

Modal Substitution in Koine Greek: The Gospels of Mark and Luke

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Abstract: This paper continues our former research on the Greek Koine from a diachronic perspective. Our main goal deals with the use of the subjunctive and optative moods both in main and in subordinate clauses. The direct corpus of our analysis consists of the Gospels of Luke and Mark, as they represent a more literary (Luke) and a rather non-literary Greek Koine (Mark). Other contemporary texts, including non-literary evidences, are also used as a reference in order to establish the extent of some tendencies. The results obtained contribute to the understanding of the decline of the subjunctive and optative moods.

Keywords: Gospels of Luke and Mark; Koine; subjunctive; optative; orality; literacy; Atticism

1. Introduction

The modal system of standard Greek was radically altered in the post-Classical Age (Radermacher 1925²: 156-157, 159-179; Blass & Debrunner 1965¹²: 217, 220-236; López Eire 1991: 74-86), since its four elements were reduced to three by means of the elimination of the optative mood.¹ But the reconstitution of the modal expression went beyond the simple reduction of the personal moods: in spite of its relevance, this is only one chapter within the whole process of modal substitution, as we will try to underline in this paper. By modal substitution we understand the mere syntactic process, without any relevant semantic consequence, of replacing a mood with another one. Actually we think of subjunctive and optative as two very close subcategories, in those terms formulated by Wackernagel and Ruipérez.²

¹ Radermacher 1925², 156: 'Für die Entwicklung der Modi in der Koine ist der Rückgang des Optativs vor allem bestimmend'; Blass & Debrunner 1965¹², 217: 'das Hauptcharakteristikum ist das starke Zurücktreten des Optativs'; López Eire 1991, 74-86.

² Wackernagel 1920, 232:

Der Unterschied beider Modi besteht also bloss darin, dass der Konjunktiv ein Wollen, der Optativ ein Wünschen ausdrückt. ... Man kann demgemäss den Unterschied der beiden Modi auch so definieren, dass beim Konjunktiv eine grössere Annäherung an die Wirklichkeit stattfindet.

Ruipérez 1952, 15:

En ambos se trata de una volición, pero en el subjuntivo lo que quiere el que habla, cree que el sujeto mismo puede efectuarlo; en el optativo la realización del deseo expresado está fuera de las fuerzas propias del sujeto, depende de otros. Paralelamente podemos decir — extendiendo la definición de Wackernagel — que el subjuntivo prospectivo

In dealing with the modal syntax of New Testament Greek, the scholars used to focus on the weakness of the aorist subjunctive as it was gradually being replaced by the future indicative³, since the loss of the optative was considered an indisputable matter. Only Radermacher stresses the increase of the uses of the subjunctive forms, in spite of being very often replaced with the future indicative.⁴

More recently, there has been some attention to the survival of the optative in non-literary texts of the late Roman age, that is to say, it was a wrong issue to think of this mood as an already non-existent category in real speech, while literary authors used it just as a stylistic device (Higgins 1945). Therefore, in the quite extended view of the moderns, every example of the optative should be analysed as a literary phenomenon due to the influence of the Atticist movement (Anlauf 1960). Yet the attested instances of the optative in the late post-Classical age give to the matter a much more nuanced perspective, in which we have to keep in mind the phonological and morphological processes that resulted in a merger of this mood with the subjunctive, as Gil points out.⁵

2. Methodological remarks

Methodologically, all the obtained data are ranged according with the following criteria: the type of clause: main clause / subordinate clause; the verbal tense: pres. / aorist / perfect; and the literary frame: narrative / oral passage. In our opinion, there are no implications on the requested matter according with the person of the verbal forms. Maybe there are according with their voice, but as this criterion seems not actually relevant at first sight at least, it has been neglected.

