

# PROJECT GRAMCORD: A REPORT

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A major project in the field of New Testament Greek grammar and syntactical studies is under way and right now is completing its first major goal.

For many years I have felt the need for a new tool for Greek exegesis, a concordance which will do for the study of syntactical constructions what a word concordance does for the study of word meanings. When a student of the NT wants to know the true meaning of a word, he goes to a concordance, finds all the places in the NT where that word occurs, and then studies its usage in all those places (a lexicon or dictionary merely reflects the results of some other scholar's study of such usage). It is obvious that language includes more than words; it includes words in syntactical relationships. And it is just as important to study the usage of these "grammatical constructions" as it is to study the separated words. But thus far it has been exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to find the other places in the NT where the same construction occurs. The grammars discuss some constructions and give some examples, but not complete lists. We need a new tool.

But such a work would be so huge and the task of preparing it so great as to be almost impossible — at least until the coming of computers. I began to inquire into the possibilities of using this mechanical means to lessen the work and speed up the process. Of course, much work is being done in using computers for the study of languages, but none even approaches the sophistication needed for this program. About three years ago, the Lord brought to me (I firmly believe it was His doing) a young man who was interested in Greek and an expert computer programmer, Mr. Paul Miller.

Mr. Miller was then a student at Indiana University, majoring in Greek and Religious Studies, and also pursuing extensive studies in computer programming and data structures. He has since graduated with high honors and has been serving as programming consultant and lecturer in Computer Science at Indiana University. He has received national recognition through papers presented at both theological and computer science conferences, and a number of published articles in the field. This year he begins his work toward a Master of Arts in New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

The first step in the program was to get the syntactical information ready in a form which could be stored in a computer data base from which it could be drawn for the grammatical concordances. This involved the morphological analysis and identification of every word in the NT together with some functional description as well. Even in this work, computer programs were devised to do much of the work, leaving only the choice between alternate possibilities to manual editing. All verbs were completely parsed, all nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and participles were identified by gender, number, case, and in the case of pronouns, further functional classification. Prepositions, adverbs, conjunctions, and particles also were to some degree functionally identified. The entire NT is now completed through this first stage.

As the work progressed, it became obvious that such a collection of information would itself be a useful tool. Unbound computer-prepared print-outs of the Grammatical Directory were made available to students and the response was very encouraging. As a result, we are presently investigating the publication of the whole data-base for the entire NT. It will be approximately the size of a large lexicon.

Now, to consider the possibilities of the larger and ultimate goal of the project, The Grammatical Concordance. Some examples may illustrate the potential usefulness of the tool. A frequently expressed misconception is that first-class conditions ( $\epsilon\iota$  with the indicative mood) indicate that the condition expressed is really true, and therefore, that they should be translated "since" rather than "if." But when the places in the NT where this construction occurs are examined, it is clear that such is totally false. (Look at Matt 12:27, John 10:37, 1 Cor 15:14; try reading them "since"; there are dozens of other examples like these.) First-class conditions do *not* express states which are true; they indicate that the result is *just as true* as the condition.

Can the interpretive problem in Rom 1:4 be solved by taking the word for "the dead" as ablative? English versions translate "from the dead," which is an ablative sense. But the Greek is rendered literally "resurrection *of* the dead (ones, pl.)," a genitive idea. When we study concordantly the usage with "resurrection," we find that the genitive expresses "the one(s) raised," while the ablative idea of "out from among the dead ones" is expressed in Greek by a preposition ( $\epsilon\kappa$ ). So the verse is not referring solely to Christ's own resurrection, but to the resurrection of dead ones.

A common expression of time in NT Greek is made up of a preposition ( $\epsilon\nu$ ) with the articular infinitive. Usually, the infinitive is in the present tense and the expression denotes "in the process of a certain action," or, "while a certain thing was happening, or continuing." But sometimes the aorist infinitive is used. What effect does that

have on the meaning? How can one tell? The answer obviously is to compare all the places where the construction ( $\acute{\epsilon}v$  + article + aorist infinitive) occurs to see what sense the context demands. But where are these examples to be found? One might find some of them in a grammar, or one can start hunting through all the places where  $\acute{\epsilon}v$  occurs in the NT (there are 2,767 of them!). With the grammatical concordance one can connect to the computer by phone and address a couple of commands to it; it then will search through the entire NT data base for these three precise conditions (the search takes about two minutes) and in a few more minutes one can have a complete printed list from which to continue study.

✓ The magnitude and the nature of the information thus available is limited only by the ingenuity of the scholar in formulating the proper instruction to the computer.

By the very nature of the case, such a Grammatical Concordance will never be published as a "book"; rather it will be an exhaustless well of new information from which one can draw whatever and however much he needs. Its possible uses will be almost limitless, answering specific questions scholars may ask about syntactical structures on the phrase level, the clause level, the sentence level, or beyond. The information would be available by mail or phone at a center for the service. These details have not yet been worked out, but plans to make the information available on a wider basis are under way.