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Is There an Emphatic μέν? A Consideration of the Particle's Development and its Function in Koine*

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Traditionally in Koine Greek grammar, the particle μέν has been described as having two functions: (1) correlating its sentence with forthcoming content, typically introduced by δέ, and (2) communicating emphasis or affirmation. Of these two functions, the first is readily apparent in Koine, but with regard to the second, communicating emphasis, it is not clearly evident that it can be posited for the particle. The propagation of 'emphatic μέν' seems to be the result of diachronic confusion. Those handful of instances of μέν in the New Testament that are sometimes labelled 'emphatic' can be more satisfactorily and consistently explained by an awareness of how the particle is used in the Koine period and a fuller understanding of its correlative function.

Keywords: μέν, Koine Greek grammar, discourse marker, Greek particle, Greek linguistics, discourse pragmatics

1. The Particle μέν and its Functions

In Greek grammars and lexica, the particle μέν is most frequently regarded as a correlative particle that introduces material corresponding with a following clause or word, usually introduced by δέ.[1] This function has best been described

* I wish to thank James Aitken, Margaret Sim and Steven Runge for their helpful comments on this article.

1 E.g. S. G. Green, *Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek Testament* (revised and improved edn; London: The Religious Tract Society, 1886) 344–5; G. B. Winer, *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek* (trans. W. F. Moulton; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882[9]) 551; R. Kühner, *Ausführliche Grammatik der Griechischen Sprache*, vol. II (ed. B. Gerth; Hannover und Leipzig: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1904[3]) 264; Le P. F. and M. Abel, *Grammaire du Grec Biblique suivie d'un choix de papyrus* (Paris: J. Gabalda et Fils, 1927[2]) §78*k*; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1934) 1151; H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1957) §232;

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recently in discourse-pragmatic terms by Greek linguists Stephen Levinsohn and Steven Runge, on the basis of their research on Koine Greek, and Egbert Bakker, on the basis of his work on Attic Greek. They describe μέν as a prospective or anticipatory particle that alerts the reader to forthcoming, semantically corresponding content (that is typically introduced by δέ). Levinsohn, for example, writes: 'The term *prospective* is used in connection with μέν to mean that it anticipates, or at least implies, a corresponding sentence containing δέ.'[2] Similarly, Runge states: 'Μέν signals the presence of one common constraint: anticipation of a related sentence that follows.'[3] Bakker is in line with both of them, arguing that '[t]he presence of *mén* … does no more than signal that the clause will acquire its intended meaning only in combination with the following one, to which it anticipates'.[4] This is also the function that μέν exhibits in the early Koine period, as made evident by its use in the LXX and contemporaneous papyri. Based on these corpora, I have described the discourse-pragmatic function of μέν in the following way:

> 1) to alert readers to forthcoming necessary, corresponding, and semantically-related material that needs to be processed together with the host utterance in which μέν occurs and 2) to instruct readers to build their mental representation of the discourse by regarding the resultant grouping as a coherent discourse unit that provides relevant information about a preceding or presupposed topic.[5]

J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* (rev. K. J. Dover; Oxford: Clarendon, 1959²) 359, 369–84; F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (trans. R. Funk; rev. edn; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961) §447; H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (rev. G. M. Messing; Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1984) §§2903–15; P. Louw and E. A. Nida, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. I (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989) §§89.104, 89.136, 91.3; R. A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994) 200; D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Zondervan, 1996) 672; BDAG s.v. μέν; S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (London: Continuum, 2005²) 212; F. W. Danker, *The Concise Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) s.v. μέν; J T. Muraoka, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009) s.v. μέν.

2 S. H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek* (Dallas: SIL International, 2000²) 170. See also S. H. Levinsohn, *Textual Connections in Acts* (SBLMS 31; Atlanta: Scholars, 1987) 143–4.

3 S. E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Lexham Bible Reference Series; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010) 75. Runge notes in n. 7 of the same page that the related clause is '*most often* introduced by δέ' (emphasis added).

4 E. J. Bakker, 'Boundaries, Topics, and the Structure of Discourse: An Investigation of the Ancient Greek Particle *dé*', *Studies in Language* 17 (1993) 301.

5 C. J. Fresch, 'Discourse Markers in the Septuagint and Early Koine Greek with Special Reference to The Twelve' (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2015) 209.

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For example, in P.Cair.Zen. I.59107 μέν is used to signal a correlation between its sentence and the following one (which contains δέ), and thus ties the two together:

> Ἀπολλώνιος Πανακέστορι χαίρειν. τὸ [π]λοῖον ἔτι πρότερον ἀπεστάλκειμεν ἄν σοι, ἀλλ' ὁρῶμεν μέ[γα ἀνή]λωμα ἐσόμενον εἰς τοὺς ναύτας. εἰ μὲν οὖν δύνασαι τῶν ἐν Κερκῆι τισὶν δοῦναι, οἵτινες ἐργῶνται καὶ δια[θ]ρέψουσι τοὺς ν[αύ]τ[α]ς, ὅταν δέ σοι χρεία ἦι τοῦ πλοίου ἀποχρήσουσι, γράψον ἡμῖν· ἀποστελοῦμεν γάρ σοι. εἰ δὲ μή, οὐχ ὁρῶ πῶς δυνάμεθα καθημένοις τοῖς ναύταις τὸν πλεῖστον χρόνον τοὺς μισθοὺς διὰ παντὸς διδόναι.
>
> Apollonios to Panakestor. Greetings. We would have already sent the boat to you earlier, but we see a great expense in the sailors. So, if (μέν) you are able to offer wages to some sailors in Kerke, whoever might work, and they will maintain the sailors, then whenever you have enough need for the boat, write to us, for we will send it to you. But (δέ) if not, I cannot see how we can continually offer wages to sailors who are sitting around most of the time.