Another important methodological aspect consists of taking as real the intention of the author to bring up a coherent and vivid reflection of the oral language. If so, no one of the interventions was under the effect of any literary technique. That is to say, both Mark and Luke adopt several narrative strategies and stylistic utterances in order to follow the model of the didactic, oral gender of the Gospel, but without an extended use of rhetorical and literary devices.

A different case is that of the manuscript variants that fluctuate between subjunctive and optative. In our corpus this situation is attested in five passages (*Mc.* 4, 29; 5, 43; 9, 30; 14, 10, and *Lc.* 19, 15).

indica una proximidad (se espera que se realice el proceso verbal), el optativo potencial indica un distanciamiento mayor de la realidad (el proceso verbal es sólo una posibilidad). Entre el subjuntivo y el optativo hay solamente una diferencia de intensidad en la expresión de la noción de modo.

³ Blass & Debrunner 1965¹², 220: ‘die Vermischung von Ind. Fut. und Konj. Aor. gegenüber der klass. Sprache ziemlich weit vorgeschritten ist’.

⁴ Radermacher 1925², 156: ‘Andererseits hat der Konjunktiv sein Gebiet erheblich erweitert, zumal er auch imstande ist, das Futurum zu ersetzen’.

⁵ Gil 1987, 88:

Indicativo y subjuntivo coincidían, salvo en la segunda y tercera de plural (con oposiciones e/i, u/o), y con uno u otro modo, salvo en primera de singular y la tercera de plural, el optativo temático. El futuro resultaba homófono con el subjuntivo de aoristo sigmático.

(1) *Mc.* 4, 29:

ὅταν δὲ **παραδῶ** ὁ καρπός, εὐθὺς ἀποστέλλει τὸ δρέπανον, ὅτι παρέστηκεν ὁ θερισμός.

And when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.⁶

In all these cases, in spite of the choice of the editors, it is easy to see that some manuscripts coincide in substituting some Koine features with others more close to the Atticism,⁷ while others act in the contrary way by introducing Koinisms.⁸

Two other variants (*Mc.* 8, 35, *Lc.* 19, 40) involve aorist subjunctive and future indicative. This is the first instance:

(2) *Mc.* 8, 35:

ὅς γὰρ ἐὰν θέλῃ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν· ὅς δ' ἂν **ἀπολέσει** τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἕνεκεν [ἑμοῦ καὶ] τοῦ εὐαγγελίου σώσει αὐτήν.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel shall save it.⁹

The future indicative ἀπολέσει appears at the codexes THVLM, while the aorist subjunctive ἀπολήσῃ is attested at the codexes WS.

It is not without sense to pay attention to the second instance:

(3) *Lc.* 19, 40:

καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν Λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐὰν οὗτοι **σιωπήσουσιν**, οἱ λίθοι κρᾶξουσιν.

To whom he said: I say to you that if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out.¹⁰

We find the future indicative σιωπήσουσιν at the codexes THWVLM, while the aorist subjunctive σιωπήσωσιν is attested at the codex S. If we are right, the subjunctival forms are only originated in an Atticist reading of the New Testament authors.

Other changes belong to an abridged grade of modal substitution, for the mainly involved element is not the mood itself, but the subordinating connector, see (5):

⁶ The subjunctive παραδῶ is attested at the codexes SV, while the optative παραδοῖ appears at the codexes THWLM. Similar cases are *Mc.* 5, 43 with γνῶ at the codexes SVM and γνοῖ at the codexes THWL; *Mc.* 9, 30 with γνῶ at the codexes SV and γνοῖ at the codexes THWLM; *Mc.* 14, 10 with παραδῶ at the codexes SV and παραδοῖ at the codexes THWLM; and *Lc.* XIX 15 with γνῶ at the codexes SV and γνοῖ at the codexes THWLM. Cf. Moulton, Howard & Turner 1963, 129: 'These optatives, like that in *Mk.* 122², are probably the learned corrections of Atticistic scribes'.

