

HISTORICAL GREEK PRONUNCIATION

A GROWING NUMBER of scholars today advocate the adoption of the *Historical Greek Pronunciation* (HGP).¹ The HGP is a sound system whose origins are traceable to the inscriptional record of Classical Attic, especially to the mid-5th century BC when Athens began to switch from the older Attic script to the more efficient 24-letter Ionic alphabet. The ratification of the alphabet took place in 403 BC under Archon Eucleides and is thus known as ἡ μετ’ Εὐκλείδην γραμματική “the post-Eucleidean grammar.”

The use of the post-Eucleidean grammar was to leave an unbroken trail of evidence of the development of the sounds of Greek from classical through Hellenistic and Byzantine times down to Neohellenic. Part of the evidence comes from official public records but mostly from the private epigraphical and papyrial records by the less literate subjects whose acoustically-guided writing led them to substitute one letter for another letter (or letters) that stood for the same sound (e.g. τη βουλει for τη βουλη, κιτε for κειται, τον for των, ημυου for ημυου, etc.).

This unbroken 2,500-year-old record of misspellings, judged by the same standard—the same 24-letter alphabet *and* post-Eucleidean grammar—is the strongest evidence of the development of the historical sounds of Greek. The record helps us follow the phonemic pronunciation of mainstream Greek that prevailed through the centuries over all other peripheral pronunciations and evolved into what it is today. Neohellenic therefore preserves the still-living historical Greek sounds with a pronunciation that is not theoretical or reconstructed, but authoritative, real, natural, consistent, and euphonic.²

¹ The term is most notably used by Prof. Chrys C. Caragounis, author of *The Development of Greek and the New Testament: Morphology, Syntax, Phonology, and Textual Transmission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006).

² The development of the Historical Greek Pronunciation is described in *Reading and Pronouncing Biblical Greek, Vol. I: Historical Evidence of Authentic Sounds*.