We also find prospective μέν without a corresponding δέ. In UPZ I.125, for example, μέν is used at the beginning of a list detailing payment penalties for one Peteimouthes. Its presence signals that further distinct penalties will shortly follow:

> ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀποδῶι καθό(τι) γέγραπται, ἀποτεισάτω Πετειμούθης Κονούφει τὸ μὲν δάνειον ἡμιόλιον παραχρῆμα καὶ τοῦ ὑπερπεσόντος χρόνου τοὺς τόκους ὡς τοῦ στατῆρ[ο]ς χαλκοῦ δραχμῶν ἑξήκοντα κατὰ μ[ῆ]να καὶ τὸ βλάβος καὶ τοῦ παρασυγγραφεῖν εἰς τὸ βασιλικὸν ἐπίτιμον ἀργυρίου δραχμὰς τέσσαρας καὶ ἡ πρᾶξις ἔστω Κονούφει καὶ τοῖς παρ' αὐτοῦ ἔκ τε αὐτοῦ Πετειμούθου καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχ[όντ]ων αὐτῶι πάντω[ν π]ρ[ά]σσοντι [κ]αθάπερ ἐκ δίκης. ἡ δὲ συγγραφὴ ἥδε κυρία ἔστω πανταχοῦ.
>
> Now, if he does not pay as it is written, let Peteimouthes pay as penalty to Konouphis the (μέν) debt plus 50 per cent immediately *and the overtime interest*, about four days' wages in bronze coins, 60 drachmae monthly, *and the damage, and the 4 silver drachma penalty of breaking contract with the treasury*. And let Konouphis and those from him have the right of retribution both from him, Peteimouthes, and from from all those present with him when he did it. Now, let this contract be authoritative everywhere.

To put this prospective function of μέν simply: μέν provides a procedural instruction to the reader/hearer to link forthcoming material with the μέν clause.[6]

6 Credit for this description is due to Margaret Sim, who wrote it in a private correspondence to me on 22 August 2014. To this description, I would add, based on my research in the LXX and papyri, that μέν also communicates that optimal relevance with regard to a preceding or established topic is attained only by understanding the corresponding materials as an intimately connected, cohesive unit.

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However, there is another function sometimes ascribed to μέν. Some Koine grammars and lexica posit that μέν can function in an emphatic role, much like it sometimes did in Classical Greek.[7] The idea behind this is that μέν derived from and was a weakened form of μήν and could thus be used as an affirmative or emphatic marker, typically glossed as 'indeed' or 'certainly', particularly when it is not followed by a corresponding particle.[8] Stanley Porter, for example, writes: 'The particle occurs alone with emphatic value in many instances.'[9] Chamberlain understands μέν as intensive and writes: 'It is a weakened form of μήν. It was originally used alone with no thought of a corresponding δέ.'[10] With regard to Koine lexica, Louw and Nida's lexicon places emphatic μέν in a separate entry with γέ and δή,[11] and Danker begins his entry on the particle by labelling it an 'affirming particle' and noting its relationship to μήν.[12]

Interestingly, there are some grammars and lexica that do not posit or say anything about an 'emphatic μέν' in their discussions of the particle. Blass, Debrunner and Funk, for instance, only mention the particle's correlative function in their grammar.[13] The same is true of Daniel Wallace, Samuel Green, James Moulton and Nigel Turner, and Takamitsu Muraoka.[14] Unfortunately, these

7 This use is traditionally labelled μέν *solitarium*.

8 So also Beekes's etymological dictionary (though it covers more than the Koine period). Beekes provides an entry on μέν that simply states 'emphatic particle' and points the reader to the entry on μήν, which then describes μέν as having the same function as μήν, though being slightly weaker. R. Beekes, with the assistance of L. van Beek, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (Leiden Indo-European Etymological Dictionary Series, vol. x/1; Leiden: Brill, 2010) s.v. μέν.

9 Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 212. So also Young, *New Testament Greek*, 200, though Young does add that there may be an inherent discourse function to link thoughts together.

10 W. D. Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1941) 161.

11 Louw and Nida, *Greek–English Lexicon*, §91.6.

12 Danker, *Concise Greek–English Lexicon*, s.v. μέν. So also BDAG s.vv. μέν, μήν 1.

13 Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §447.

14 Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 672; Green, *Grammar of the Greek Testament*, 344–5; J. H. Moulton and N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. III: Syntax (London: T&T Clark International, 2005) 331–2; Muraoka, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, s.v. μέν. Mayser also does not mention a confirmatory or emphatic μέν, not even in his section on μέν without δέ (E. Mayser, *Grammatik der Griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit: Satzlehre*, vol. II.3 (Berlin und Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1934) 129–32). While Abel does mention a confirmatory μέν, he only does so with regard to the construction μὲν οὖν (with which I disagree, as the anticipatory function of μέν can be observed when this collocation is used – there is no need to posit more plurality than necessary). So also G. C. Wakker, '"Well I Will Now Present My Arguments": Discourse Cohesion Marked by ΟΥΝ and ΤΟΙΝΥΝ in Lysias', *Discourse Cohesion in Ancient Greek* (ed. S. Bakker and G. Wakker; Leiden: Brill, 2009) 70–1; Levinsohn, *Textual Connections*, 141–50; *idem, Discourse Features*, 170–1; Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 78–80). In addition, Abel does not mention an emphatic or

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grammarians and lexicographers do not provide a reason for the absence of the 'emphatic' category in their works, though the fact that they did not see any reason to include it may itself be significant.