⁷ At *Mc.* 3, 26 the codexes SV prefer the perfect form μεμέρισται instead of the aorist ἐμερίσθη, which is the lesson given by the codexes THWLM; at *Mc.* 3, 31 the codex V prefers the perfect form ἐστῶτες instead of the present στήκοντες, which is given by the codexes THWVLM.

⁸ At *Mc.* 1, 41 the codex W prefers the lesson δύνῃ instead of δύνασαι, which is given by THSVLM.

⁹ The future indicative ἀπολέσει appears at the codexes THVLM, while the aorist subjunctive ἀπολήσῃ is attested at the codexes WS.

¹⁰ We find the future indicative σιωπήσουσιν at the codexes THWVLM, and the aorist subjunctive σιωπήσωσιν is attested at the codex S.

(4) *Mc.* 11, 19:

Καὶ ὅταν ὀψὲ ἐγένετο, ἐξεπορεύοντο ἔξω τῆς πόλεως.

And when evening was come, he went forth out of the city.¹¹

Other cases are doubtful, as there is not a cogent transmission of the text. For example, in (6) all but one of the extant manuscripts attest the lesson ὄψησθε, since Th gives the variant ὄψεσθε.

(5) *Lc.* 13, 28:

ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων, ὅταν ὄψησθε Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ καὶ πάντας τοὺς προφήτας ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὑμᾶς δὲ ἐκβαλλομένους ἔξω

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; when you shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God: and you yourselves thrust out.

Of course the manuscript variants in themselves attest to a syntactic change — where also phonological and morphological changes are involved, as pointed out above — but they make less reliable any diachronic perspective on the matter, even if the text is such as a Gospel, present in many manuscripts at a quite early date.

Since this paper deals with the substitution of the subjunctive and the optative moods in two Gospels, it is to be intended as a partial approach to the matter. We will not deal, for example, with modal indicative forms that can also be replaced with simple, formally non-modal, indicative.

3. Commentary of the obtained data

If we now pay attention to the different clauses, we will notice that most of the cases of subjunctive and optative occurring in main clauses belong to oral passages where direct discourse is implied — 70 instances from a total figure of 76. Of course, main clauses at the narrative sections appear predominantly in indicative. In subordinate clauses, the oral frame is dominant in the temporal and relative sentences of the Markan Gospel. But the Gospel of Luke shows a completely different situation, since the increasing figures of the orally performed clauses affect much more syntactical types: besides temporal and relative clauses, as in Mark, Luke prefers the oral frame for final, conditional and substantive also.

For a complete evaluation of our figures it should be necessary not only to check the whole of the New Testament, but also to estimate the extent of the oral and the narrative sections. Therefore, this is an approximative frame to develop further research. Our figures are the following:

Mark:

Main clauses: 35 examples, 33 oral sections, 2 narrative sections

Subordinate clauses:

Final: 57 examples, 28 oral sections, 29 narrative sections

¹¹ The same substitution of ὅτε with ὅταν appears at *Mc.* 3, 11, and 11, 25. In this last instance, however, it must be noticed that the codex S gives the lesson στήκητε, as a way of emending the syntax of the passage.

Substantive: 31 examples, 16 oral sections, 15 narrative sections
 Relative: 28 examples, 23 oral sections, 5 narrative sections
 Temporal: 22 examples, 14 oral sections, 8 narrative sections
 Conditional: 18 examples, 8 oral sections, 10 narrative sections

Luke:

Main clauses: 37 oral sections, 4 narrative sections

Subordinate clauses:

Temporal: 55 examples, 53 oral sections, 2 narrative sections

Final: 47 examples, 31 oral sections, 14 narrative sections

Substantive: 32 examples, 25 oral sections, 7 narrative sections

Relative: 27 oral sections, 0 narrative sections

Conditional: 26 oral sections, 0 narrative sections

As a general remark, it is noteworthy that the presence of subjunctive forms in the oral sections is increasing as the Gospel — Markan or Lukan, it does not matter — goes on. Therefore, it seems that the link between literacy and the use of the modal forms tends to diminish; in other words, the trend to use subjunctive in the oral sections seems to be weak at first, but later it equalizes and even clearly overcomes the use at the narrative sections.

