The Importance of Syntax for the Proper Understanding of the Sacred Text of the New Testament

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[p.131]

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I have been asked to speak on the subject, "The Importance of Syntax for the Proper Understanding of the Sacred Text of the New Testament".

The dictionary defines "syntax" as "the way in which words are put together to form phrases, clauses, or sentences".

Syntax, therefore, lies at the very heart and center of meaning in any language. In the English sentence "James gave the boy a book", for example, how do we know that the giver is "James", the recipient is "the boy", and the gift is "a book"? There are no case-endings to aid us, as there would be in Greek or Latin; we determine the meaning from the order of the words. Rearranged in the word order, "The boy James gave a book", it would yield a somewhat different meaning; while "A book gave James the boy" would not have any easily apparent meaning. In Greek, on the other hand, the nouns and verb of this sentence could be arranged in any order and the meaning would still be clear, since the form would indicate the function of each word in the sentence. Indeed, the meaning of the Greek sentence could be even clearer than the written English sentence; because, since the function of the nouns would be indicated by case-endings, word order could be utilized to indicate where emphasis is intended.

In teaching New Testament Greek over a period of years, I have faced students of vastly differing degrees of understanding of the traditional concepts and terms of English grammar, both native

[p.132]

speakers of English and students for whom English is a second language. In order to avoid having to teach any more English grammar than was necessary in teaching principles of Greek exegesis, I have sought to give students practical questions which they could ask themselves in addition to, or if necessary instead of, the more formal grammatical questions. In doing so I have come to see that underlying virtually all exegesis there seem to be two basic questions which can be applied at nearly every point, to almost any unit of discourse—a word, a phrase, or a clause. These two questions are (1) *What* information does this item give? and (2) *Concerning what* does it give this information? Even if a student has difficulty

distinguishing between adverbial and adjectival modifiers, or remembering the names of the various kinds of pronouns, he still should be able to learn to ask himself these two basic questions about the various parts of a New Testament passage and to learn to give a satisfactory answer with the help of the usual tools—grammar, commentaries, etc. I have the conviction that, in exegesis, asking oneself the proper question is a large part of the battle. If one can ask the proper question, there is a good chance that he can find a satisfactory answer.

There is so much information which the various units of meaning of a passage can give that it is unrealistic to think of a single translation which could give "the full meaning of the Greek". To attempt to go through a passage of Scripture and bring out all of the information which is to be found there would often mean becoming bogged down completely in the mass of ideas. It is probably best to go through a passage seeking a limited number of kinds of information at one time.

By the same token, it would not be practical to attempt in this lecture to deal with all of the various aspects of the language which give meaning to the text of the Greek New Testament. We will not even deal with some aspects which I feel are among the most important sources of meaning for New Testament exegesis. These should be standard items in a class dealing with principles of exegesis. Instead, I would like to give attention to a few specialized areas of syntax, including some which often, I rather think, do not receive the attention which they deserve.

I

First, however, I would like to say a word concerning the Greek definite article. It is my impression that the area in which the King James Version of the New Testament is the least reliable may be in its treatment of the presence and absence of the Greek definite article. On the other hand, perhaps I have been unduly prejudiced

[p.133]

by a few significant instances. We recognize, of course, that the actual use and non-use of the definite article is not identical in Greek and English, and we must not suppose that the English text must simply use the article or not use it in the exact pattern of the Greek text. At the same time,, there are instances in which the King James Version's treatment of the article gives a sense which is not in accord with the rules governing the article in Greek. For example, in Luke 2:, 10 the King James reads, "...great joy, which shall be to all *the* people", while the Greek text reads "to all the people", doubtless using the word "people" in the typical Jewish sense to refer to the Jewish people. In Luke 2: 12 the KJV reads, "And this shall be *a* sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes…"; while the Greek text reads "the sign" and "a baby". In 2 Tim. 4: 7-8 the KJV reads, "I have fought a good fight" and "there is laid up for me *a* crown of righteousness"; but the Greek has "*the* good fight" and "*the* crown of righteousness". In 2 Cor. S: 19, the KJV, RSV, and other versions refer to God's reconciling "the world" to himself; but the Greek text has no article, and the emphasis is certainly qualitative, not definite "reconciling a *world* to himself", emphasizing *what* it was that God was reconciling; just as in Heb.1: 2 the Greek text indicates that God has now spoken to us in one who is qualitatively a *son*, not "the son" nor "his son".