2. A Diachronic Understanding of μέν[15]

The issue at hand is whether μέν retains some degree of the affirmative or emphatic force it held in Classical Greek. The traditional Greek grammarians wrestled with this, being aware that such a force does not appear to be present in Koine, or even in late Classical Greek, yet wanting to hold on to it to a certain extent. Consider A. T. Robertson's discussion on the particle:

> Indeed, in Homer all three forms [μάν, μήν, μέν] occur in the same sense. That original sense is affirmative, meaning 'surely', 'indeed', 'in truth' … It is probable that in the change from the old alphabet to the new the transcribers adopted the two ways of spelling, common in Attic and Ionic (μέν and μήν) with a notion that μήν was merely emphatic with single words, while μέν was correlative (forwards or backwards) or antithetical. Questions of metre may have also entered into the matter. But there is no doubt at all that in itself μέν does not mean or imply antithesis. The original use was simply emphatic confirmation of single words, usually the weightiest word in the sentence. This use was gradually left more and more to μήν and other particles, but it is not anacoluthic, as Winer holds, for μέν to occur without the presence of δέ or ἀλλά. The older language is naturally richer in this original idiom with μέν, but it survives in the N. T. and is not to be regarded as unclassical or uncouth … The old idiom survived best in the vernacular and in poetry, while the literary prose was more careful to use the antithetical or resumptive μέν. This μέν *solitarium*, as the books call it, may have a concessive or restrictive force.[16]

Robertson acknowledges that the original force of μέν had been left to μήν. In instances of μέν *solitarium*, though, he sees some of that force retained, postulating that it may have 'a concessive or restrictive force'. However, it is important to note, with regard to 'the old idiom that survived in vernacular and poetry', that Robertson seems to be drawing on the work of Antonius Jannaris, but Jannaris only claims this use of μέν for μήν *in Classical Attic and earlier verse*, owing to the interference of metrical quantity.[17] Shortly after this discussion, Robertson

confirmatory use in his section on μέν *without* a corresponding δέ (Abel, *Grammaire du Grec Biblique*, §78*k, l*).

15 I am grateful to Geoffrey Horrocks for interacting with me and offering invaluable insights on the content of this section.

16 Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1150–1.

17 A. N. Jannaris, *An Historical Greek Grammar: Chiefly of the Attic Dialect* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1987) §1744.

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also argues for instances of μέν *solitarium* that imply contrast.[18] J. D. Denniston, who focuses on Classical Greek, is more decisive than Robertson in his description of the particle. He writes:

> The two particles [μήν (μάν) and μέν] have already begun to diverge in the earliest surviving Greek literature. The primary function of μέν, as of μήν, is emphatic, strongly affirming an idea or concentrating the attention upon it. But, as this process naturally entails the isolation of one idea from others, μέν acquires a concessive or antithetical sense, and serves to prepare the mind for a contrast of greater or lesser sharpness. (The same thing occurs in Latin, German, and English, with *sane, zwar*, and 'certainly'.) The original, affirmative, sense of μέν nevertheless maintains some kind of precarious existence throughout classical Greek.[19]

Denniston does note an emphatic function for μέν but sees this sense as becoming less prominent, even before the Koine period. Moreover, he later states, '[p]reparatory μέν, already fully developed in Homer, ousts emphatic μέν from the field in the fifth and fourth centuries, and many cases which appear at first sight emphatic are really elliptically antithetical'.[20] Therefore, at least according to Denniston, it would seem that even before the end of the Classical period, μέν had lost its emphatic use and solely exhibited a prospective function. Lastly, consider Jannaris' remarks:

> The two particles μὲν and μὴν were originally identical both in form ... and meaning ... and their distinction, as drawn in our grammars and lexica, is a comparatively later [Classical Antiquity – 500–300 BCE] feature. In transliterating the original MEN from the old into the new alphabet ... the transcribers adopted the form μὴν for those cases where the particle appeared to be *emphatic* or formed *technical* (prosodic or grammatical) *length*, while μὲν was retained for unemphatic and technically short cases, in particular such as pointed to a correlative particle to come, the two particles then standing in relation of either antithesis ... or mere parataxis.[21]

Thus, as stated by the above grammarians, μέν was originally emphatic but came to function as a prospective marker, leaving the emphatic use to μήν, at least sometime before the end of the Classical period. Such a shift in the particle's function is understandable. Discourse markers tend to develop as they undergo

18 Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1152.

19 Denniston, *Particles*, 359.

20 Denniston, *Particles*, 359.

21 Jannaris, *Historical Greek Grammar*, §1744 (emphasis original). It would seem that Smyth is one of the only old grammarians who views μέν *solitarium* as categorically emphatic, at least in Attic Greek, though he also notes that μέν did gradually lose its asseverative force and is not clear whether this applies only to μέν followed by a corresponding particle or also to μέν *solitarium* (Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §§2895–2901).

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semantic shifts and as certain constructions and typical contexts of use become conventionalised.[22] On this, Diana Lewis writes:

> [D]iscourse markers develop largely through internal lexical semantic change, and this is the source of the multifunctionality of the lexemes … Discourse-marking senses tend to arise from repeated usage of a lexeme in particular context types, leading eventually to functional split. While the split is little advanced, the incipient new sense is transparently related to the old one and the new interpretation is predictable. When the split is more advanced, there may be no perceived relation between the senses.[23]

In the case of μέν, 'affirmative/emphatic μέν' was phasing out in Classical Greek and 'prospective μέν' was becoming the standard usage before the Koine period. From a diachronic perspective, it is likely that the prospective function of μέν was related to its old emphatic use and naturally developed from it. Denniston makes an excellent point when he writes: 'As this process [emphasis] naturally entails the isolation of one idea from others, μέν acquires a concessive or antithetical sense, and serves to prepare the mind for a contrast of greater or lesser sharpness.'[24] As noted by Lewis above, the new sense of a discourse marker will overlap for a period with the old function, but over time, the split between the two will