Regarding the distribution of the utterances between the different types of clauses, the obtained data attest very similar figures in both authors, with an only difference. In the case of the temporal clauses, Mark shows a deeper tendency for substitution of the subjunctive mood. Take as an example the following passage:

(6) *Mc.* 3, 11:

καὶ τὰ πνεύματα τὰ ἀκάθαρτα, ὅταν αὐτὸν ἐθεώρουν, προσέπιπτον αὐτῷ καὶ ἔκραζον λέγοντα ὅτι Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

And the unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him: and they cried, saying.

It is remarkable also that the modal substitution in temporal sentences is quite frequent in contemporary Koine texts. An author like Galen, writing in a non-literary Koine occasionally embellished with an Atticist touch (Vela Tejada 2009; Redondo 2017), shows a smaller frequency than the New Testament writers, but a deeper analysis is needed, for some passages were emended by Kühn, as in (13):

(7) *Gal. Hum.* I 12, XVI 1.12.114.1-5 K.:

ἴσμεν γὰρ ὅτι δεῖ μετὰ τὴν τοῦ ὅλου σώματος κάθαρσιν χρῆσθαι τοῖς τοπικοῖς βοηθήμασι καὶ φλεβοτομία χρῶμεθα καὶ καθάρσει καὶ κλυστηῖσι καὶ ἀσιτίαις, ὅταν ἡμῖν τὸ πᾶν σῶμα φαίνεται πληθωρικὸν καὶ κακόχυμον ὑπάρχον.

We know that after cleaning the whole body it is necessary to use topical remedies, so that we use phlebotomy, purgation, clyster-pipes, and diets, as much time as the whole body seems to us full and hosting bad humour.¹²

¹² Here Kühn emendates in φαίνεται. On the problem of the textual transmission of the Galenic *Commentary on the Hippocratic treatise On Humours*, see Redondo 2014.

In order to make clear that this innovation belongs to the general Koine evolution of the modal system, we will give an example taken from the historian Polybius:

(8) Pol. XIII 7, 10:

... ἐπειδὴν ἐκ τῆς καθέδρας **ἀνέστησε** τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ **περιέπτυξε** ταῖς χερσί, προσήγετο κατὰ βραχὺ πρὸς τὰ στέρνα.

As soon as the man offered his hand to the supposed lady to raise her from her seat, the figure threw its arms round him and began drawing him by degrees towards its breasts.

A second Galenic example is free of any textual problem:

(9) Gal. *Hum.* I 1, XVI 1.1.7.12-15 K.:

νεκροῦσθαι γὰρ δηλοῖ τὴν διοικοῦσαν αὐτὸν δύναμιν καὶ τὰ λευκὰ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐρυθρὰ φαίνεσθαι, ὡς ὅταν πελιὰ ἢ μέλανα φλεβία ἐν ἑαυτοῖς **ἔχουσι**.

He shows that his strength is dead and the white of his eyes looks red when they have inside them livid or black veins.

As a parallel phenomenon to that of our textual evidence, it is not without interest that in several oral Lukan passages there is no way to distinguish between the aorist subjunctive and the future indicative.¹³ This situation does not appear in narrative passages, so that it leads to the conclusion that some of these changes have to do with the oral performance, to the context of the practical use of the language.

A special case is that of the sentences where the verbal subordinated form attests the syntactical construction known as Complementizer Deletion (CD) (Poletto 2001; Giorgi & Pianesi 2004; Grau-Llinàs & Fernández Sánchez 2013). This small group of sentences consists of three Markan and three Lukan instances (*Mc.* 10, 36; 10, 51; 15, 36; *Lc.* 6, 42; 9, 54; and 22, 7). This is the first example at the *Gospel of Mark*:

(10) *Mc.* 10, 36:

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς τί θέλετε **ποιήσω** ὑμῖν;

But he said to them: What would you that I should do for you?