II

Agreement between words is an aid to syntax in Greek much more frequently than in English. In many instances, of course, the syntax is obvious from the context as well. Probably not many preachers, for example, would take 2 Tim. 4: 3 to mean, as did one preacher whom I heard, that it was the "teachers" rather than their hearers who had "itching ears", even without observing the Greek agreement. In Luke 2: lb, when we read the translation, "they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the manger", it is surely evident that only the baby was lying in the arranger; but the agreement in the Greek text between "baby" and "lying" helpfully limits the reference to the baby without the necessity of the comma, dash, or self-conscious pause which one must introduce into the English rendering. On the other hand, in Eph. 2: 8 it may be necessary to observe the neuter gender of the word "this" in order to see what Paul has in mind when, he says, "For by grace you are in a saved condition through faith; and this does not have its source in you, it is God's gift". The gender of the word "this" agrees with neither "grace" nor "faith" rather, Paul means to say that the whole fact of salvation by grace through faith is from

[p.134]

God rather than from man. Likewise in 2 Thess. 2: 14 the neuter relative pronoun ("into which") evidently refers to the previous concept concerning salvation rather than to one specific word as its antecedent.

In numerous instances, agreement involves the drawing of a word out of the case which it should normally have in its clause. This phenomenon occurs most frequently with relative pronouns. For example, Greek normally omits the antecedent of a relative pronoun when the antecedent is "thing" or "things", or an obvious antecedent such as "man", "woman", "day", or one of a few other words. This omission of the antecedent, however, sometimes leaves a clause incomplete and the thought unclear, and the relative pronoun is therefore drawn from the case which it should have in its own clause (generally the accusative case) into the case of its missing antecedent. For example, in Luke 9: 36, "nothing of the things which they had seen", "of the things" is omitted in Greek and the relative pronoun "which" is attracted to the genitive case of the missing antecedent. In translating into English, of course, this attraction must be "unscrambled"—the missing antecedent must be supplied in the genitive case, and the relative pronoun returned to its own (accusative) case. Similarly, in Heb. 5: 8 the relative pronoun is of necessity attracted to the case of its missing antecedent, since the omission of the antecedent otherwise leaves a dangling preposition, and the Greek "from which things he suffered" (ἀφ᾽ ὧν ἔπαθεν) must be unscrambled to read "from the things which he suffered".

There is a story of the man who brought his coat to his wife for the fourth or fifth time and said in exasperation, "Dear, if you don't sew this button on my coat soon I'll sew it on myself!"—and we can gleefully conjure up a painful experience for the poor husband by interpreting the pronoun "myself" as a reflexive instead of an intensive. In Greek, as in English, the type of pronoun used is important for meaning, and in at least one instance the selection is significant. 2 Tim. l: 12 is commonly translated, "for I know whom I have believed...". This rendering, however, implies an indirect question in Greek, "Whom have I believed?" which would normally require an interrogative pronoun underlying the word "whom". It is not an interrogative in the Greek text, however, but a relative pronoun, which should be translated together with its missing antecedent to read, "I know him whom I have

believed...". This is not an insignificant difference, as the following will illustrate: "Mr. Smith, do you know who is the President of the United States?" "Yes, Mr. Jones, I know who he is." "Mr. Smith,

[p.135]

have you talked with the President recently?" "No, Mr. Jones; I don't know him." Mr. Smith knows *who* the President is, but he doesn't *know* the President. St. Paul, however, is more fortunate regarding Jesus Christ. In the present passage he does not claim merely to know *who it is* in whom he has trusted; he says that he knows *him*. Both the KJV and RSV fall short in the rendering of this passage. The ASV and Phillips handle it correctly, as does J. A. Bengel, who has a very specific note on the point in his commentary.

