

# Newly Discovered Meanings for Οὐν

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The writer wrote a doctor's dissertation, at the suggestion and under the supervision of Dr. A. T. Robertson, on the conjunction οὐν, which occurs 496 times in the N. T. and is mistranslated fully half of the time because it is translated almost exclusively as inferential by such words as *therefore*, *then* or *so*. We made our discoveries of several new meanings for the word from the study of papyri from 200 B.C. to 200 A. D. Our findings on οὐν and other conjunctions were published in 1922 in *the Expositor*, London, and in *A manual Grammar of the Greek N. T.*, published by Macmillan in 1928. Moulton and Milligan have accepted and printed these new meanings in their *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*. And H. L. Jones has used them in his translation of Strabo's *Geography*. But for some reason these meanings have not been used, except in rare instances, by the translators of the *Revised Standard Version*. (They left it untranslated 74 times, mistranslated it 52 times, and translated it correctly only 70 times in John's gospel.) We present the following evidence for careful consideration.

First we present evidence that οὐν was used as an adversative conjunction. *Pap. Oxy.* XIII, 1609:12, 98-138 A.D., "And it seems to appear there. For it is not seen on that mirror, but the reflection to the one seeing. *However* (οὐν) concerning these things mention has been made in the (discussions) on Timaeus."

From a letter of warning concerning the temple inspector's visit: *P. Tebt.* II, 315:16, II A.D., "Know that an inspector of finance in the temples has arrived and intends also to go into your district. *But* (τοι γὰρ οὐν) do not be at all troubled, for I will release you. *However*, (οὐν) if you really have time, write up your books and come to me."

In these two extracts from the papyri we have three examples of οὐν used as adversative. At any rate the context argues for an adversative connective.

In a recent study of every usage of οὐν in vols. 13 and 14 of Strabo's *Geography* we found only a few contexts that call for an inferential translation, whereas we found four that demand an adversative translation: 13.1.13, "Here, *however*, (μὲν οὐν) there is no temple of Adresteia"; 14.1.2; 14.2.24; 14.5.24.

Hartung in his *Partikeln der Griechischen Sprache*, vol. 2, quotes from classical Greek to substantiate an adversative use—"so nimmt es *adversative* kraft an."

Only in Acts 25:4, and 28:5 is οὐν in the R. V. translated *howbeit*; and *but* properly in Jn. 9:18 and Acts 23:21 in the A. V. The R. S. has *but* in Acts 23:21 and Rom. 10:14; and *however* in Acts 28:5. The fact that the context argued so conclusively for an adversative rendering in these passages that the revisers were impelled and constrained, even against their training and prejudices, to translate οὐν *howbeit*, *however* and *but* is exceptionally forceful evidence that the word may have the same meaning in other places in the N. T. Take for instance Acts 26:22 where οὐν is rendered *therefore*, and notice how much better *however* suits the context. "For this cause the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. *However* (οὐν), having obtained help from God, I stand even to this day witnessing to small and great." I Cor. 11:20, where the R. V. translates οὐν *therefore* and the R. S. does not translate it at all: "For there must be factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you. *However* (οὐν), when ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper, for each one in his eating

takes in advance his own supper, and one is hungry and another full." Thus, the real reason that Paul specifies for their not being able to observe properly the Lord's supper is not factions, but failure on their part for all to partake of one common memorial meal at the same time.

Note Jn. 8:38, ἃ ἐγὼ ἐώρακα παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ λαλῶ· καὶ ὑμεῖς οὖν ἃ ἠκούσατε παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ποιεῖτε. The R. S. has for this, "I speak of what I have seen with my Father: and you do what you have heard from *your* father." In one case the definite article is translated my, in another *your*. οὖν is not translated at all. It is our opinion that, since there is practically no punctuation in the oldest Greek mss., and because the expression "the Father" is

twice used and so close together, this verse should be translated, "What I have seen with the Father I speak. *However* (οὖν), do you also do what you have heard from the Father?" This is the normal translation for at least every word including οὖν. Thus Jesus contrasts his loyalty to the Father with that of his listeners.

Jn. 11:5, 6, "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. *However*, when he heard that he was sick, he still remained in the place where he was two days."

In the approximately 30 passages where οὖν is adversative in function in the N. T. it is so translated only 30 times in the R. S.