If we apply the CD theory, the apparently ambiguous form ποιήσω should be analysed as a subjunctive. In the second Markan passage the verbal form is also ποιήσω, so that there is no morphological way to decide to which mood it belongs.¹⁴ But all the other instances will show that we are actually dealing with aorist subjunctives, as it can be seen after our sentence (12):

(11) *Mc.* 15, 36:

δραμῶν δέ τις γεμίσας σπόγγον ὄξους περιθεῖς καλάμῳ ἐπότιζεν αὐτόν, λέγων Ἄφετε **ἴδωμεν** εἰ ἔρχεται Ἡλείας καθελεῖν αὐτόν.

¹³ The instances are the following: *Lc.* 7, 31; 12, 17 (*bis*); 13, 18; 13, 35; 16, 3; 16, 4; and 18, 18. Most of them are main clauses, but the second instance at 12, 17 is a causal clause, and 13, 35 is a temporal clause.

¹⁴ *Mc.* 10, 36; 10, 51.

And one running and filling a sponge with vinegar and putting it upon a reed, gave him to drink, saying: Stay, let us see if Elias come to take him down.

Perhaps we should be attracted by the idea that here ἄφετε is just a fixed imperative, partly because it is placed as the opening word of the sentence. If so, our next example (12) could be of some help:

(12) *Lc.* 6, 42:

πῶς δύνασαι λέγειν τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου Ἀδελφέ, ἄφες **ἐκβάλω** τὸ κάρφος τὸ ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ σου, αὐτὸς τὴν ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ σοῦ δοκὸν οὐ βλέπων;

Or how canst thou say to thy brother: Brother, let me pull the mote out of thy eye, when thou thyself seest not the beam in thy own eye?

This second example suggests that the imperative governs the following verb. Therefore, the syntactical pattern of the sentence coincides with the CD model. Two more remarks on this group of sentences: first, none of them presents textual variants of the type aorist subjunctive/future indicative;¹⁵ and second, all of them belong to oral sections. Therefore, it could be inferred that the CD pattern is more at home in speech situations than in literary texts.

It is also to be noticed that the Latin *Vulgata* actually renders some Greek subjunctives by future indicative, as in (11):

(13) *Lc.* 13, 35:

λέγω [δὲ] ὑμῖν, οὐ μὴ **ἴδητέ** με ἕως **εἴπητε** ‘Εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι Κυρίου’.

dico autem vobis, quia non **videbitis** me donec veniat cum **dicetis**: benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.

And I say to you that you shall not see me till the time come when you shall say: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

At the age of the New Testament authors and Galen, the modal system was already under a severe crisis, so that it will not be surprising that we can find hypercorrections such as the following one, at (15):

(14) *Gal. De anat. adm.* II 10, II 2.10.329.10-13 K.:

εἰ γὰρ **ἐάσης** τὸ μὲν τι μέρος αὐτοῦ συνδραμεῖν εἰς ἑαυτὸ, τὸ δ’ ἔτι τείνων τοῖς σεαυτοῦ δακτύλοις πλατύνης, ἀρρωστότερόν σοι φανεῖται τὸ πλατυνθέν τοῦ συνδραμόντος.

... If you let one part shrink while you stretch and distend another, the latter will appear weaker.

The weakness of the optative mood led Galen to try another kind of hypercorrection:

¹⁵ *Mc.* 10, 36 shows a variant attested in some codexes, in which the subjunctive is replaced with an infinitive, so that an accusative subject is needed. The manuscripts choosing this option are the same that present the Atticist emendations, S and V. Other manuscripts, ThWL, show even the odd, agrammatical conflation με ποιήσω.