Just as the kind of pronoun used in a clause is significant, so also the kind of possessive use may be important. In John 5: 18 both the KJV and RSV read that the Jews were seeking to kill Jesus because Jesus was saying that God was "his father, making himself equal with God". Yet the Jews universally claimed God as their father. They would not be disturbed by any one of their number acknowledging God as his father, and they certainly would not equate such an acknowledgment with the blasphemy of claiming equality with God. The clue is to be found in the use in John 5: 18 of the emphatic ἴδιος, "one's own", instead of the ordinary possessive αὐτοῦ, "his". The Jews were therefore charging Jesus (and correctly so) with claiming that God was "his own father" in a unique relationship which no one else shared, and they rightly held that this was tantamount to claiming deity for himself.

In other instances, however, ἴδιος is used not so much to *set forth* emphatic possession as to *recognize* a special possession which is already taken for granted—as "his own field" (Matt. 22: 5), "his own servants" (Matt. 25: 14), and "your own husbands" (Eph. 5: 22).

III

Our reference to emphasis in possession brings us to one of our points of major concern. I have the feeling that emphasis in the Greek text of the N.T. is one of the most neglected features of exegesis of the N.T., in spite of the ability of Greek to indicate emphasis to a very helpful degree. This failure to give attention to emphasis in the Greek text is probably due in part to the fact that points of emphasis indicated in the Greek text often cannot easily be indicated in a straightforward English translation. Yet sometimes the very point which an author wishes to make may be missed if the emphasis which he makes in Greek is neglected in the translation. This is certainly one of the areas of meaning in which the exegete can often clarify what an ordinary written English translation leaves unclear.

The significance of emphasis is neatly illustrated in Gilbert and

[p.136]

Sullivan's *operetta Patience*. Patience says she knows nothing about love, except that it seems to make everyone involved unhappy; but she remembers that when she was a tiny child she had a playmate with whom she had very happy times, and says, "*He* was a little boy". Her friend Angela replies in her stanza of the song, ending with, "He was a little boy". Patience hastily sings her response, reminding Angela, "He was a *little* boy"; to which Angela sings

pointedly in the final stanza, "But he was a little boy". Thus four different words in this brief sentence are made to bring out four different emphases.

Emphasis is indicated in Greek in two principal ways: by the use of special emphatic words and forms, and by word order. We have just referred to one of the emphatic words, ἴδιος. There are a few others, in particular the nominative forms of the personal pronouns—"I", "we", and "you" singular and plural. Since a personal pronoun subject is included in the Greek finite verb, the pronoun itself does not need 'to be used in such instances except to indicate emphasis. For example, when Jesus requests baptism from John (Matt. 3:14), John's instinctive reaction includes two such emphatic subject pronouns: "*I* have need to be baptized by you; and do *you* come to me?" In an oral translation of this passage, the emphasis can be indicated by the voice; but how can it be indicated in a written translation, unless, as Phillips does, one uses italics? In James 2: 3 the different—and discriminatory—treatment of the rich and the poor visitor is reflected in the pointedly emphatic "you"—"*You* sit here... *You* stand, or sit there...". Likewise, when Peter rebuked Simon Magus (Acts 8: 22-24) and urged him to "pray to the Lord" for forgiveness, Simon turns the request back to the apostles with the emphatic pronoun, "*You* pray to the Lord for me...".

Emphasis is also indicated in Greek when a word which is normally enclitic receives an accent (unless the accent is required by other factors). Unfortunately, our oldest Greek N.T. manuscripts have no accents, and the placing of an accent for emphasis on an enclitic in our printed Greek text merely reflects the opinion of the editor that emphasis should be indicated. The Bible Societies' edition of the Greek N.T. and other editions are doubtless correct, however, in thus accenting normally-enclitic forms of the present indicative of the verb "to be" in such passages as Acts 17: 28, "For in him we live and move and *are*", and 1 John 3: 1, "...that we should be called children of God, and we *are*".

Emphasis indicated through emphatic words and accented enclitics, however, is obviously limited, since there are relatively so

[p.137]

few forms within these categories. By far the most common method of indicating Greek emphasis is through word order. If it is true that emphasis in general in the Greek N.T. is neglected, it is certainly true that emphasis indicated by word order is neglected even more than emphasis indicated by special words and forms.

