




The Greek language as a means of Transmitting the Christian message

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 <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.107.219>

Introduction

There are moments in the history of nations when language transcends its conventional limits. It ceases to be merely a means of communication and becomes a vehicle of culture and spirit, a bearer of thought and wisdom, and, in the fullness of time, an instrument of Divine Revelation (Babinotis, 2008). Such a language was—and remains—Greek, a language which Odysseas Elytis (1911–1996), one of Greece’s most important modern poets and a major figure in twentieth-century European literature, described as having “the light of God within it.” The Greek language, born on the shores of the Aegean and forged through philosophy and poetry, stood ready to receive with faith, humility, and love the true Word (Logos). It proved capable of expressing the inexpressible mystery of the Incarnation and of assisting humanity in understanding God Himself, who became flesh and dwelt among us—not as an abstract concept, but as a living Word, as a person. Greek played a decisive role in the transmission and dissemination of the Christian message in the ancient world. When Christianity emerged in the first century CE, Koine Greek functioned as the common language of the Eastern Mediterranean. This linguistic reality enabled Christianity to move rapidly beyond its Jewish origins and to become a universal faith. For this reason, the present study examines the Greek language in order to understand how it became the principal medium through which the Christian message was proclaimed and how it served as the conceptual canvas upon which the salvation of humankind was articulated.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative historical–theological methodology, integrating textual analysis, historical linguistics, and patristic theology in order to examine the role of the Greek language in the transmission and formulation of the Christian message. The research is



primarily interpretive and analytical, rather than empirical, and is situated within the framework of Orthodox Christian theological tradition. The analysis proceeds through a historical examination of key linguistic contexts, beginning with Hellenistic *Koine* Greek as the *lingua franca* of the Eastern Mediterranean, followed by the role of the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament in early Christian proclamation. These sources are examined not merely as historical artifacts, but as theological texts whose language shaped doctrinal expression and ecclesial identity.

Patristic writings constitute a central body of primary sources. Selected works of the Greek Church Fathers—including Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Athanasius, Maximus the Confessor, Cyril of Alexandria, and John of Damascus—are analyzed to demonstrate how Greek linguistic categories were employed, transformed, and refined in the articulation of Christian doctrine. The study does not attempt an exhaustive survey of patristic literature but focuses on representative figures whose writings exerted decisive influence on theological language. Exegetical analysis draws upon traditional Orthodox hermeneutical approaches, incorporating literal, typological, moral, and anagogical readings where relevant. These interpretive modes are used descriptively, to illustrate how theological meaning was historically communicated, rather than normatively imposed. Particular attention is given to key theological terms (e.g., *logos*, *ousia*, *hypostasis*, *physis*, *energeia*) in order to demonstrate the precision and conceptual capacity of the Greek language in doctrinal formulation.

Secondary sources from historical theology, philosophy, and linguistics are employed to contextualize the primary texts and to engage contemporary scholarship. The study acknowledges the limits of linguistic determinism and therefore avoids treating Greek as an exclusive or absolute medium of revelation. Instead, it examines Greek as a historically providential instrument—one that enabled clarity, universality, and continuity in the early Church, while remaining open to translation and inculturation, as evidenced by later missionary practices. Overall, this methodology allows for a balanced assessment of Greek as both a historical medium and a theological tool, without conflating linguistic privilege with theological exclusivity.

Preparation - The role of Hellenistic *Koine*

Following the conquests of Alexander the Great, Greek became the predominant language of culture, administration, and education across much of the Hellenistic and later Roman world. The widespread use of *Koine* Greek—the common language spoken by ordinary people—enabled the Christian message to be communicated broadly and effectively. As Saint Paul articulated the universal scope of the Gospel, “There is neither Jew nor Greek... for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Greek thus functioned as the *lingua franca* of the ancient world.

From the Homeric epics to the present day, the Greek language has continued to express the deepest dimensions of the human spirit, including the most universal of all: the message of Christianity. With the conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BCE, Greek spread throughout the Mediterranean basin, the Near East, and almost the entire known world of the time. The emergence of Hellenistic *Koine* served as a linguistic bridge among peoples who spoke diverse native languages. As Babiniotis (2008; 2009) observes, “*Koine* was the first example of global linguistic communication,” allowing distinct cultures to coexist within a shared linguistic framework. Within this environment, the new faith of Christianity found particularly fertile ground for its expansion, as Greek functioned as an international language, comparable in many respects to the role of English today (Wallace, 1996; Stergioules, 2017).