(15) Gal. *De anat. adm.* II 4, II 2.4.301.1-4 K.:

καὶ ὅταν γε ἀπὸ τῶν ἄνω μερῶν **ἄρξαιο** τῆς ἀνατομῆς, καταβαίνειν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ πειρῶ διὰ τῶν ὀπίσω τε καὶ τῶν ἔνδον μερῶν τοῦ μηροῦ.

When you begin dissecting from above, seek to move downward through the hinder and inner region of the thigh.

It must be said that the Gospels of Mark and Luke do not show hypercorrections such as those of the examples (15) and (16), that is to say, even Luke does not share some of the Atticist trends. A last example of this case of modal substitution can be read at the (16) text, taken again from Polybius:

(16) Pol. IV 32, 5-6:

λοιπὸν ὅταν μὲν οὗτοι πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἢ πρὸς ἑτέρους πολεμοῦντες ἐν περισπασμοῖς **ἦσαν**, ἐγένετο τὸ δέον αὐτοῖς: ἦγον γὰρ τὴν εἰρήνην αἰεὶ παρευδισζόμενοι διὰ τὴν τοῦ τόπου παράπτωσιν: ὅταν δ' εὐσχολοὶ καὶ ἀπερίσπαστοι Λακεδαιμόνιοι γενηθέντες **ἐτράπησαν** πρὸς τὸ βλάπτειν αὐτούς κτλ.

Accordingly when the attention of the former was distracted by domestic or foreign war, the Messenians were secure; for they always enjoyed peace and tranquillity from the fact of their country lying out of the road; but when the Lacedaemonians, having nothing else on hand to distract their attention, took to inflict injuries on them. (transl. E.S. Shuckburg)

On the question of the optative, as either a literary device or an already existent linguistic reality, our research points out that besides the scarcity of this mood, there exist different ways of substituting it.

The desiderative function of the optative appears twice in our corpus of texts, and it is Luke the author who uses it:

(17) *Lc.* 1, 38:

εἶπεν δὲ Μαριάμ Ἰδοὺ ἡ δούλη Κυρίου: **γέννοιτό** μοι κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμά σου.

And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

(18) *Lc.* 20, 16:

ἐλεύσεται καὶ ἀπολέσει τοὺς γεωργοὺς τούτους, καὶ δώσει τὸν ἀμπελῶνα ἄλλοις. ἀκούσαντες δὲ εἶπαν Μὴ **γέννοιτο**.

He will come and will destroy these husbandmen and will give the vineyard to others. Which they hearing, said to him: God forbid.

In both cases the Hebrew affirmative adverb **יִשְׁרָא** has been rendered by means of a desiderative optative, and there is room to describe the Greek device as a concession of Luke to the Atticist trend.

The expression of wish by means of syntactical and semantical markers — past indicative tense of a verb stating lack, want or need — is also attested, but not in our two Gospels:

(19) *G.* 5, 12:

ὄφελον καὶ ἀποκόψονται οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες ὑμᾶς.¹⁶

I would they were even cut off, who trouble you.

The potential optative is not attested in our two Gospels. The so-called oblique optative — a narrative tense according with the proposal of Faure (Faure 2009) — can be found only at the Lukan text, but the circumstances are here just the opposites to the case of the subjunctive mood: Luke does not use the optative in oral sections rather than in the narrative, but on the contrary; at the oral sections there are no examples of oblique optative, while eight examples appear at the narrative sections.¹⁷ Actually there is an instance where we could point to an oral context, but in a very loose way:

(20) *Lc.* 15, 26:

... καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος ἓνα τῶν παιδῶν ἐπυνθάνετο τί ἂν εἴη ταῦτα.

... And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

The substitutes of the optative mood are the present indicative, the imperfect indicative and the future indicative.