I mentioned just now that this neglect of emphasis is in part due, I believe, to the difficulties inherent in making clear in English translations the emphasis which the Greek intends. In addition, however, I am afraid that we simply do not understand the principles of Greek emphasis as well as we should. Beginning students accept the fact that Greek word order in sentences is sometimes exasperatingly different from English word order; but perhaps too many continue to assume that the usual word order of the Greek text is simply a puzzle to be solved so as to produce an intelligible English sentence, without adequately recognizing that this supposedly strange word order may have something else to tell us of the writer's meaning.

I certainly do not pretend to have mastered the principles of Greek word order to express emphasis. I believe that the science of descriptive linguistics could help us in this respect by

assisting in establishing more clearly what normal word order in Greek is, so that we could be more certain of deviations from normal order which would indicate emphasis. Some of the grammars, of course, set forth some principles concerning word order (Funk-Blass-Debrunner, for example), but even these may need to be further verified against actual N.T. usage.

At the same time, I believe we can set forth some principles governing emphatic word order in the Greek N.T. One such general principle is the one which is in fact implied by the reference which we have just made to deviation from normal word order; that is, that such deviations imply emphasis.

This principle has several applications. One such application is that when a genitive of possession precedes instead of following the possessed word, emphasis is commonly indicated. In 1 Corinthians, for example, in certain passages St. Paul uses the normal order with the possessive θεοῦ ("of God") following the possessed noun; e.g., in 1: 18, "the message of the cross... is the power of God"; 1: 25, "the foolish thing of God" and "the weak thing of God"; and in 2: 5, "not ... in the wisdom of men but in the power of God". In other passages the possessive precedes the possessed noun, indicating emphasis upon "of God"—1: 24, "to us who are called, ... Christ the power *of God* and the wisdom *of God*"; 3: 9, "we are co-workers with *God*; you are God's tilled field, *God's*

[p.138]

building"—here emphasizing not the Christian's privileged position, as it is sometimes preached, but the centrality of God. Likewise in 3: 13, after saying (3: 10), "let each one take heed how he builds", he twice places emphasis upon the possessive genitive ἑκάστου ("of each one"): "*Of each one* the work shall become manifest..." and "*of each one* what sort of work it is the fire shall test".

Another application of the principle of emphasis by word order is that words at the first of a clause are commonly emphatic. Let us qualify this statement in one or two ways. First, a word which stands first in a clause by obligatory word order—that is, if it must stand in that position—cannot, of course, be considered emphatic because of its position. In this category would be included most conjunctions, relative pronouns and adverbs, and other words which introduce clauses. Secondly, a verb commonly stands first in its clause—although, of course, the verb is also often the point of emphasis of its clause.

What do we mean by "the first part of a clause""? Certainly the first element in the clause (with the exceptions just mentioned); and to some extent, as Professor G. D. Kilpatrick has suggested to me, whatever precedes the verb in a clause may be considered emphatic. This latter point may have to be qualified in long and involved sentences, but it nevertheless invalid.

Let us examine some examples. Since the subject of a clause, as well as the verb, is frequently the point of emphasis, perhaps we need not dwell on examples in which the subject comes first in its clause; e.g., John 1: 2, "*This one* was in the beginning with God"; John 1: 15, "*John* witnessed concerning him"; John 3: 3, "*This man* came to him by night".

An adverb may be first in its clause, as in John 3: 16, "*Thus* God loved the world", in this way pointing with emphasis to the ware result clause which follows this first clause; John 2: 13, "*Near* was the Passover of the Jews"; John 8: 31, "*truly* my disciples you are"; in Luke 4: 39, "*immediately* she arose and began serving them". Luke thus places παραχρῆμα ("immediately") first in other clauses as well, to emphasize immediate healings: Luke 5: 25; 8: 44, and 13: 13, for example.

A prepositional phrase may be first in the clause: John 1: 11, "To his own possessions he came", contrasting with the following nominative, "and his own people did not receive him". In 1 Cor. 2. 2 the emphatic "I" begins the clause, but it is immediately followed by three prepositional phrases which precede the verb: "And I in weakness and in fear and in much trembling was with

[p.139]

you...". John 4: 39 begins, "And from that city many believed . . .". Acts 16: 25 begins, "And at midnight (κατὰ δέ τὸ μεσσυνύκτιον)...".