22 'Discourse marker', simply put, is a functional category that comprises any linguistic item that directs the reader in the building of his or her mental representation of the text. See Fresch, 'Discourse Markers', §1.1; K. Fischer, 'Towards an Understanding of the Spectrum of Approaches to Discourse Particles: Introduction to the Volume', *Approaches to Discourse Particles* (ed. K. Fischer; SIP 1; Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006) 6; M. M. Hansen, 'A Dynamic Polysemy Approach to the Lexical Semantics of Discourse Markers (with an Exemplary Analysis of French *toujours*)', *Approaches to Discourse Particles*, 25; A. Drummen, 'Discourse Cohesion in Dialogue. Turn-Initial ΑΛΛΑ in Greek Drama', *Discourse Cohesion in Ancient Greek*, 135.

23 D. M. Lewis, 'Discourse Markers in English: A Discourse-pragmatic View', *Approaches to Discourse Particles*, 52. Similarly, Richard Waltereit states: 'Discourse markers are historical relics of speakers' strategies for manipulating the structure of the discourse or the interaction. Speakers discover that some word forms may have a certain appeal for textual and interpersonal purposes. They then start to employ these forms in communicative contexts that do not properly justify their primary use. Hearers will then discover that the form is being used "abusively", thereby reanalyzing it as a discourse marker. Many of the properties of this new discourse marker can be shown to be related to the initial rhetorical strategies' (R. Waltereit, 'The Rise of Discourse Markers in Italian: A specific Type of Language Change', *Approaches to Discourse Particles*, 66.)

24 Denniston, *Particles*, 359. Denniston's comparison of this to the word 'certainly' is apt, as it seems to have undergone similar change. Instead of two phonological forms developing as in the case of μέν and μήν, though, English speakers use alternative prosodies for its affirmative and anticipatory functions (affirmative: no pauses on either side of the word – falling intonation; anticipatory: brief pause before and after the word – usually rising intonation). A helpful, brief discussion on the discourse-marking capability of linguistic items and gradual nature of diachronic evolution can be found in Hansen, 'A Dynamic Polysemy Approach', 27–8.

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become more distinct as the new sense is conventionalised and, in the case of μέν, as the old sense falls out of the language.

Even if μέν developed from μήν as an allegro form of the emphatic particle,[25] such a development (and the fact that both particles remained in the language) would appear to point to a functional (albeit pragmatically motivated and diachronically related) divergence. Understandably, μέν and μήν would share a mixed usage for a period of time while the distinct prospective use of μέν was still being concretised, but this period of overlap is viewed by the historical grammarians cited above as having ended *well before* the Koine period. This is ostensibly affirmed by those Koine grammarians and lexicographers mentioned earlier who only posit a correlative or prospective function for μέν. Despite this, there are still Koine Greek grammars and lexica that assert the emphatic category.

3. 'Emphatic μέν' in the New Testament

Given the above, it would be fruitful to investigate some of the occurrences of μέν in the New Testament that are commonly understood as belonging to the so-called 'emphatic' or 'affirmative' category.[26] The historical evidence strongly suggests that 'emphatic μέν' would not occur in Greek as late as the New Testament. Does the historical evidence need to be re-evaluated or are there other avenues for explaining these uses of μέν in the New Testament that follow the historical evidence and remain consistent with the synchronic data?

The first example may be found in Matt 3.11. Here it has been suggested that μέν should be regarded as emphatic and rendered by 'indeed'.[27]

> Ex. 1
> ἐγὼ μὲν ὑμᾶς βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι εἰς μετάνοιαν, ὁ δὲ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἰσχυρότερός μού ἐστιν, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς τὰ ὑποδήματα βαστάσαι· αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί·
>
> I (μέν) baptise you with water for repentance, but the one who comes after me is more powerful than me, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

25 In Attic Greek, before the fourth century BCE, μήν would have been written μέν, owing to the fact that eta had not yet entered the Attic alphabet. So, when one says that μέν originally was emphatic, it could be that μέν itself was emphatic or μέν – pronounced μήν – was the emphatic original from which μέν developed. On the introduction of eta to the Attic alphabet and subsequent spelling shifts, see G. Horrocks, *Greek: A History of the Language and its Speakers* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010²) 27, 38, 40; C. C. Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament: Morphology, Syntax, Phonology, and Textual Transmission* (WUNT 167; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) 28, 355–9.

26 Thus, the following representative sample was chosen on the basis of what occurrences of μέν are often treated as emphatic in Greek lexica and grammars.

27 Young, *New Testament Greek*, 200.

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If the verse is understood in the sense of 'I, indeed, baptise you with water for repentance, but the one …', one is left wondering what exactly μέν is emphasising. There is not a need to affirm the truth of the statement, nor would it make sense for John to be emphasising his baptism, as the point of the communication is to place the focus on the baptism of the one who comes after him. Even in English, the suggested gloss, 'indeed', is not clearly emphatic. If anything, it does not emphasise so much as anticipate the upcoming contrastive switch in John's speech. This is clear in Leon Morris' assessment of the passage. He writes: 'At this point John turns to his practice of baptism and relates it to another baptism that would follow. *I indeed* is emphatic; it sets John in contrast with the stronger one who is to come.'[28] Morris seems to understand correctly what μέν is accomplishing, anticipating the forthcoming related content, but unhelpfully labels this as 'emphatic'. Such a label does not accurately describe the particle or its relation to the following content, thus adding nothing to the argument and potentially confusing the reader regarding what the particle communicates.