Our example (21) presents both the imperfect indicative and the aorist indicative instead of the optative:

(21) *Mc.* 6, 56:

καὶ ὅπου ἂν εἰσεπορεύετο εἰς κόμας ἢ εἰς πόλεις ἢ εἰς ἀγροὺς ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς ἐτίθεσαν τοὺς ἀσθενοῦντας, καὶ παρεκάλουν αὐτὸν ἵνα κἂν τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ ἄψωνται· καὶ ὅσοι ἂν ἤψαντο αὐτοῦ ἐσώζοντο.

And whithersoever he entered, into towns or into villages or cities, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch but the hem of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

Mark shows an instance of the substitution with future indicative:

(22) *Mc.* 11, 13:

καὶ ἰδὼν συκῆν ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔχουσαν φύλλα ἤλθεν εἰ ἄρα τι εὐρήσει ἐν αὐτῇ, καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐπ' αὐτὴν οὐδὲν εὔρεν εἰ μὴ φύλλα, ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς οὐκ ἦν σύκων.

And when he had seen afar off a fig tree having leaves, he came, if perhaps he might find any thing on it. And when he was come to it, he found nothing but leaves. For it was not the time for figs.

Luke seems much more flexible not only for introducing another variant, the present indicative, but also because of the different types of clauses where the substitution is

¹⁶ This possibility is already present at the Homeric poems, cf. *Hom. Il.* IV 315-316: ἀλλά σε γῆρας τεῖρει ὁμοῖον· ὡς ὄφελέν τις / ἀνδρῶν ἄλλος ἔχειν, σὺ δὲ κουροτέροισι μετεῖναι, and it is not unknown at the Classical age, cf. *Dem.* XVIII 320: ... ἐπειδὴ δ' ἂ μήποτ' ὄφελεν συνέβη κτλ. The Homeric example shows a modal adverb — similar expressions are εἴθε, εἰ γάρ, and so on — as the Demosthenic example begins with the modal negation μή.

¹⁷ *Lc.* 1, 29; 1, 62; 3, 15; 6, 11; 8, 9; 9, 46; 18, 36, and 22, 23 (narrative sections); 15, 26 (oral sections). Cf. Moulton, Howard & Turner 1963: 129.

attested: main, conditional and relative clauses.¹⁸ We will look at first at the examples where the optative is replaced with the future indicative:

(23) *Lc.* 11, 11-12:

τίνα δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν τὸν πατέρα αἰτήσῃ ὁ υἱὸς ἰχθύν, μὴ ἀντὶ ἰχθύος ὄφιν αὐτῷ ἐπιδώσῃ; ἢ καὶ αἰτήσῃ ὄφιν, ἐπιδώσῃ αὐτῷ σκορπίον;

And which of you, if he ask his father bread, will he give him a stone? Or a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he reach him a scorpion?

These first two instances could actually be expressed by means of the future indicative, that is to say, with ἐπιδώσῃ instead of ἐπιδώσοι, according with the Attic rule. This is also the case of the sentences (25) and (26), where the prothesis is much more clearly expressed:

(24) *Lc.* 11, 18:

εἰ δὲ καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς ἐφ' ἑαυτὸν διεμερίσθῃ, πῶς σταθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ;

And if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?

(25) *Lc.* 17, 7-8:

Τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν δοῦλον ἔχων ἀροτριῶντα ἢ ποιμαίνοντα, ὃς εἰσελθόντι ἐκ τοῦ ἀγροῦ ἐρεῖ αὐτῷ Εὐθέως παρελθὼν ἀνάπεσε, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ ἐρεῖ αὐτῷ Ἐτοίμασον τί δειπνήσω, καὶ περιζωσάμενος διακόνει μοι ἕως φάγω καὶ πίω, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα φάγεσαι καὶ πίεσαι σύ;

But which of you, having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle, will say to him, when he is come from the field: Immediately go. Sit down to meat. And will not rather say to him: Make ready my supper and gird thyself and serve me, whilst I eat and drink; and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink?