The pioneering role of Greek in the transmission of Christianity can be traced back to the third century BCE, when, under Ptolemy II Philadelphus (Fraser, 1972), the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into the Hellenistic common language of the time. This translation, produced in Alexandria, Egypt, became known as the Septuagint. It was undertaken primarily for the Jews of the Diaspora, many of whom no longer spoke Hebrew and instead communicated in Greek. The Septuagint, together with the Greek New Testament, constituted the Bible of the early Christian Church and played a decisive role in the dissemination of the Christian message.

Through its Greek form, the Old Testament prepared Greek-speaking Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean world to receive the Apostolic preaching, to recognise Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and to embrace Christianity. This linguistic choice, however, was not merely pragmatic. Greek also proved particularly well suited to expressing and formulating the theological depth and subtlety of the Christian message in a manner intelligible to a wide audience (Constantelos, 1967). Several foundational Christian terms entered theological usage through the Septuagint, including λόγος (*logos*)—word, δικαιοσύνη (*dikaioσynē*)—righteousness, σωτηρία (*sōtēria*)—salvation, and διαθήκη (*diathēkē*)—covenant.

The Greek language as the cradle of Theology

The New Testament was written almost entirely in *Koine* Greek. The rich Greek vocabulary permitted early Christians to express deep theological ideas with accuracy. A central example is the term Logos (λόγος), used in the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word (*Logos*), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

The evangelist John uses the term Word (*Logos*), an ancient Greek concept with multiple meanings including speech, logic, principle, order, great moments. He fills it with divine revelation. This concept resonated with both Jewish beliefs about God’s creative word and Greek philosophical ideas about reason and order, making the Christian message intelligible to a broader audience (Skouteris, 1998; Papademetriou, 2015).

Thus, the “Word” of the philosophers - which, for Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 540–480 BCE) one of the earliest Greek philosophers to use the concept of λόγος (*logos*) was the harmony of the world. In Fragment B1 (DK 22B1) Heraclitus states “Although this Logos is eternal, human beings are unable to understand it, both before hearing it and after hearing it for the first time” (τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ’ ἐόντος αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι...). This shows *logos* as an objective, universal principle, not a human invention.

The Stoic philosophers developed the concept of λόγος (*logos*) into a fully systematic doctrine, making it one of the most significant ideas in ancient philosophy and a key connection to early Christian thought (Sharples, 1996). For the Stoics, the rational power of nature, become synonymous with a person. The *Logos*, as the Son of God, takes on flesh, but also the language of men. What language, then, would be more suitable to express the miracle of the Godhead becoming men than the language that had already coined the term “being”, “word”, “essence” and “substance”? (Alexopoulos, 2012). To the Stoics, the *Logos* was the rational principle governing the cosmos and Divine reason as well as the law of nature and an active principle that directs matter. The Stoic *Logos* is immanent and so God is not external to the world but within it, arranging all things (Long, 1986).

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, was widely used by Jews of the Diaspora and early Christians. New Testament writers commonly quoted it, highlighting the continuity between Judaism and Christianity. Jesus himself appealed to Scripture in Greek-



speaking contexts, as seen in Luke 4:18, where he reads from Isaiah in the synagogue. This use of Greek Scripture allowed Christians to announce Christ as the fulfilment of prophecy.

St. Justin Martyr in the 2nd century CE stated “For each man spoke well in proportion to the share he had of the spermatic word (*logos spermatikos*), seeing what was related to it (Skouteris, 1998). But they who contradict themselves on the more important points appear not to have possessed the heavenly wisdom... For whatever things were rightly said among all men are the property of us Christians.” (Second Apology, 13)

This passage underlies the idea that Greek philosophy functioned as a preparation or tutor for Jesus Christ. In other words, Greek thought prepared men to accept the divine word. The Greek language, with its plasticity and its ability to express the abstract without losing the concrete, was as if it were destined to become the cradle of theology (Makrides & Roudometof, 2013).

St. Basil the Great puts it with striking clarity “Education of the Greeks is not entirely the work of demons, but insofar as it contributes to virtue, it is inspired by God.” (The words of the Greeks are not demonic, but inspired by God, insofar as they lead to virtue).