The following data shows the diversity of translations in passages in which we believe οὖν has the significance of *however*:

Reference	A. V.	R. V.	R. S.
Mt. 10:25-26, "If they call the owner Beelzebub . . . . <i>However</i> do not fear them."	----	therefore	so
Lk. 21:13, 14, "It shall happen to you for a testimony. <i>However</i> do not take thought for your defense."	----	"	----
Jn. 2:22, "He spoke concerning the temple of his body. <i>However</i> when he arose from the dead"	----	"	therefore
Jn. 4:45, "A prophet does not have honor in his own community. <i>However</i> when he entered Galilee they received him,"	then	so	so
Jn. 6:19, "the sea disturbed by a great wind blowing. <i>However</i> . . . they saw Jesus walking on it"	so	therefore	----
Jn. 9:18, "He said, He is a prophet. <i>However</i> the Jews did not believe that he was blind"	but	"	----
Jn. 11:6, "Jesus loved . . . Lazarus. <i>However</i> when he heard he was sick he remained there two days."	therefore	"	so
Jn. 12:29, "I glorified it and again I will glorify it. <i>However</i> the crowd said it had thundered."	"	"	----
Jn. 18:11, "His name was Malchus. <i>However</i> Jesus said to Peter, Sheath thy sword"	then	"	----
Jn. 18:27, "Did I not see you with him? <i>However</i> Peter again denied it."	then	therefore	----
Ac. 17:30, "deity like gold or silver . . . . <i>However</i> God overlooked the times of ignorance."	----	"	----

Reference	A. V.	R. V.	R. S.
Ac. 23:21, "The Jews have agreed to ask to bring Paul down. <i>However</i> do not yield to them."	but	"	but
Ac. 28:5, "justice has not permitted to live. <i>However</i> he shook off the creature into the fire"	- - - -	howbeit	however
Rom. 2:21,            however	therefore	therefore	then
Rom. 10:14           "	then	then	but
I Cor. 11:20,       "	therefore	therefore	- - - -
I Tim. 3:2           "	then	"	now
II Pet. 3:17         "	therefore	- - - -	therefore

There is also exhaustive and convincing evidence in the papyri (and much in the N. T.) that οὖν was frequently used as an emphatic or intensive particle. Our first direct evidence leading to this conclusion came from the examination of οὖν in postscripts, which were disconnected from the body of the letter and which stressed some statement already made in the letter. Notice these two: A.D. 94, Μὴ οὖν ἄλλως ποιήσης, *P. Fay.* 110:34; A.D. 56, Μὴ οὖν ἄλλως ποιῆς, *B. G. U.* III, S24:17. Translation, "*Be sure* that you do not do otherwise."

As excellent evidence that οὖν may be used as emphatic, we give here a copy of a complete letter, found in *Papyri Tebtunis* I.33: Ἑρμίας Ὠρῶι χαίρειν. τῆς πρὸς Ἀσκληπιάδην ἐπιστολῆς ἀντίγραφον ὑπόκειται. [φρόν]τισον οὖν ἵνα γένηται ἀκολούθως. ἔρρωσο. "Hermias to Horus, greeting. Appended is a copy of the letter to Asclepiades. See to it *by all means* that it is followed. Goodbye."

The context forbids an inferential rendering and calls for an emphatic translation of οὖν. References in the papyri on this use of οὖν are abundant. Cf. *P. Rylands* II, 229: 7,17; *P. Oxyrhynchus* XII, 1493:9 X, 1293:7; II, 281:9; 282:6; 294:14,25; *B. G. U.* I., 37:5; IV, 1095:5.

Jn. 20:29-30 may be well translated, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast be-

lieved: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. *To be sure* (οὖν), Jesus also performed many other signs."

In Phil. 3:8 we have ἀλλὰ μὲν οὖν γε καί, and in I Cor. 6:7, ἤδη μὲν οὖν ὄλωσ. The presence of so many particles in these places is clearly for the purpose of emphasizing the truths being stated. However, neither the R. nor the R.S. versions attempt to translate οὖν in either case. There are here at least four emphatic words in each example. What depth of pent up feeling is here expressed! These particles suggest inexpressibly profound depths of emotion and reveal Paul's inmost soul.

Matt. 3:8,10 stand out with greater clarity when οὖν is translated as emphatic: "*By all means* produce fruit expressive of repentance. . . . Every tree, *rest assured*, that does not produce good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire." And note Lu. 14:34, "Salt *to be sure* is good, but if. . . ." Cf. also Matt. 10:32; 12:12; Lu. 21:7; Jn. 1:21, 25; 6:62; 9:10; 12:50; 16:22; 19:25; Acts 2:33; 10:33; 25:11; Rom. 4:10; 5:9; Eph. 5:1, 7, 15; Jam. 4:7; 5:7, etc. Οὖν has such significance approximately 65 times in the N. T.

The context in each case suggests what emphatic English word or words are most appropriate. Such words as *surely, indeed, very, really, certainly, above all* and *in fact*, as well as phrases, usually are good translations.