A dative case may stand first in its clause for emphasis. A time sequence is evidently thus emphasized in John 1: 29, 35, 43, and 2: 1, "on the next day... on the next day... on the next day... and on the third day...". In Rom. 14: 15 St. Paul begins a sentence with a dative—"Don't by food destroy that person for whom Christ died!" Rom. 8: 28 has too often been watered down to merely "all things work together for good". The clause however, begins with an emphatic dative phrase which is repeated in different words at the end of the clause, thus doubly emphasizing that this working for good applies specifically to one certain group—"*to those who love God* all things work together for good; that is, to those who are called ones according to his purpose". In Gal. 2: 19 the emphasis is upon Christ: "with Christ I stand crucified". In Phil. l: 21 St. Paul emphasizes his own point of view, in possible contrast with that of other people: "*to me*, living is Christ and dying is gain".

The direct object of a verb may stand for emphasis. In John l: 18 "God" is first in the clause—"*God* no one has ever seen". A few verses later, in l: 22, the messengers from the Pharisees say, "…in order that an *answer* we may give to those who sent us".

Similarly, other predicates may be emphasized by their word order. In John l: 1 Greek students have often been disturbed by the word order of the Greek text, "and God was the Word". This word order is evidently intended to place emphasis upon θεός while λόγος is clearly the subject. The word order thus emphasizes the deity of Christ the Logos. In John 1: 21 the predicate ὁ προφήτης stands first in its clause, which might be paraphrased, "Is it the *prophet* that you are?"

Although the last position in a clause may be unemphatic, nevertheless sometimes a word or phrase may be, in Funk's words (sec. 473), "torn out of its natural context and made more independent", in which case it "is emphatic even when placed at the end of the sentence". The latter part of Rom. 8: 28, mentioned a moment ago, illustrates this point. Consider likewise he suspense and emphasis conveyed in Philemon l0 by withholding the name "Onesimus" until after two qualifying phrases: "I beseech you concerning my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus…".

Let us look at a few additional instances where a word or phrase

[p.140]

appears to be first in its clause for emphasis: Acts 23: 9, the Pharisees' response after St. Paul declares himself a Pharisee—"*Nothing evil* do we find in this man..."; Rom. 3: 21, after St. Paul has declared the impossibility of justification through the Law—"But *now apart from law* the righteousness of God stands revealed...". Even the verb in emphatic first position is worth noticing in Rom. 4: 3, "*Believed* Abraham God"; i.e., "Abraham believed God…".

A comparison of a passage in the N.T. version, Good News for Modern Man, with the word order of the Greek text may serve as our final illustration of emphasis. No disparagement of this version is intended, for it is in accord with the simplified nature of this version that such matters as special word order to bring out emphasis would not commonly be found in it.

Good News for Modern Man	*Emphasis indicated by Greek text*
[12] I am sending him back to you now, and with him goes my heart.	[12] whom I am sending back to you; him—that is, my very heart;
[13] I would like to keep him here with me, while I am in prison for the gospel's sake, so that he could help me in your place.	[13] whom I could wish to keep back *to myself*, in order that in your behalf he might minister to me in the bonds of the gospel;
[14] However, I do not want to force you to help me; rather, I would like for you to do it of your own free will. So I will not do a thing unless you agree.	[14] But apart from *your* decision, *nothing* did I wish to do, in order that not according to necessity your good deed might be but according to willingness.