Thus, he argues:

“We must not surrender the guidance of our minds entirely to these men [the pagan authors], as though they were pilots of a ship, but must take from them whatever is useful for virtue and discard the rest. For just as bees do not visit every flower indiscriminately, nor attempt to carry away all that they find in those they visit, but take only what is suitable for their work, so we also, if we are wise, shall take from pagan learning whatever befits us and is allied to the truth.” (Ad adolescentes, 2).

He further explains... “All that has been well said by pagan authors is not harmful. For moral instruction and the cultivation of virtue come from God, even if they reach us through secular learning.” (Ad adolescentes, 3)

God himself, in a way, uses the Greek language as an instrument of divine economy so that Christ message could be understood universally. This is the mystery of linguistic incarnation: Justice. God became man, so his truth became human speech in the Greek language, proving that God transforms human expression and uses the human mouth as His tool for the purpose of understanding His message.

Of course, the event of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit spoke in the language of each person, reveals that the Church respects the language and identity of all people. In Acts 2:1–4 (Byzantine text):

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues as of fire appeared to them, and a tongue rested on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

The rendering of theological terms is not a simple technical task, but a complex process, because the Word of God must be fully embodied in the culture of the people. Greek was also essential to missionary activity, predominantly in the writings of Saint Paul. His epistles, addressed to communities across the Roman world, were written in Greek and created the foundation of Christian doctrine. Paul highlighted the communicative clarity of language when



preaching: “Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what is being said?” (1 Corinthians 14:9). This reflects the practical importance of Greek as a shared language for teaching and unity.

The history of Orthodox missionary work in the centuries that followed demonstrates the importance of translating the Holy Scriptures and liturgical texts into the language and dialect of each nation. The example of the missionaries and Saints, Cyril and Methodius in the 9th century, who systematically attempted to bring the Gospel to the Slavs by creating an alphabet, remains unique in Christian history (The Step of the Church, 2021; Duce, 1985).

The Holy Father's and the Sacred Transformation of Language

From the fourth century CE onward, the great Fathers of the Church deliberately chose to draw upon the classical Attic dialect of the fourth century BCE in composing the texts and prayers of the Divine Liturgy. Rather than employing the vernacular Greek of their own era, they returned to an earlier linguistic form, which they regarded as more capable of conveying sacredness, precision, and theological depth. This same Attic linguistic tradition was also adopted by Byzantine hymnographers and by the divinely inspired Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils, with the Symbol of Faith standing as a characteristic and enduring example (Alexopoulos, 2021).

Through the writings of the Church Fathers, the Greek language attained its highest theological vocation. The Three Hierarchs—Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom—were not only reformers of Christian morality, but also profound reformers of Christian speech. The precision of the Greek language and its capacity to express abstract realities with clarity played a crucial role in articulating the mysteries of faith. Basil the Great (c. 329–379 CE), with his philosophical depth, introduced into Christian theology the rigour of Aristotelian conceptual analysis and the disciplined use of Greek logic, thereby strengthening doctrinal clarity without compromising spiritual depth (McGuckin, 2001).

Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329–390 CE), through his poetic intensity and rhetorical brilliance, transformed language into prayer and hymn, rendering expressible what had previously seemed ineffable. Drawing upon classical Greek rhetorical training, he composed orations, poems, and letters that unite intellectual precision with profound spiritual elevation. Although firmly rooted in the Attic rhetorical tradition, his language was consciously reshaped to serve liturgical, doxological, and contemplative purposes (Barnard, 1983).

John Chrysostom, distinguished by both simplicity and rhetorical force, translated the Gospel into the language of everyday life and pastoral care. His preaching transformed theological teaching into words of consolation, moral exhortation, and communal responsibility. His assertion that “nothing gladdens the soul as much as a word spoken kindly” exemplifies his emphasis on compassionate and gentle speech as an essential dimension of Christian ministry. For Chrysostom, the Christian message was not merely theoretical but was to be embodied daily through family life, acts of charity, and active participation in the life of the community (Wickham, 2013). In this way, the Greek language “liberated theology by giving it form and expressiveness” (Alexopoulos, 2012).

The Three Hierarchs, however, taught not only how to speak, but also how to live according to the Word. For them, speech was inseparable from virtue, reflecting the purity and disposition of the soul. Gregory of Nazianzus articulates this principle succinctly when he writes: “Not everything is for everyone, nor at all times, nor in the same way; but according to each person’s capacity and purification.” This insight underscores the conviction that language, however divinely inspired, requires the purification of the speaker in order to become a genuine instrument of truth. Such a view reflects an ancient Christian pedagogy in which spiritual truths



are revealed gradually, in accordance with the moral and spiritual readiness of the hearer (Norris, 2012).