The presence of μέν can be better explained as functioning prospectively. In view of the preposed topic switches (ἐγώ and ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος), the verbal repetition of βαπτίζω/βαπτίσει, and the switch between the instruments of baptism (ὕδατι and πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί), it is clear that μέν anticipates the correlated material of the latter two thirds of the verse (which is introduced with a δέ). The particle serves to strengthen the connection and contrast between the two persons and baptisms presented. It is not enough for John the Baptist to state what he does with regard to baptism. He has something more to say that is intimately and necessarily connected to his first statement; in contrast to him, there is someone else coming who is greater than him and has a superior baptism. Thus, μέν is not employed for emphatic purposes but rather to call attention to this connection, instructing the hearer/reader to anticipate the related content and to regard the two propositions as a cohesive unit.[29] By understanding the function of μέν, the reader comes to a fuller appreciation of John's purpose in this verse. The particle is not necessary to John's speech, and, therefore, its use is purposefully motivated. John uses μέν to create anticipation in his hearers for an upcoming switch. In this way, he is encouraging them to regard what he is saying about his baptism as only a part of the intended communication; it is not the last thing to be said on the matter at hand. The description of his baptism then serves as a foil for the baptism of the one who comes after him. John could have communicated the same propositional content without μέν, but

28 L. Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 60 (emphasis original).

29 For a similar argument, see Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 76–7.

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by virtue of its use, he ensures that the connection between the two correlated parts of the communication will not be missed.[30]

Another occurrence is in Acts 4.16. Dana and Mantey regard this instance of μέν as emphatic and thus translate it as 'really'.[31]

> Ex. 2
> [16]... λέγοντες· τί ποιήσωμεν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τούτοις; ὅτι μὲν γὰρ γνωστὸν σημεῖον γέγονεν δι᾽ αὐτῶν πᾶσιν τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν Ἰερουσαλὴμ φανερὸν καὶ οὐ δυνάμεθα ἀρνεῖσθαι· [17]ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα μὴ ἐπὶ πλεῖον διανεμηθῇ εἰς τὸν λαὸν ἀπειλησώμεθα αὐτοῖς μηκέτι λαλεῖν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ μηδενὶ ἀνθρώπων.
>
> [16]... saying, 'What should we do with these men? For that (μέν) a remarkable sign has happened through them is clear to all those living in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. [17]But, in order that it does not spread any further among the people, let us threaten them to no longer speak in this name to anyone.'

The emphatic reading, 'For that a really remarkable sign has happened ...', understands the particle to be highlighting the great extent to which the sign was remarkable. The first question one must ask is, even if μέν has an emphatic function in addition to its prospective function, why not use a less ambiguous form, such as an adverb like σφόδρα or ἀληθῶς? Moreover, this instance of μέν can be explained as functioning as it consistently does in Koine, anticipating forthcoming related material. In this case, μέν prepares the reader for the proverbial 'other side of the coin', the content of v. 17. It may be argued that this cannot be the case as there is not a corresponding δέ. However, the presence of δέ is not a necessary condition for the prospective function of μέν. Prototypically, μέν will be followed by a δέ, but it can correspond with other particles as well, such as ἀλλά (as is the case here) or καί,[32] and is even sufficient by itself.[33]

30 'The presence of μέν only serves to highlight and strengthen what was already present, ensuring that the reader or hearer does not miss the speaker's intended connection' (Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 77).

31 Dana and Mantey, *Manual Grammar*, 261.

32 Cf. Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 81–2; Denniston, *Particles*, 370, 374–6; Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1151–3; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §447(6); Winer, *New Testament Greek*, 553; Abel, *Grammaire du Grec Biblique*, §78*k* (mentions ἀλλά but not καί); Mayser, *Grammatik der Griechischen Papyri*, §164.4 (mentions καί but not ἀλλά); BDAG s.v. μέν 1β. For an example of μέν corresponding with καί, see the example in UPZ I.125 in section 1 above.

33 See Fresch, 'Discourse Markers', 188–212; Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 83. Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §447(6); Abel, *Grammaire du Grec Biblique*, §78*l*; and Mayser, *Grammatik der Griechischen Papyri*, §164.4 also note that μέν can correlate with asyndeton.

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Verses 16b and 17, then, are to be viewed as a cohesive unit that offers the relevant full consideration in answer to the question posed in v. 16a, 'What should we do with these men?' The religious leaders first affirm that a remarkable sign has happened, but that is not to be understood as the end of the conversation. There is more to be said, and thus μέν is employed (1) to instruct the hearer/reader to anticipate the forthcoming related material that sets the affirmation aside and provides the decision, and (2) to instruct the hearer/reader to then mentally process the material in which μέν occurs together with the anticipated content.

Another μέν that has been regarded as emphatic occurs in 1 Thess 2.18.

> Ex. 3
> διότι ἠθελήσαμεν ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἐγὼ μὲν Παῦλος καὶ ἅπαξ καὶ δίς, καὶ ἐνέκοψεν ἡμᾶς ὁ σατανᾶς.
>
> For we wanted to come to you, I (μέν) Paul even several times, but Satan hindered us.