There is an only case where the conjunction used is ἐάν:

(26) *Lc.* 16, 30:

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν Οὐχί, πάτερ Ἀβραάμ, ἀλλ' ἐάν τις ἀπὸ νεκρῶν πορευθῇ πρὸς αὐτοὺς μετανοήσουσιν.

But he said: No, father Abraham: but if one went to them from the dead, they will do penance.

This construction, certainly not new in the history of the Greek language, is the most common in the non-literary Koine.¹⁹

Our following instance implies a main clause:

(27) *Lc.* 20, 13:

εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος Τί ποιήσω; πέμψω τὸν υἱόν μου τὸν ἀγαπητόν· ἴσως τοῦτον ἐντραπήσονται.

¹⁸ *Lc.* 11, 11 (*bis*); 11, 12; 11, 18; 16, 30; 17, 7 (*bis*), both instances being cases of relative clause, and 20, 13.

¹⁹ Radermacher 1925², 161: 'Gewöhnlich ist auf ihnen [i.e., in den Ptolemaic papyri] ἐάν cum Coniunctivo im Vordersatz, im Nachsatz das Futurum'.

Then the lord of the vineyard said: What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. It may be, when they see him, they will reverence him.

Notice that the main verb ποιήσω could also be analyzed as an ambiguous case, as nothing implies that it be a future indicative — the most tenable option — or an aorist subjunctive — a literary construction, almost found in tragedy.

The Galenic Koine prose will provide the examples (29) and (30):

(28) Gal. *De anat. adm.* III 2, II 3.2.351.2-4 K.:

καὶ χρῆ πρὸς τὸ δέρμα τὴν σμίλην ἐρείδοντας τὸν ὑμένα χωρίζειν, ὡς, εἴ γε πρὸς τὸν ὑμένα τὴν σμίλην ἐγκλίνεις, **τρώσεις** αὐτόν.

You must incline the lancet toward the skin when separating the membrane. If you turn it toward the membrane, you would injure it.

(29) Gal. *De anat. adm.* III 2, II 3.2.353.6-7 K.:

εἰ δ' ἐγκαρσίαν ἐπιβάλοις τὴν σμίλην, πολλὰ **διαιρήσεις** ἅμα.

... But if you apply the lancet transversely, you may divide many.

If we now come back to Luke, the most interesting instance is (30), where the optative is replaced with the present indicative:

(30) *Lc.* 17, 9:

μὴ **ἔχει** χάριν τῷ δούλῳ ὅτι ἐποίησεν τὰ διαταχθέντα;

Doth he thank that servant for doing the things which he commanded him?

The modal negative adverb μή suggests a first consideration, as its use implies a modal verbal form, which is not the case of the present indicative. Therefore, ἔχει has a modal meaning that in Classical Greek should have been afforded by an optative — as the inherited, traditional solution — or alternatively by a future indicative.

Some conclusions

As a general conclusion, the data gathered in these New Testament texts suggest that the process of modal substitution is much more alive in speech than in literature. This observation fits with the Atticist contrary trend aiming at the preservation of subjunctive and especially optative.

It must be taken into account that all the cases of substitution of the optative mood in Luke have been found in oral sections. This means that the loss of the optative is not a literary matter, but a phenomenon that has its origin in daily speech. On the contrary, from all the attested examples of this mood — eleven examples — only those belonging to main clauses, just two of them, were found in oral passages, besides an only example among a group of nine sentences. That is to say, it seems that the optative was still in use as a main clause, even if this utterance was restricted to the sociolect of the more cultivated people or to some speech situations. Yet in subordinated clauses the tendency to substitute the optative was beyond any doubt very strong. *Vice versa* as in the main clauses, here the appearance of the optative seems linked to an Atticist, literary trend, much more at work in Luke than in other authors of our neotestamentary texts.

The ways to substitute the optative do not bring up a sufficient number of instances to obtain any tenable conclusion. Yet it seems that the future indicative appears as the most preferable solution.

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