IV

Let us now look at the question of syntax in a narrower definition of this word—that is, the question of the relationship between various elements of a sentence. Happily, the relationship between many elements in Greek is indicated by agreement, as we well know. While even within this area there are ambiguities at times (e.g., in 1 Pet. 1: 6 the relative pronoun of the phrase ἐν ᾧ may refer to καιρῷ, God, Jesus Christ, or to the whole fact expressed in the thought preceding it; and in John 21: 15 the ambiguity of "these" in the question by Jesus, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" is well-known), nevertheless to a large extent agreement in Greek makes clear the relationship between noun and adjective, subject and verb, and various other elements of the sentence. At the same time, between numerous elements of a sentence there are no such objective indicators of agreement or relationship, and we must depend upon other means for making the determination. The more complicated the sentence, the more need there is likely to be for analysis of its component parts to determine syntactical relationships. There are at times, however,

[p.141]

crucial ambiguities even in short sentences, such as that which evidently caused ancient scribes to change iv αὐτῷ in John 3: 15 (''may have in him'') to εἰς αὐτόν and other alternatives, thinking the meaning was intended to be "believes in him" (as in 3: 16). One of the elements of a sentence which is most commonly ambiguous in this respect is the prepositional phrase, and particularly in passages where a number of prepositional phrases are added to one anothar. Consider, for example, some of the opening verses of 1 Peter: "...who

has begotten us according to his great mercy into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead into an inheritance...", and a few words farther on: "...guarded by the power of God through faith to salvation...". Recalling the two basic questions to which we referred earlier, we must decide not merely what information these prepositional phrases convey to us, but also *concerning* what do they convey this information—in other words, what does each of these phrases modify? Similar questions must be answered for other sentence elements as well.

How do we determine the syntax of these elements of the sentence where there is no agreement of gender, number, or case to assist us? Theoretically, at least, we must consider each of the possible relationships of each element and seek to determine which relationship seems most likely to represent the author's intention, taking into consideration both the immediate context, the larger context; and the sense of the New Testament in general.

After the preferable sense and relationship have been decided it is often well to express the meaning in a simple one-thought sentence.

Let us examine some verses of the first chapter of 1 Peter, to which we referred a moment ago, to illustrate the questions involved and the procedure for determining the answers to these questions of syntax. There will be more than one acceptable interpretation in some instances; and we will be concerned at the moment not primarily with deciding which one of legitimate alternatives is preferable, but rather with the procedure for determining the various acceptable alternatives and especially the means of expressing these alternatives clearly.

"Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 3). While no one in this audience is likely to wonder whether "God and Father" in this verse refers to one person or two, we might do well to point out, for its value in other contexts which might be less certain, that "blessed" is singular, not plural. Moreover, there is only one article preceding these two nouns, which,

[p.142]

according to Granville Sharp's rule, suggests unity of the two rather than separateness. We may therefore clarify the meaning of this phrase by paraphrasing, "Blessed is he who is God and Father...".

"…God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...". Does the genitive phrase refer to both preceding nouns, or the latter only? In other words, is the meaning "God, who is also Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", or "both God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"? Again, the single article before these two nouns suggests some sort of unity of the terms "God" and "Father"; but is it scriptural to refer to God as "the God of Christ"? In both Matthew and Mark, Jesus cries from the cross, "My God, my God..."; and in John 20: 17 Jesus speaks of ascending to "my Father and your Father and my God and your God" (incidentally, the single article preceding these four nouns accords with the fact that all four references are to one person). In our passage, therefore, the meaning is doubtless "he who is both God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. l Cor. 15: 24, τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί).

"...who has begotten us..." The attributive participle ἐκαγεννήεας agrees with "God and Father" rather than with the genitive "Lord Jesus Christ", thus making it clear—as it is not in English—that it is the Father rather than Christ who has begotten.

"…who has begotten us according to his great mercy…". Since the prepositional phrase, "according to his great mercy", stands between the participle and its article, it is clear that the phrase modifies the participle. The phrase "into a hope" likewise can hardly refer to anything other than "having begotten"; hence, "God has begotten us. He has begotten according to his great mercy. He has begotten into a hope. It is a living hope".

"…throngh the resurrection of Jesus…". To what does this phrase refer? The closest word is "living", which would suggest the possibility of "a hope which has become a living hope through the resurrection…". Bengel supports this interpretation. The next possibility is "hope", with the resultant meaning, "a hope which has come through the resurrection…". This is possible, but the phrase "through the resurrection" would then be an attributive phrase; for this meaning a definite article would often, but not always, precede the prepositional phrase. The final possible syntax is with "having begotten", giving the meaning "he has begotten (us) through the resurrection…" which well fits the context and the New Testament in general. Our conclusion, then, for this phrase will presumably be either "he has begotten us through the resurrection..." or "this hope is a living thing because of the resurrection…".