BDAG understands this μέν to be emphasising the subject of the clause in a contrastive context in which there is no expressed correlation, though the context may permit the contrast to be supplied by the reader.[34] With regard to the claim that the particle is emphasising the subject, this is ambiguous. It is not clear what is accomplished by such emphasis. In addition, the salient piece of information in the μέν clause is that Paul attempted to come *several times*. If anything, the frequency with which he attempted to visit the Thessalonians should be what is emphasised here. Thus, rather than regarding μέν as emphatic, one may understand the particle here to be creating the anticipation of related content relevant to the preceding topic of wanting to visit the Thessalonians. There are two options available for the reader. The first is that the particle anticipates the final sentence καὶ ἐνέκοψεν ἡμᾶς ὁ σατανᾶς, correlating with the καί.[35] This verse would then be similar to Ex. 2 (Acts 4.16), in that the 'other side of the coin' is given in the anticipated content: they all wanted to visit the Thessalonians; on the one hand, Paul even tried on many occasions to visit them but, on the other, they were constantly hindered by Satan. However, given the mismatch of persons (ἐγώ ... Παῦλος vs ἡμᾶς), this option may not be regarded as viable (though I do not think this is a necessary conclusion, since ἡμᾶς could simply be including those who accompanied Paul when he attempted to visit). The other option is that μέν implies the correlated content and the reader must supply it. This is where BDAG may be on the right track. In this case, the implied content could be either ἐγὼ δὲ οὐκ ἠδυνάμην 'but I was not able' or οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι ἐπείρασαν

34 BDAG s.v. μέν 2a.

35 So Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1152.

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'and the others tried'.[36] That μέν can imply its corresponding content is not a new idea. Denniston, for example, provides a sub-category for 'preparatory μέν' that is devoted to instances of μέν through which the corresponding clauses are implied. In fact, for him, this is the category wherein μέν *solitarium* fits. He writes:

> The explanation of μέν *solitarium*, in general, is either that the speaker originally intends to supply an answering clause, but subsequently forgets his intention ... or, far more frequently, that he uses μέν, like γε, in contrast with something which he does not, even in the first instance, intend to express in words, or even (sometimes) define precisely in thought.[37]

Whichever option one chooses, whether the μέν anticipates the sentence at the end of the verse or implies the corresponding content, its function is synchronically consistent with how it is used throughout the New Testament and in early Koine Greek and is diachronically consistent with the shifts that the particle underwent.[38]

Rom 10.1 has also been cited as containing a μέν that emphasises the subject of its clause.[39] This, it would seem, is due to the fact that there is no δέ following it, even though there is clear corresponding material and despite the historical agreement among grammarians that μέν can correspond to particles other than δέ (or to no particle at all).[40]

36 This second option is given partially by F. F. Bruce. He writes: 'Formally, μέν implies a following δέ, in the shape of some such phrase as οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι, "but as for the others (they may speak for themselves)"' (F. F. Bruce, *1&2 Thessalonians* (WBC 45; Waco: Word Books, 1982) 55.

37 Denniston, *Particles*, 380. Cf. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, 170; Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1152; Green, *Grammar of the Greek Testament*, 345; BDAG s.v. μέν 2; LSJ s.v. μέν 2.

38 Another example of μέν implying its corresponding clause may be found in Acts 1.1, Τὸν μὲν πρῶτον λόγον ἐποιησάμην περὶ πάντων, ὦ Θεόφιλε, ὧν ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς ποιεῖν τε καὶ διδάσκειν. The anticipated δεύτερον (δέ) λόγον is implied and clear due to it being the present letter. Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1152 also acknowledges this, as does Danker, *Concise Greek–English Lexicon*, s.v. μέν b. So also in LXX Exod 4.23, where the Lord says: Ἐξαπόστειλον τὸν λαόν μου, ἵνα μοι λατρεύσῃ· εἰ μὲν οὖν μὴ βούλει ἐξαποστεῖλαι αὐτούς, ὅρα οὖν ἐγὼ ἀποκτενῶ τὸν υἱόν σου τὸν πρωτότοκον. The μέν anticipates and thereby implies the corresponding εἰ δέ clause: 'But if you do want to send them out, I will not kill your firstborn son'. (See Fresch, 'Discourse Markers', 202–3.) I do not consider the μέν to be anticipating the apodosis of the conditional as I have observed no other instance in the LXX or third–first century papyri of that happening. Rather, in almost every case of εἰ/ἐὰν μέν, the μέν anticipates a corresponding conditional clause, usually introduced by εἰ δὲ μή.

39 BDAG s.v. μέν 2a.

40 See nn. 32 and 33 above, respectively.

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Ex. 4
Ἀδελφοί, ἡ μὲν εὐδοκία τῆς ἐμῆς καρδίας καὶ ἡ δέησις πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν εἰς σωτηρίαν.

Brothers, the (μέν) desire of my heart and my prayer to God on their behalf is for their salvation.

The relationship between an emphatic μέν and ἡ εὐδοκία is tenuous at best. There is nothing in the context to suggest that Paul is emphasising his desire or what exactly ἡ μὲν εὐδοκία would mean emphatically. Some commentators follow Blass and Debrunner[41] in suggesting that ἡ μὲν εὐδοκία without a corresponding δέ results in the meaning 'so far as it depends on my desire'.[42] This would appear to be an emphatic reading of μέν (though it is not labelled as such), but it is not convincing. First, if an emphatic reading were intended, a clear, unambiguously emphatic form, such as μήν, δή or ἀληθῶς, could have been used. Second, Blass and Debrunner offer no discussion nor much support for such a reading, other than noting that μέν without a corresponding δέ is 'excusable or even good classical usage'.[43] Lastly, it is stretching well beyond the limits of μέν, even the so-called 'emphatic μέν', to regard 'so far as it depends on my desire' as a legitimate rendering of ἡ μὲν εὐδοκία.

A more linguistically and exegetically satisfying approach is to regard μέν as maintaining is typical function. The particle is used here with a narrow scope, that is to say, it is being used at the word level of the discourse. It is instructing the reader to expect further material that corresponds to ἡ εὐδοκία τῆς ἐμῆς καρδίας and to read the two connected utterances together (ἡ μὲν εὐδοκία τῆς ἐμῆς καρδίας —> καὶ ἡ δέησις πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν). The interpretive value here is that the reader understands why Paul made the choice to use μέν, a particle that is not semantically necessary, in order to tie these two noun phrases together explicitly. For the apostle, the desire of his heart and his prayer to God are two intimately connected parts of a whole, and highlighting that connection was important enough for him to employ μέν.[44]

Louw and Nida's lexicon provides John 11.6 as an instance of 'emphatic μέν'.[45] Once again, this interpretation seems to be based on the absence of a corresponding δέ despite the presence of corresponding material in the next verse.