Consequently, in the hands of the Church Fathers, the Greek language becomes an instrument of divine knowledge rather than a merely literary medium. Their discourse is not confined to intellectual instruction alone, but is deeply personal, pastoral, and ultimately salvific—addressing the whole human person and guiding the faithful toward transformation in Christ.

The Relationship between Christian Discourse and Ancient Greek Philosophical Discourse

The choice to return to ancient Greek as the language of Christian expression has occasionally been a point of debate in intellectual circles. However, a philosophical examination of the relationship between Hellenism and Christianity reveals a profound convergence, particularly around the concept of “Logos” (Skouteris, 1998). Plato spoke of the agathon as the supreme principle, Aristotle of the nous, and the Stoics of the logos spermatikos. Christ, however, is neither simply nous nor logos spermatikos; He is the Word made flesh. The Greek language, rooted in the concept of Logos, was uniquely capable of expressing the miracle of divine economy—not metaphorically, but ontologically.

St. Maximus the Confessor (c. 580–662 CE), a central Byzantine theologian and mystical writer, observes: “All beings have their words within themselves, but their words are in the Word” (Ambigua, PG 91). Each being’s reason for existence resides within the eternal Word of God. In this context, language is more than a mere tool; it is a sacred mystery that participates in divine truth without diminishing it. Human speech, therefore, can participate in the Word of God, and the Greek language becomes a theological laboratory—a divine-human medium: human in origin, but divine in use.

The formulation of Christian doctrine was itself a profoundly linguistic undertaking. The Ecumenical Councils, from Nicaea to Chalcedon, debated and defined terms such as person, essence, nature, hypostasis, and energy (Feidas, 1994). These distinctions were not literary subtleties but existential realities. Greek, with its precision and conceptual flexibility, enabled theologians to articulate these mysteries without distortion. Without the framework of ancient Greek philosophy, Christianity might have remained primarily emotional; with it, it acquired a coherent intellectual and doctrinal structure.

Greek, as the language of the sacred Gospels, the dogmatic definitions of the Ecumenical Councils, and Orthodox Christian liturgy, holds the unique privilege of serving as the linguistic prototype in which Christian faith and teaching were recorded with conceptual accuracy. The original Greek text possesses authority and semantic richness that are often diminished in translation, which underscores the necessity of studying sacred texts in their original language.

Triandaphyllidis (1883–1959), a prominent Greek linguist and educator associated with the Demotic movement, worked extensively to standardize modern spoken Greek for educational and literary purposes. His collected works (Apanta) include foundational studies on Greek grammar and language history, emphasizing both continuity and the living nature of Greek, demonstrating its immense relevance to Biblical studies and the understanding of the Christian faith (Tachiaos, 1989).

It is therefore unsurprising that today, in non-Greek university theological programs, the Gospels and other sacred texts of the Church are taught in their original Greek. For similar reasons, certain theological terms—Logos, hypostasis, Homoousion, among others—remain



untranslated internationally to preserve their conceptual precision. This practice represents both a contemporary and timeless contribution of the Greek language to the accurate dissemination and understanding of Christian truth (Tachiaos, 1989).

A striking historical example is St. Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376–444 CE). At the Third Ecumenical Council in 431 CE, he employed the subtleties of the Greek language to articulate the union of Christ's natures in the phrase: "One nature of the Word of God Incarnate." Such linguistic precision is virtually impossible to convey fully in any other language. Through Greek, St. Cyril defended the doctrine of the hypostatic union, affirmed Mary as Theotokos, and articulated a Christology in which divine and human natures are united in one person—safeguarding both the integrity of the Incarnation and the salvific efficacy of Christ's work (Lossky, 1976).

Continuity through the Centuries

The Greek language continued to shape Christian theology through the Church Fathers. Saint Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–107 CE), writing in Greek in the early second century, emphasized both unity and belief in Christ's divinity: "There is one Physician, both flesh and spirit... Jesus Christ our Lord" (*Letter to the Ephesians*, 7). Similarly, Saint Athanasius (c. 296–373 CE) employed precise Greek terminology to defend Orthodox belief concerning Christ: "He became human so that we might become divine" (*On the Incarnation*, 54). This theological clarity depended profoundly on the expressive richness of the Greek language.