It is surprising that οὖν was not translated, occasionally at least, as emphatic in the R. and R. S versions since it was frequently used that way in classical Greek. Hartung claimed emphasis was one of its functions. Monro said that was its chief function in Homer: so also Blass. And Liddell, Scott and Jones in their large lexicon list as the first meanings for it *really, very, at least, and actually.*

H. L. Jones has so translated it in Strabo's *Geo.* 13.1.22: "Sestas is small and well fortified and connected with its harbor with a double wall and because of these things *in fact* (διὰ τούτ' οὖν) and its current, it is mistress of the passage."

The R. S. has consistently not translated οὖν as emphatic but in nearly every passage has instead given an inferential translation, and in a few passages, none at all.

We found four cases of an unusually peculiar use of οὖν in the papyri. In these places it is used in the body of a sentence following a relative pronoun and seems to intensify the indefiniteness of the pronoun very much as ὅν does. A.D. 78, ὄν δὴ ποτε οὖν τρόπον, *P. Amh.* II, 86:9— A.D. 42, ἢ ὅστις οὖν, *Brit. Mus. P.* III, 1171:8— II/A.D., ὅσα ποτὲ οὖν, *P. Rylands* II 243:9 — III/A.D., ὅστις ποτ' οὖν, *P. Milligan*, p. 113.

The other usage of this conjunction which we wish to set forth may be called transitional, continuative, or resumptive. This is the significance οὖν has in John's gospel 104 times, but is so translated only 25 times in the R.S., and it should be so translated in the N.T. about a hundred and seventy times.

*Then* and *now* are the two words to translate οὖν in this classification. The former indicates a succession of either time or events, the latter, a continuation of a subject from one thought to another, or the introduction of a new phase of thought. In this sense it is a synonym for δέ or καί and may be used to introduce an explanatory statement, or in continued discourse. Partial proof for this classification occurs in convincing extracts from the papyri. Here is one: *B. G. U.* IV, 1079:6, 41 A.D. "I sent you two letters, one by Nedymus

and one by Cronius, the swordbearer. *Then* (οὖν) at last I received the letter from the Arab, and I read it and was grieved."

We give two N. T. examples:

Acts 8:24-25, "Pray ye for me to the Lord, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me. *Now* (οὖν) when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem." Acts 11: 18-19, "Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life. *Now* (οὖν), they that were scattered abroad. . . travelled as far as Phoenicia."

Other suggestive references to this use of οὖν are Jn. 11:17, 20, 21, 32, 38, 56; 12: 1, 2, 9, 17, 21, 29; Acts 8:25; 9:31; 10:29, 32; 13:14; 14:3; Col. 2:6, 16.

The R. S. has translated it *then* or *now* only about 25% of the time when its contexts called for a transitional translation. H. L. Jones has translated it as transitional 24 times in vols. 13 and 14 of Strabo: Cf. 13.1.32, *Now* (οὖν), such were the conditions at the time of the Trojan war."

If οὖν is inferential or consequential in a sentence, that inference or consequence is expressed by the main verb in the sentence and not by a verb in a subordinate clause, nor by a participle, nor an infinitive. In the N. T. it is frequently translated as if the consequence belonged to a temporal or conditional clause. Οὖν always comes near the beginning of the sentence in which it is used in the N. T., but its force belongs to the main, independent clause of the sentence even though it be separated from it by one or more subordinate clauses. It is well to remember this in trying to determine what function this word has in a sentence.

There are approximately thirty verses found in John's gospel exclusively that call for a *responsive* translation of οὖν, by which we mean to translate it *in reply* or *in response*. Hartung has this classification and has cited several examples from classical Greek to illustrate it. We have a good example in Ex. 8:10, "And he said, Tomorrow. In reply (οὖν), he said, as you have spoken." This translation best fits in the following passages: Jn. 4:8, 9, "Jesus said to her, Give me a drink. . . . *In*

*response* the Samaritan woman said. . . .” Jn. 4:47, 48, “He asked that he come down and heal his son. . . .*In response* Jesus said to him. . . .”; Jn. 6: 52, 53, “How is this one able to give us his flesh to eat? *In reply* Jesus said to them. . . .”. Cf. also Jn. 7:6, 16, 28, 47; 8:13, 19, 25, 57; 9:10, 16, 20, 25, 26.

This translation is not found in any of the N. T. translations in spite of the grammatical, contextual and lexical evidence

favoring it. It has this force in John’s gospel 30 times. It is wrongly translated 17 times and left untranslated 13 times in the R. S.

Just as with prepositions so with the Greek participles and conjunctions, the context is the final court of appeal in each instance to determine proper translations: it furnishes the best clue. However, more than one context, to be sure, is necessary to determine any particular meaning.