41 Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §447(4).

42 E.g. D. J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 631 n. 4; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. II (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979; reprinted 1981) 512–13; J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC 38B; Dallas: Word Books, 1988) 585.

43 Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §447(4).

44 Another example of μέν … καί with a narrow scope can be observed in the papyrus UPZ I.125, which was given as an example in section 1 above.

45 Louw and Nida, *Greek–English Lexicon*, §91.6.

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Ex. 5
[6] ὡς οὖν ἤκουσεν ὅτι ἀσθενεῖ, τότε μὲν ἔμεινεν ἐν ᾧ ἦν τόπῳ δύο ἡμέρας,
[7]ἔπειτα μετὰ τοῦτο λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς· ἄγωμεν εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν πάλιν.

[6]So, when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he then (μέν) remained in the place where he was for two days. [7]Then, after this, he said to his disciples, 'Let us go into Judea again.'

It is not clearly evident how this μέν could even be construed as emphatic or affirmative given that there is nothing to emphasise or affirm in the sentence. Moreover, Louw and Nida do not render the particle in their translation of the verse, thus begging the question of its emphatic contribution, even if it is a 'relatively weak emphasis'.[46] If one were to argue that μέν is emphasising the temporal adverb τότε,[47] he or she must then ask to what end it is emphasised. The answer could only be that it is 'emphasised' for the purpose of contrasting with the forthcoming ἔπειτα μετὰ τοῦτο, which is how Sanders and Mastin explain their 'emphatic' reading of the particle.[48] At this point, however, it would seem that 'emphatic' is being used as a conveniently ambiguous catch-all category. There is nothing emphatic about τότε μέν. A more satisfactory and linguistically consistent explanation is that the μέν is prospective and thus anticipates the temporal change, signalled by the preposed ἔπειτα μετὰ τοῦτο, and the associated event in v. 7, Jesus deciding to go to Judea.[49] The material of vv. 6b–7, then, is to be understood as a cohesive unit relevant to Jesus hearing that Lazarus was sick. It informs the reader that Jesus responded to the information in two ways: (1) he waited two more days and (2) then decided to go to Judea. John had a choice to use μέν here; it is not necessary to the propositional content. Why is linking these responses important? Why anticipate Jesus' decision in v. 7 to go to Judea by using μέν in v. 6? The answer is found in v. 11, when Jesus informs his disciples that Lazarus has died ('fallen asleep') and he plans to go to wake him up. The interpreter then understands the connection between John 11.6 and 7 – that upon hearing of Lazarus' death, Jesus *waited two days* and *then* went – to be a salient one. The explicit correlating of the two verses reveals what Jesus had planned all along: to wait until Lazarus died to leave for Bethany so that he could raise him from the dead. This connection presents Jesus in a specific way

46 Ibid.

47 J. N. Sanders and B. A. Mastin, *The Gospel according to St John* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968; reprinted 1975) 265.

48 Sanders and Mastin, *The Gospel according to St John*, 265.

49 So also C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, 1955; reprinted 1970) 324. In addition, BDAG s.v. μέν 2b, though not treating this μέν as correlative, at least notes that there is a contrast expressed between the two verses and that a δέ would be expected after ἔπειτα.

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that John wants his hearers/readers to pick up on. By using μέν, he highlights the connection, ensuring that the hearer/reader does not miss it.

Another 'emphatic μέν' provided by Louw and Nida is in 1 Cor 6.7.[50]

> Ex. 6
> ἤδη μὲν ὅλως ἥττημα ὑμῖν ἐστιν ὅτι κρίματα ἔχετε μεθ᾽ ἑαυτῶν. διὰ τί οὐχὶ μᾶλλον ἀδικεῖσθε; διὰ τί οὐχὶ μᾶλλον ἀποστερεῖσθε;
>
> It is already (μέν), in fact, a failure in you, that you have lawsuits among yourselves. Why not rather suffer harm? Why not rather be defrauded?

Here too, however, μέν is not emphatic.[51] Rather, the presence of μέν alerts the reader to the corresponding rhetorical questions at the end of the verse.[52] For the reader of the New Testament, such an understanding of the function of μέν provides insight into how Paul is structuring his argument. Paul has something more to say. He does not leave it at the fact that the Corinthians have failed, but rather he poses the options alternative to that failure that should have been obvious to them from the start. In order to ensure that this connection is not missed, so that the Corinthians anticipate some related content, and that these utterances are read together as a cohesive unit, Paul uses μέν to signal to the hearer/reader that related material is forthcoming, and he thereby highlights the connection between the utterances.

Rom 1.8 contains a μέν that does not seem to correspond to any material whatsoever and thus is sometimes regarded as emphatic.[53] However, there are three more satisfactory explanations that can be given that also remain consistent with the prospective function of μέν.

> Ex. 7
> Πρῶτον μὲν εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ περὶ πάντων ὑμῶν ὅτι ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν καταγγέλλεται ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ.
>
> First (μέν) I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

50 Louw and Nida, *Greek–English Lexicon*, §91.6.

51 Contra R. F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (SPS 7; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999) 234. According to Collins, μὲν οὖν heightens the force of Paul's rejoinder.

52 This is noted also by G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (rev. edn; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014) 263 n. 217; S. J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NTC; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993; reprinted 2007) 187; Danker, *Concise Greek–English Lexicon*, s.v. μέν b.

