

INTRODUCTION.

The prepositions which are used, as distinct words, are called separable prepositions, or more generally *prepositions*;—those which are used only in composition are called inseparable prepositions. For the sake of brevity, I give to all words or single letters, prefixed to other words in composition, the general name of *prefixes*.

One of the best modes of ascertaining the true sense of a preposition, is to examine its various uses in composition, and discover what effect it has in modifying the signification of the word to which it is prefixed. Prepositions, used in compounds, often suffer the loss or change of a letter, for the sake of euphony, or the ease of pronunciation. Thus *ad* in Latin becomes *in affixis*; *col* becomes *col in colligis*; the Gr. *κατα* loses a letter in *καρπυ*, as does *αρι*, in many words.

The following sketch of the principal prepositions and prefixes in several languages of Europe will exhibit some of the affinities of these languages, and in a degree, illustrate the uses of this class of words.

SAXON AND GOTHIC.

And, Sax. and Goth., signifies *against*, *opposite*. This is the Gr. *αντι*, and Latin *ante*, not borrowed from the Greek or Latin, but a native word. Examples, *andstandan*, to stand against, to resist. *Andsuarian*, *answarian*, to answer; that is, to speak again, against or in return.

Amb, *amb*, *ymb*, usually *emb*, Saxon, signifying *about*, *around*; coinciding with the Latin *amb*, and Gr. *αμφι*. Example, *emb-faran*, to go around, to walk about; *embutan*, about; *emb*, about, and *butan*, without. See *But*. *Jumbeth*, *embeth*, *yumbeth*, office, duty, whence we have *ambassador*. This is Gothic is *andbader*, and a bailiff, minister or servant is *andbata*. The Germans have the word contracted in *ant*, charge, office, Dutch *ampt*, Dan. *ambt*. The Gothic orthography gives rise to the question whether *amb*, *emb*, and *ary*, Sax. and Goth. *and*, are not radically the same word; and it is very certain that the Gothic and Saxon *and*, is radically the same word as the Latin in, Dan. *ind*. Soin Gothic, “*and wigans*,” in the ways, into the highways. Luke, xiv. 23. “*and haimos*” per vicos, through the towns. Luke, ix. 6.

This preposition, *amb*, is in Dutch *om*; in German *um*; in Swedish and Danish *om*.

At, is a Gothic preposition and prefix, coinciding with Eng. *at*, Lat. *ad*. *Be*, in Saxon, as a preposition and prefix, is always written *be*, or *big*, answering to the English *by*, a preposition, and *be* in *beset*. In Gothic, it is written *bi*, *by* and *be*, being contractions of *big*. The primary and principal signification is *near*, close, as “*stand or sit by me*.” So in the word *by-stander*. It is a prefix of extensive use in the Saxon, German, Dutch, Danish and Swedish. Its use in denoting instrumentality, may be from the sense of nearness, but more probably it is from *pressing*, like *per*, through, or it denotes *proceeding from*, like *of*, as salvation is *of the Lord*.

For, in Saxon, as in English, is a preposition and prefix of extensive use. In Saxon *for* signifies a going, from *faran*, to go, to fare. It is radically the same word as *fore*, in the sense of in *front*, *before*. Its primary sense is *advancing*; *hence moving towards*; hence the sense of in *favor of*, and that of opposition, or negation. See the preceding remarks.

This word in German is *fur*, *ut*, with this orthography, the word is little used in composition. Yet the German has *furbitte*, intercession or praying for; *furwort*, intercession, recommendation, and a pronoun [*for-word*]; and *fur-wahr*, forsooth.

In the sense of *for*, the German has *vor*, a word of extensive use as a prefix. Thus in Saxon *foreseen*, to foresee, is in German *vorsehen*. The identity of these words need not be questioned. But in German as in Dutch the preposition *vor*, which is the English *far*, and Saxon *for*, is used in composition, in words in which the Saxon and English have *for*. Thus *forgifan*, to forgive, is in German, *vergeben*, and in Dutch, *vergeven*—Saxon, *for-gifan*, to forget; German *vergessen*; Dutch *vergeten*. Hence we see that the Saxon *for*, *fore*, *for*, the English *far*, *fore*, *far*, and the German *fur*, *vor* and *ver*, are from the same radix.

In Dutch, *for* and *fore* are represented by *voor*, and *ver* represents *for* and *far*.

The Danish also unites *for* and *fore*, as does the Swedish.

The French has this word in *pour*, and the Spanish and Portuguese in *por*. The latter signifies not only *for*, but *through*, as in Portuguese, “*Eu passarei por França*,” “*I will pass through France*.” Here we see the sense of moving. In Spanish and Portuguese this word is written also *para*, as if from the Greek. It is evidently the same word, probably received through a different channel from that of *por*. Now *through* is the exact sense of the Latin *per*; and *per* is the Italian preposition answering to *for* and *por*. But what is more to the purpose, the Spanish, Italian and Portuguese word, equivalent to the English *for*, *fore*, is in Spanish *perdonar*; in Italian, *perdonare*, and in Portuguese, *perdoar*; and the French is *pardonner*. Here then we have strong, if not conclusive evidence, that *for*, *pour*, *por*, *per*, *par*, and *para*, in different languages, are all from one stock, the word being varied in dialect, or by the different families; just as we have *far*, *farther*, as well as the Saxon *for*, and the English *forth*, *farther*, from the same primitive word. We have the same word in *pursue* and *purchase*, from the French *pour*.

The Greek has *κατα*, and *κατα*, probably from the same root, as well as *κατανοω*, *καποτ*.