From the Church Fathers, the tradition of Greek expression continued in the hymnographers and theologians of the Byzantine era. Saint John of Damascus (c. 675–749 CE), in his systematic exposition of Orthodox faith, demonstrates how language can be both dogmatic and poetic. Alongside rigorous doctrinal explanation, St. John incorporates poetic imagery and hymnody, particularly in his *Hymns on the Nativity, Resurrection, and the Theotokos* (canons and troparia). Even in theological prose, metaphors, analogies, and elevated diction convey the beauty and mystery of divine realities, illustrating how language can inspire both intellect and devotion.

Romanos the Melodist (c. 490–556 CE), chief hymnographer of the early Byzantine Church and a foundational figure in Byzantine liturgical poetry, transformed dogma into hymn and hymn into theology, proclaiming, "Salvation has come to the world." In this context, language transcends mere communication; it becomes liturgy, prayer, and praise. Every word of the Divine Liturgy—"Blessed be the Kingdom," "Peace to all," "I believe in one God..."—reflects a centuries-long journey in which faith became word and word became faith. This phenomenon reveals a unique continuity: the Greek language has remained recognizable across the centuries, providing the Christian tradition with a stable and enduring identity (Alexopoulos, 2012).

The Greek Language as a Theological Experience

Having established the foregoing characteristics, it becomes clear that the language of Christianity in Greek is not merely a translation; rather, it embodies the indwelling of the Spirit within a living tradition. Greek discourse, from Homer to Saint Gregory Palamas, carries the experience of the encounter between God and humanity. Saint Gregory himself speaks of man's "participation" in divine energy, explaining both the nature of this energy and the manner in which it is expressed—requiring linguistic precision and philosophical depth. Through Greek, one can distinguish—without separating—the divine essence from divine energies. For Saint Gregory Palamas, language becomes not a tool of division but a theological instrument of discernment.



Constantine Skouteris, a respected Greek Orthodox theologian and scholar of doctrinal history, known for his work on doctrine, terminology, and the reception of theological concepts in the Greek patristic tradition, examined the inseparable relationship between Orthodox theological expression and the Greek language. In *Orthodox Theology and the Greek Language*, Skouteris emphasizes that Greek was not merely a neutral medium for theology, but fundamentally shaped how doctrinal truth was articulated in the early Church. He argues that theology in Orthodoxy is “performed” through language—doctrine is not only conceptual but is lived and transmitted linguistically. Orthodox theology did not simply borrow Greek philosophical language; rather, it transfigured it to communicate revealed Christian truth.

This perspective aligns with broader patristic scholarship, which recognizes the Greek language as integral to Orthodox doctrinal formation and transmission. For Skouteris, Greek is not merely the historical language of the New Testament and the Fathers; it constitutes a fundamental theological medium. Orthodox theological expression depends on the precision and depth of Greek terms—such as *logos*—which shape and transmit doctrinal truth from Scripture, through the patristic tradition, into contemporary theology.

In *The Language of the New Testament and the Religious Value of the Greek Language* (1975), Siotou highlights how Greek functioned not merely as the medium of the New Testament but as a theological vehicle that enabled early Christian doctrine to be expressed, preserved, and transmitted throughout the Mediterranean world. Greek’s vocabulary and structure supported the precise articulation of Orthodox Christian beliefs and facilitated continuity in liturgy, catechesis, and doctrinal formation within the Orthodox Church, and thus wherever Orthodoxy is present globally.

The Moral Value of the Greek language

The value of the Greek language is not only conceptual but also moral. Returning to the Three Hierarchs, it is important to note that they were teachers not only of speech but also of virtue. In one of his homilies, St. John Chrysostom states: “Nothing gladdens the soul as much as a word spoken kindly”—that is, words spoken both kindly and truthfully. Similarly, St. Basil the Great emphasizes: “The education of the Greeks, insofar as it leads to virtue, is divinely inspired” (*Epistulae*, Letter 248:13; PG 32:903). He thus affirms that Greek education, when it cultivates virtue, participates in divine inspiration.

The Greek language, with its measure, rhythm, and harmony, teaches respect for the listener, politeness in expression, and fidelity to truth. Genuine Greek speech seeks not to impose but to enlighten; it pleases rather than offends, guides rather than criticizes, and conveys truth with dignity.

