AN EXCURSION WITH GINOMAI
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To understand the true significance of the great words of the Scriptures should be the passion of every lover of the Word. Such words are dynamic, for "they are spirit and they are life." One of the most outstanding words and one apparently overlooked by the usual Bible expositor is the Greek word γινομαι. Its root γεν occurs nearly one thousand times in the New Testament. A word so frequently used and so significant in meaning might well employ one's thought and energy. It is our purpose to discover its intrinsic meaning, compare that with the usual translations, and seek to catch the real meaning as intended by the mind of the writer in the various New Testament passages.

We lay no claim to originality. We have endeavored to live long enough with the Greek until, we believe, its inner secrets have been discerned.

"Originality in man," notes Dr. William G. T. Shedd,[1] "is always relative and never absolute . . . . Man did not absolutely originate the first truths of ethics, the necessary forms of logic, the fixed principles of physics. They were inlaid in his rational structure by a higher author and his originality consists solely in their exegesis and interpretation. Originality then within the sphere of a creature and in reference to a finite intelligence consists in the power of interpretation. In its last analysis it is exegesis,—the pure, genial and accurate exposition of an idea or a truth already existing, already communicated, already possessed."

A root, in language study, is the simplest form attainable by the analysis of a word into its component parts. Such a form contains the main idea of the word in a very general sense and is common also to other words either in the same language or in kindred languages. For example, the root STA is found in the Sanskrit TISHTHAMI, Greek ιστημι, Latin SISTERE and STARE, German STEHEN, and English STAND.[2]

The number of Greek roots is comparatively few,—not more than four hundred, probably less.[3]

We shall now proceed to the source of our word γινομαι. Its root is γεν. "In Ionic prose writing and in common Greek from Aristotle on, it is spelled γινομαι instead of the Attic spelling γιγνομαι.[4]

Acting on the suggestion of Liddell and Scott to compare the significance of the root γεν with the radical or root "gan" of the Sanskrit, we shall now take up the parallel of γινομαι in the Sanskrit. "The Sanskrit is of special interest to the student of the Greek New Testament," notes Dana and Mantey, "because of its close relation to the Greek, of which it may be described as an elder sister."[5]

The root (in Sanskrit) gan, gana, gaya, means to beget, bring forth, bear, generate, produce, make fruitful, cause to be, and be born, be produced, arise, grow, be by nature, be born again, be, become, be changed into, fall to share of, take place, be possible or admissible, and begotten by, new born, grown, spring up, arisen, existing; happened, conducive to.[6]

Gan-ana bringing forth, producing, producer-creator, fem: mother, neut: birth, existence, life; bringing forth production. Gan-tum: offspring, creature-being. Gan-ya: that is born or produced, arising from body.[7]

Sir W. Jones in Robertson's *Grammar of Greek New Testament*[8] comments, "The Sanskirt language, whatever may be its antiquity is of wonderful structure, more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity both in roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could have been produced by accident; so

strong that no philologer could examine all the three without believing them to have sprung from some common source which no longer exists."

To help arrive at the essential meaning of the root γεν let us note the main thought running through the various Greek words built upon this stem. They are fourteen in number: (1) γενεα, generation; (2) γενεαλογεω, derive one's pedigree; (3) γενεαλογια, genealogy; (4) γενεσια, birthday; (5) γενεσις, generation, natural; (6) γενετη, birth; (7) γενναω, beget, be born, bring forth; (8) γεννημα, offspring, kindred, fruit; (9) γεννητος that is born; (10) γενος offspring, kindred; (11) ανα-γενναω to produce again, beget anew; (12) συγγενεια, kindred; (13) συγγενης kindred; (14) συγγενις, kinswoman. Running consistently throughout these various words is the thought of bringing into existence, of producing. It is particularly a "generate" word.

From Cremer we learn that the verb signifies both absolutely, to become and relatively, to become something, akin to be and to be so and so. To become, to begin to be (a) of persons to become, to be born (cf. John 1:15); of creation and what belongs thereto (cf. John 1:3, 10); (b) of circumstances and occurrences, to begin, to originate, to take place (cf. Acts 6:1); (c) of proceeding and events, their beginning and their course (cf. Matt. 21:42); (d) to express the historical appearing of persons (cf. John 1:6). And relatively, to become something with a predicate or adverbial limitation.[9]

Thayer gives the primary meaning of γινομαι as "to become," i.e., to come into existence, begin to be, receive being.[10]

Liddell and Scott give the radical sense of the word γινομαι as *to come into a new state of being* hence: (1) absolute: to come into being of persons, to be born; of things to be produced; of events, to take place, come to pass, come on, happen.[11]