53 So Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 212; Dana and Mantey, *Manual Grammar*, 261.

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Naturally, one would expect something to the effect of δεύτερον δέ to follow soon after. However, Paul never provides a second point. The first option for understanding the μέν in this verse is that Paul simply never made it to his other points, that is, he forgot, owing to being wrapped up in his present discourse, and thus the reader is left with an anacoluthon. This is certainly possible and is the explanation given by both Robertson and Green.[54] This option is also entertained by both Douglas Moo and Morris in their commentaries on Romans.[55] Another explanation is provided by Runge, who states that Paul had a rhetorical purpose here in creating anticipation for the reader but never returning to his other points. He argues that the 'feint' draws extra attention to Paul's larger purpose at the beginning of the letter, that is, to announce his visit and to provide an exposition of the Gospel.[56] A third option is that μέν anticipates the ὅτι clause, which is then understood to explicate the content of the prayer ('First, (μέν) I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you that your faith is proclaimed in all the world').[57] Of course, this suggestion does not answer the question as to why πρῶτον is used as well. However, if πρῶτον is regarded as an adverb of degree (e.g. 'Above all, I thank my God …'),[58] the issue does not arise. Thus, in whichever case, the normative function of μέν is maintained. Moreover, each of the above explanations is more viable than an emphatic reading. It is not clear how this μέν *could* be emphatic. If anything, as with Ex. 1 (Matt 3.11) and Ex. 5 (John 11.6) above, it is only 'emphatic' insomuch as it creates anticipation for the anticipated correlative member. Some have suggested the translation 'in fact' for μέν here,[59] but at that point μέν has lost any emphatic force and one wonders whether such a rendering has any relationship to a supposed function of μέν or is more the result of an old function being retained and ascribed to μέν when convenient.

54 Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1152; Green, *Grammar of the Greek Testament*, 345. Robertson also states this could be the original use of μέν and thus offers the rendering 'first of all in truth'. (This is the only instance in which Robertson posits an emphatic reading of μέν in the New Testament. He comes close to doing so again in his reading of Luke 11.48 (p. 1153), but he stops just shy of claiming it outright.) This is a good example of the current situation and how 'emphatic μέν' has been propagated. Because of instances such as this in which maintaining the synchronically and diachronically established function of μέν is difficult or provides a less exciting reading, an historically defunct function is attributed to the particle.

55 Moo, *Romans*, 57; L. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 55–6.

56 S. E. Runge, *High Definition Commentary: Romans* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2014) 15–17. Moo also considers an option similar to Runge's (Moo, *Romans*, 57).

57 This third explanation was suggested to me by Margaret Sim in a private communication on 22 August 2014.

58 BDAG s.v. πρῶτος 2b.

59 Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 212; Dana and Mantey, *Manual Grammar*, 261.

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4. Concluding Remarks

There are only a handful of occurrences of μέν in the New Testament that have been labelled 'emphatic' by various grammars and lexica, and there is rarely ever agreement over which occurrences do exhibit this use. Most often, those identified as 'emphatic' tend to be instances in which μέν corresponds to forthcoming material but correlates with a particle other than δέ or no particle at all. The few others are when μέν implies its corresponding material, the occurrence is a case of anacoluthon or strategic rhetoric, or the corresponding δέ is simply further separated than expected.[60] One is able to explain these apparently exceptional usages under the same prospective function without needing to appeal to an archaic vestigial usage from the Classical period by understanding the diachronic development of μέν, its discourse-pragmatic function in the Koine period, and by being aware of its use and interaction with various contexts in Koine. The above New Testament examples are evidence of this. They can all be explained more consistently and satisfactorily by maintaining the diachronically evinced and synchronically established function of μέν rather than attributing to it a function that it lost some centuries earlier. For the interpreter of the New Testament, this understanding of μέν provides insight into how authors conceived of correlations in the discourse, subsequently structured the discourse, and highlighted those correlations to which they wanted to draw the reader's attention.

Hence, in view of the diachronic data and what can be observed in the Koine period, the description of prospective μέν provided earlier is a description of the particle's sole function in Koine: μέν provides a procedural instruction to the reader/hearer to link forthcoming material with the μέν clause. Despite the fact that the particle μέν is described as emphatic in Koine in some grammars and lexica, these claims are better understood as a case of diachronic confusion. That is to say, this category asserted for Koine μέν is based on Classical μέν having had this function.[61] However, first, an earlier use of the particle is not sufficient evidence to posit that same use in a later period. A word's function in one time period does not necessarily determine its function in every instantiation of the language throughout time. Second, as was observed above, the emphatic/affirmative use of the particle was already phasing out in Classical Greek. Third, the prospective function of μέν can be explained as having naturally developed

60 For example, see Runge's discussion of Heb 9.1–11 in Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 78–80.

61 It may be a case of etymological confusion as well, as μέν is regularly regarded as having developed from μήν. As I argued in section 2 above, however, even if μέν did come from μήν, the prospective function of μέν probably developed from an earlier emphatic function (that was then left to μήν) and that development would seem to attest to a functional divergence between the two. Moreover, a word's etymology does not necessarily indicate its meaning.

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from the old emphatic function. In the end, one is left wondering how an emphatic or affirmative category for Koine μέν could have been posited for so long. It seems that an archaic explanation of the particle was propagated at the expense of understanding the Koine prospective function better. Thus, on the basis of the historical evidence, the natural diachronic evolution of the particle and, most importantly, the function of μέν that can be observed in Koine Greek, it would seem that the so-called 'emphatic μέν', at least with respect to Koine, should simply be regarded as an historical footnote in the diachronic development of the particle.

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