As the Gospel of John affirms in the Greek New Testament (John 1:9):

“ὁ λόγος ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον.”
“The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.”

Here, the Word (Logos) exemplifies the moral dimension of language itself: it enlightens, instructs, and uplifts humanity, embodying both truth and virtue.

The Mission of Speech today and the need to Translate the Christian Message

Before concluding our discussion on the multifaceted and unique contribution of the Greek language to the spread of the Christian faith, the formulation of Orthodox Christian doctrine, and the composition of Byzantine liturgical texts—whether poetic, hymnal, logical, or prose—



it is important to clarify that the Orthodox Church has never considered Greek as an absolute requirement for its sacred texts. Nor has it ever underestimated the value of the national languages of different peoples. On the contrary, in its missionary work among those who did not know Greek, the Church from the outset translated its sacred texts into local languages. A classic example is the translation of the Holy Scriptures and liturgical texts into the Slavic language in the 9th century CE by the Slavic enlighteners, Saints Cyril and Methodius.

The universal, pan-human spirit of the Gospel made it impossible to impose Greek as the mandatory language of worship for non-Greek Christians. Precisely for this reason, the heresy of trilingualism—which emerged in the West and taught that the sacred texts of Christianity should only be written in three languages, namely Greek, Latin, and Hebrew—was rejected both in practice and through the arguments of Cyril and Methodius (Feidas, 1994).

In regions such as Africa, where more than 700 languages are spoken, the need for translations that respect the idioms and spirit of local peoples is especially urgent so that the Gospel can become accessible to indigenous communities worldwide. For this reason, the contribution of local believers and specialist scholars is considered essential (The Step of the Church, 2021, 27 November).

If we, as theologians, philologists, or spiritual people, preserve the purity of our language, we also preserve the light of the Word. The Greek language, like faith itself, is not merely a relic of the past; it is a calling, an offering, a mystery. It is the language that testifies, with every word, that God became the Word so that humanity might be saved.

As the Apostle Paul reminds us in his hymn to love: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging symbol” (1 Corinthians 13). Words without love lose their power. The Greek language, however eloquent, acquires meaning only when it serves love and becomes a bridge between human hearts. This bridge presupposes the spread of the Gospel through the translation of Christian texts. To this end, the Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece has actively contributed, since salvation is not tied to a single language, and unity of faith does not require uniformity, but harmony in diversity (Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Albania, 2000; 2013).

Conclusion – The Light of the Word

In closing, we would like to recall a phrase from St. Basil the Great: «οὐ μόνον λόγοις ἐπίστευσεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πράξεσιν» — “It has believed not only with words, but also with deeds.” The Word of Faith is not abstract but Incarnate. Let us therefore speak Greek not merely correctly, but sacredly. Let us use language not only to describe the world, but to transform it. St. Basil emphasizes that true faith manifests both intellectually and practically; that Faith (*pistis*) is not simply confessed verbally, but must be expressed through virtuous action and moral living.

The Greek language has been, and can continue to be, the light that reveals the Word: “The Word was the true light that enlightens every man coming into the world” (John 1:9).

Greek was far more than a channel of communication; it was a formative force in the expansion, articulation, and preservation of the Christian faith. Through the Greek language, the Christian message was preached, written, debated, and defined. As the Apostle Paul proclaimed: “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). It was Greek that made that “hearing” possible across cultures, enabling Christianity to become a truly universal religion.



The Greek language is not a servant of truth because it is “superior” in any inherent way, but because it has faithfully served and continues to serve whenever it is used with respect, purity, and love. Odysseas Elytis (1911–1996), the Greek poet and Nobel Laureate in Literature (1979), wrote: “If you break Greece down, in the end you will see that you’re left with an olive tree, a vineyard, and a boat.” The olive tree symbolizes Greek land, agriculture, and endurance, reflecting spiritual and cultural continuity. The vineyard represents fertility, celebration, and communal life, a source of nourishment and joy. The boat evokes the Greek maritime tradition, central to the nation’s history. To this, we might also add: “and a Word—the Greek Word—which continues to enlighten the world.”

In his *New Testament with Interpretative Comments*, Trabelas (1952) highlights the continuing significance of the Greek text of the New Testament for Orthodox Christian readers, reinforcing the role of Greek not merely as a historical artifact, but as a living medium for fully comprehending and transmitting Christian doctrine within the tradition and beyond.

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Conflict of Interest Statement: *The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.*



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