Arndt and Gingrich give for γινομαι come to be, become, originate. Specifically I. (1) Be born, or begotten; of things, arise, come about, also used with divisions of a day and (with various temperaments): e.g. complaining, weeping, clamor, contention, confusion; (2) be made, created; (3) happen, take place; (4) become something. II. As a substitute for the forms of ειμι, used with nominative, genitive and dative cases as well as with prepositions and adverbs and also translated appear, hence exist.[12]

As one senses the main drive throughout these various translations, the idea of being created stands out. With this consistency of meaning Webster's New International Dictionary is in perfect agreement, Webster defines CREATE as (1) to bring into being; to cause to exist; (2) to cause to be, or to produce, or bring to pass; (3) to cause or occasion, to form.[13]

These three essential factors lie inherent in this word γινομαι (1) It is a passive creative word. (2) Back of the creative act lies an intent, purpose, design. (3) It denotes ingressive existence, a coming into being: i.e., "begin to be."

The more common translations of ginomai noted.

The word γινομαι is variously translated as has been noted. The more common translations are as follows: arise, 13 times; be, 250 times; be done, 62 times; be made 70 times; become, 42 times; come, 53 times; come to pass, 82 times, and God forbid, (with un) 15 times.

The loss of the real significance of the meaning of γινομαι is most apparent when these translations just given are compared.

1. γινομαι translated ARISE. Compare Matthew 8:24, 26, "And behold, there *arose* a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the boat was covered with waves; but he was asleep . . . And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little

faith? Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."

The verb *arise* is more nearly the translation of ανιστημι (intransitively), to rise, stand up, arise, appear; or εγειρω, to arouse from sleep, to awake, to arouse from death, Hence, some of the vital meaning of γινομαι is lost by the translation *arise*.

2· γινομαι translated BE. Compare Matthew 5:45. "That ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." The most frequent translation of γινομαι is BE (250 times). Indicative of the use of this translation we cite the following passages: Be calm, Mt. 8:26; wise, Mt. 10:16; ready, Mt. 24:44; alone, Mk. 4:16; merciful, Luke 6:36; imitators, I Cor. 4:16; partakers, Eph. 5:1,7; mature, I Cor. 14:20; kind, Eph. 4:32; thankful, Col. 3:15; comfort, Col. 4:11; doers, James 1:22, 25; in Spirit, Rev. 1:10; faithful, Rev. 2:10; watchful, Rev. 3:2.

The Greek verb more nearly approximating our English idea of being or existing is ειμι which the lexicon gives as "to be, to exist, to live, be found." But γινομαι has a far richer and fuller significance than that of merely being or existing.

3. γινομαι translated BE DONE. Compare Matthew 9:29. "Then touched he their eyes, saying according to your faith BE it DONE unto you."

The Greek word more nearly corresponding to our idea of doing is πρασσω to do, practice, effect exercise, be busy with, carry on, accomplish, perform.

BE DONE does not convey the true idea of γινομαι.

4. γινομαι translated BE MADE. Compare John 1:3, "All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that *hath been made.*"

The Greek word more nearly approximating our idea of making is ποιεω, to make, produce, construct form, fashion. The significant loss made in such a translation is the root idea of *being created* thus. Compare I Cor. 1:30, 4:9; Eph· 3:7; Col. 1:23, Heb. 11:34.

5. γινομαι translated BECOME. Compare Matthew 4:3. "And the tempter came and said to him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones *become* bread." Is not the real intent, "that these stones *be created* bread" revealing purpose and a creative act? Indicative of the use of γινομαι translated "become" we cite the following passages, Become - great, Mt. 20:26; clean; Mt. 23:26; sons, John 1:12; united, Rom. 6:5; righteous, II Cor. 5:21; obedient, Phil. 2:8; blameless, Phil. 2:15.

To translate γινομαι as *become* does not convey the real meaning of γινομαι when we compare its meaning with the English definition of the verb *to become*: i.e., to come, happen, be about, to pass from one state to another, to be suitable to, congruous with.

6. γινομαι translated come. Compare John 1:6, "There *came* a man sent from God, whose name was John." Compare also John 1:17; Acts 12:11, II Cor. 3:7, Gal. 3:14.

Two Greek words more closely convey the meaning of *come* than does γινομαι. They are ερχομαι, to come from one place to another, appear; and ηκω, to have come, have arrived, to be present. When such meanings are compared with the meaning of γινομαι, the weak translation is obvious.

7. γινομαι translated COME TO PASS. Compare Matthew 7:28· "And it *came to pass*, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching." This group contains next to the largest number of passages (82 times).