Ge, in Gothic, and *ge* in Saxon, is a prefix of very extensive use. In Saxon, it is prefixed to a large portion of all the verbs in the language. According to Lye, it has sometimes the sense of the Latin *cum*; but in most words I cannot discern any effect of this prefix on the signification of the simple verb. It is retained in the Danish and in some German and Dutch words, especially in the participles of verbs, and in nouns formed from them. But it is remarkable that although the Saxon is our mother tongue, we have not remaining in the language a single instance of this prefix, with the original orthography. The only remains of it are in the contraction, *a*, as in *unake*, *adrift*, *ashamed*, &c. from *gewaken*, *awaken*; *gedrifan*, *adrifan*; *gesceamian*, *ascamian*. The letter *y* prefixed to verbs and participles used by Chaucer, as *yberied*, *yblent*, *yborne*, *yldight*, and a few others, the remnant of the *ge*. The words *yelud*, and *yceped*, are the last English words used, in which this letter appears.

It is possible that the first syllable of *govern*, from Lat. *gubern*, Gr. *κυβερνα*, may be the same prefix; or it may be the Welsh prefix *ge*, which occurs in *gobert*, to work, which the Romans wrote *aperor*. But I know not whether the first syllable of *govern* is a prefix or not.

There is another word which retains this prefix corrupted, or its equivalent; it is *common*, which we have received from the Latin *communis*. This word in the Teutonic dialects is, Sax. *gemeine*; Ger. *gemein*; Dutch, *gemeen*; Dan. *gemeen*; Sw. *gemeen*. Now if this is the Latin *communis*, and of the identity of the last component part of the word, there can, I think, be no doubt; then the first part of the word is the Teutonic *ge* altered to *com*, or what is more probable, *com* is the equivalent of *ge*, or *ge* may be a contracted and corrupted form of *cum*, *com*. In either case, we arrive at the conclusion that the Teutonic *ge*, and the Latin *cum*, are equivalent in signification.

In, is used in the Saxon and Gothic, as in modern English. It is in German *ein*, Dutch and Swedish *in*, Danish *ind*, Greek *εν*, Lat. *in*, Fr. *en*. This is radically the same word as *on* and *un*, the German *an*, Dutch *aan*, and Welsh *an*. In its original sense, it implies moving, advancing towards, and hence its use as a particle of negation or contrariety. “*Eunt in urbem*,” they are going to the city. “*Hec audio in te dictum*,” I hear these things said against you. In modern military usage, *on* is used in the same sense of advancing. “*The army is marching on Liege*.”

Mid, in Saxon, signifies *with*. It is the Gothic *mith*, German *mit*, Dutch *mede* or *met*, and the Gr. *μετα*; but not retained in English. It seems to have the same origin as *mid*, *middle*, *amidst*. In the Gothic it is used as a prefix.

Miss, a prefix, is the verb *miss*, to deviate. It is used in Saxon, German, Dutch, Swedish and Danish, in nearly the same sense, as in English. Its radical sense is to depart, or to wander.

Of, is a preposition and prefix of extensive use in the Saxon, as in English. It denotes primarily issuing, or proceeding from; hence separation, departure, and distance; in the latter sense, it is written *off*. It is the Latin *ab*, written by the early Romans *of*; the Greek *απο*, the German *ab*, the Dutch *of*; Dan. and Sw. *af*. The Saxons often prefixed this word, in cases where we use it after the verb as a modifier; as *of-drifan*, to drive *off*; as it is still used by the Germans, Dutch, Swedes and Danes. We retain it as a prefix, in *offset* and *offspring*, Sax. *ofspring*. As it denotes *proceeding from*, it is the proper sign of the genitive case; the case expressing production.

Offer, Eng. over, Goth. *ufar*, G. *uber*, D. *over*, Dan. *over*, Sw. *offer*, is a preposition and prefix, in all the Teutonic and Gothic languages, which I have examined; and in the same or similar senses. This seems to be the Greek *επι*, from which the Latins formed *super*, by converting the aspirate of the Greek *φ* vowel into *s*. This is probably the Heb. Ch. Syr. *אָר*, *קָרַב*, to pass, a passing, beyond.

On, is a Saxon preposition and prefix of very extensive use. It is obviously a different orthography of *in*, and it is used for *in*, in the Saxon, as in the origin, “*In the beginning*.” It has also the sense we now give to *on* and *upon*, with other modifications of signification.

In composition, it signifies *into*, or *towards*, as *on-blawan*, to blow in; *onclifan*, to adhere; to *cleave to*; and it is also a particle of negation, like *un*, as *onbindan*, to unbind. This *on* is only a different spelling of *un*, in Dutch, on German *un*, used as a word of negation. The Gothic has *un* and *un*, in the like sense, as the Danish has *un*; the D. *ont*. In this sense, *un* answers precisely to the Greek *αρι*, and as this is sometimes written *und* in Gothic, as *in* is written *ind*, in Danish, there can be little doubt, that *in*, *on*, *un*, *ar*, are all from one stock. The original word may have been *han*, *hān*, or *hān*; such loss of the first letter is very common; and *in*, from the Ch. and Heb. *תָּחַל*, presents us with an example. See *in* and *un*.

The German has *an*, and the Dutch *aan*, in the sense of *in* and *on*. *Oth*, is a Saxon preposition and prefix, sometimes written *ath* and *ed*, and answering nearly to the Latin *ad* and *re*; as in *oth-witten*, to twit, to throw in the teeth. It has also the sense of *from*, or *away*, or *against*, as in *oth-swerian*, to abjure. This preposition is obsolete, but we have the remains of it in *twit*, and perhaps in a few other words.

Sam, *samod*, a prefix. See the Danish and Swedish *infra*.