATIONS OF SPACE**

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GREEK PREPOSITIONS,

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AS DESIGNATIONS OF SPACE.

BY
F. A. ADAMS, PH. D.

It is of more importance to us to learn how the Greeks spoke than to know what they said.—JULY.

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INTRODUCTION.

WHATEVER theory we adopt of the origin of language, it is agreed by all scholars that its words are derived largely from notions of things in space. This book presents the results of a study of the Greek Prepositions from the stand-point of that admission.

No class of words in the Greek is more important than the Prepositions; and none are more imperfectly understood; yet these are the words that, beyond all others, bear on their face the suggestions of space. But the clew is soon lost that conducts from these primary uses into the wide realm of thought, of reasoning, of will, of passion, and life. And yet such a clew there must be, connecting by real, though subtle analogies, the primary meanings with all the meanings which follow.

But learners of the Greek find no harder thing, after passing the rudiments, than to fix in mind the meanings of verbs compounded with prepositions. The difficulty is natural, and on the whole creditable to the intellect of the embarrassed student. He has nothing but his memory to aid him; neither the Dic-

tionary nor the Grammar give instruction here—they give only authority. The learner is left with few incitements to his power of discrimination and logical deduction. The definitions in the Lexicons burden his memory; they do not instruct him to find his way. Even Treatises on the Greek Prepositions do not evince any systematic endeavor to interpret the prepositions through a logical deduction from their primary meanings as designations of space. The learner under these conditions naturally becomes indifferent; for what he cannot do intelligently, he becomes, after a time, willing not to do at all; and, perhaps, in the end, he adds one to the number of those who complain that they have spent much time on the Greek with little profit.

To show that the picture here outlined is not too highly colored, let a college graduate, who has done well in his Greek, take, for example, the verb *λείπειν*; and, prefixing to it successively the prepositions *ἀπό*, *διὰ*, *ἐκ*, *ἐν*, *ἐπί*, *κατά*, *παρά*, *ὑπό*, let him form English sentences that, if written in Greek, would require the use of these prepositions respectively compounded with the verb. His certain failure is the result of many former defeats, where his natural inquisitiveness has not been encouraged and rewarded.

When he finds the verb *μένειν* compounded with *ἀνά*, with *διὰ*, *ἐν* and *κατά*, with *περί* and *ὑπό*, he finds himself in a like difficulty. The adjectives *δηλος*, *ἐκδηλος*, *ἐνδηλος*, *κατάδηλος*, all contain the

notion *clear*, with differences which forbid the use of one for another. What are these differences? And through what lines of thought does the learner come to see these differences, so that the knowledge of them shall no longer depend on a burdened memory, but shall be a natural possession of his instructed intelligence? The present work is an endeavor to clear somewhat this seeming jungle of the Greek Prepositions—to show that it is not a jungle, but a garden, whose alleys and paths have become overgrown through neglect, and lost to view. Or—to speak without a figure—the object of this work is contained by implication in the following Thesis:

The Greek Prepositions, suggestive primarily of notions of space, show through all their uses such analogy to the primary meanings as affords aids indispensable to a satisfactory understanding of the language.

The *motive* and *object* of the work, thus stated, naturally lead to the question of its *method*. It begins by analyzing the notions of space, and the notions that accompany these in nature; it then seeks for the *analogues* of these in human experience. Thus the whole field of human life, of thought, passion, and purpose, is laid open, and the Prepositions enter it in their own right.

The store-house of facts used in the present study is the language of the Greek Literature—the Greek Language at its best. As the work is Psychological,

not Etymological, it does not discuss the origins of words. It is not the forms of the words, but the thought that underlies them, that is here the object of search; not the changing fortunes through which a written word has passed till it comes to the form in which we have it in our hands; but what the word means now that is in our hands, and how it comes to mean what we know it does mean. As the prepositions primarily denote relations of space, we have in these notions, and others which these carry with them, a point of departure—not a working hypothesis awaiting its justification, but a basis of facts settled by common consent; *ἀνά* primarily means *up*, and *κατά* *down*; *ἐπί* means primarily *on* or *upon*, and *ὑπό* means *under*; and so of the rest. In beginning at this point we begin where the learner must begin; and where he must stay till he learns to love the Greek, if he ever comes to love it at all.

As the ideas of space and the notions these carry with them were always present, it is reasonable to believe that they were operative in the formation of language from the first; that they served as landmarks pointing out the paths along which human speech should move. For reasons already suggested, the present work does not enter this wide and attractive field. It is written with the humbler aim of aiding the students who are learning to read Greek, and the teachers whose work is to instruct them.

This work makes no claim to be a complete

treatise on the Greek Preposition. The author has restricted himself to the presentation of the subject in a single line of observation—omitting whatever was not pertinent to his special object.

In this view he trustfully commends it to the hospitable reception that will be readily accorded to a thoughtful endeavor on new ground.