The English conception for COME TO PASS is the thought of being or happening. Hence ειμι is sometimes translated *happen* and so is συνβαινα (6 times in N.T.) meaning to come together, to happen, to come to pass. This falls far short of the true conception of γινομαι.

8. γινομαι translated GOD FORBID. This, of course, is not a translation but a paraphrase. Compare Luke 20:16. "He will come and destroy these husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. And when they heard it, they said, *God forbid."*

The Greek word portraying the idea of forbidding is κωλυω (17 times in N.T.). to hinder, prevent, forbid. The comparison of such translation with the meaning of γινομαι is so obvious that no comment is necessary.

Before finishing this phase of our study of the meaning of γινομαι, it would be well to study and compare the New Testament creation word κτιζω with γινομαι. The only word in the New Testament translated *to create* is κτιζω. That it has in its primary significance a different connotation than γινομαι is apparent from the definitions that follow. In a later use, however, of the verb κτιζω, we find a close parallel to γινομαι, which fact helps to establish our contention of the translation of γινομαι as TO BE CREATED.

κτιζω is defined: (1) to build houses and cities, etc.; (2) to found, plant, build; (3) to found, establish; (4) to produce, create, bring into being; (5) to make so and so.

Again, as: to create, form, compose, - physically and spiritually as Romans 1:25, Eph. 2:10, κτισις - creation (1) act - Rom. 1:20; (2) thing created, creature - Romans 1:25; creation generally - Romans 8:9-22; (3) metaphorically institution - I Peter 2:13.

Of rich significance is the inherent meanings of the compounds with γινομαι. Time will only permit a few to be noted.

1. απογινομαι. Compare I Peter 2:24. Christ . . . "Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, HAVING BEEN CREATED AWAY FROM (απογενομενοι) sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed." The Authorized Version translates απογινομαι as "be dead" and the Revised as "die". This translation fails to bring out the intrinsic meaning of απογινομαι απο away from, and γινομαι to be created; hence *to be created away from.* Thayer gives απογινομαι as "to be removed from" and in reference to this passage he gives: "become utterly alienated from our sins." Thus by a new creation (John 1:12) we are removed from or *created away from* our sins.

Being created away from our sins is a negative phase of our salvation, we live unto righteousness as a positive phase; so that instead of going way from Christ as strayed sheep (verse 25) "we are created away from our sins; and the life is now hid with Christ in God, a complete reversal of life's direction.

2. διαγινομαι. Compare Acts 27:9. "And when much time was spent (literally, came to be through or was created through (διαγενομενον) . . . and the voyage was now dangerous . . . Paul admonished them."

Compare Acts 25:13 "Now when certain days WERE PASSED. Literally came to be through or were created through, Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and saluted Festus."

3. επιγινομαι. Compare Acts 28:13. "And from thence we made a circuit and and arrived at Rhegium: and after one day a south wind SPRANG UP." Literally: *came to be upon* or *was created upon* (επιγενομενου). The south wind *was created upon* the land. This translation shows a causation back of the wind and not just the fact of there being such a wind.

4. παραγινομαι. Compare Acts 11:23. "Who, when he WAS COME and had seen the grace of God was glad." *Was come,* more literally translated *came to be by* or was created by or near (παραγενομενος). Authorized Version: "Came." It is to be

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noted that neither ερχομαι nor ηκω, the favorite words for "come" are used here but rather a compound of γινομαι — the passive creative word. There must be more significance here than merely the arrival of Barnabas or else the writer would not have used γινομαι. It involves the creative purpose of God in Barnabas' relation to the indicated situation. Compare Hebrews 9:11. "Christ, having come, literally having been created near, a high priest of good things to come."

5. προγινομαι. Compare Romans 3:25. "Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of sins DONE AFORETIME" (προγεγονοτων). Literally "the sins coming to be before — in the forbearance of God."

6. συμπαραγινομαι. Compare Luke 23:48. "And all the multitudes that CAME TOGETHER, literally: were created alongside with or came to be along side with (συμπαραγενομενο') to this sight, when they beheld the things that were done, returned, smiting their breasts."

It is to be seen from our cursory adventure into the Greek New Testament that much clear and definitive meaning is lost by translators in their more or less free translation of the very significant word γινομαι. Inherent in the word lies the passive creative idea (sometimes making a good English translation, at other times a rather awkward one, though the idea lies imbedded in γινομαι). Again much of the purposefulness of God back of His acts as well as of man's when γινομαι is used is lost because back of the creative act lies intent purpose, design seen in the all-over use of this word. And all of the action of γινομαι is in the ingressive state, a coming into a state of being making thus the kind of action definite.

Through γινομαι we have been brought back to the very incipiency of each new creation and design as it breaks forth into vitalized meaning and beauty.

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