[p.143]

As for the next phrase, there is hardly any alternative to the meaning, "the resurrection of Jesus Christ". We might, however, digress from questions of syntax long enough to ask whether we have here a subjective or objective genitive—i.e., is it "God's raising of Jesus Christ" or "Jesus Christ's rising" which is in the author's mind. The practical difference in this instance is, of course, small, as God's agency is implied in either interpretation. More probably, however, the subjective sense is intended: "God begot us through Jesus Christ's rising from the dead".

The phrase "from the dead" could possibly refer back to "having begotten", with the meaning "he has begotten us from the dead". This would give the sequence, "he has begotten us into a hope", "he has begotten us through the resurrection", "he has begotten us from the dead". Nevertheless this phrase almost certainly is intended to refer to "resurrection"—"this resurrection is a resurrection from the dead".

"…into an inheritance…". At first sight it might be tempting to take this phrase with what immediately precedes: "…from the dead into an inheritance…". As we read further, however, we find that the inheritance is for the believers, not for Christ. Hence we must look for another connection, and the next likely reference is back to "having begotten"—"he has begotten us into an inheritance…" which is clearly the author's intended meaning.

Skipping a few phrases which are fairly self-evident, we come to "guarded through faith for salvation" (v. 5). Is the syntax of the second prepositional phrase "guarded for salvation" or "faith for salvation"? The later is possible; but, once again, if the author had intended this sense he could have made it certain by inserting the article before the prepositional phrase—"faith which is for salvation". It more likely is to be connected to "guarded"; hence, "guarded by the power of God", "guarded through faith", and "guarded for salvation". Calvin,

on the other hand, refers this phrase still farther back, to "having begotten"―"he begot us for salvation".

My concern in this syntax study is not primarily to recommend some one of the reasonable alternative interpretations over any others, although, of course, I am concerned that the meanings selected be meanings which are compatible with the principles of syntax. (For example, if a verb is followed by five prepositional phrases, and it is decided that the first three of these phrases each modify the verb, then the fourth phrase can also modify the verb or it can modify the object of the third phrase; but it cannot normally be taken to modify the object of either the first or the

[p.144]

second phrase. This would require a jumping into the middle of a sequence, which is likewise not normal in English.) On the positive side, however, my concern is that in exegesis we should express correctly and understandably whatever syntax we do assign to these elements, such as by breaking the passage up into simple sentences or units. The passage which we have just been examining might thus be summarized in the following manner:

"Blessed is he who is both God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He (i.e., God) has begotten us again. He has begotten us into a living hope. He has begotten us through Jesus Christ's rising from the dead. He has begotten us into an inheritance. This inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfailing. This inheritance is kept in heaven. It is kept for you who are being guarded. You are being guarded by the power of God. You are being guarded through faith. You are being guarded for salvation. This salvation is ready to be revealed. The revealing will come at the last time."

V

Let us conclude with one or two observations about certain types of clauses.

First, let us say a word concerning clauses of indirect discourse and related indirect statements. These, of course, are substantive or noun clauses. When such a clause is expressed by ὅτι and the indicative mood, it is the indirect form of a statement whose direct form has its verb in the indicative mood. If, on the other hand, the substantive clause is expressed by ἵνα and the subjunctive mood, it is the indirect form of a statement whose direct form has its verb in a mood other than the indicative. Thus, in John 6: 69, "We know that you are the Holy One of God", ὅτι and the indicative mood assume that the underlying direct statement is, "You are the Holy One of God", a statement in the indicative mood. In Mark 6: 25, on the other hand, "I desire that you would give me the head of John the Baptist", ἵνα and the subjunctive mood reflect the fact that the underlying direct statement of the girl's wish is in the imperative mood: "Give me the head of John the Baptist". ἵνα and the subjunctive would likewise be used if the underlying direct statement were in the subjunctive mood; e.g., Matt. 14: 36, "They besought him that they might touch the hem of his cloak", which implies a direct statement, "Let us touch…".

It is important to note, too, that the noun clause normally preserves the tense of the direct statement, whereas in English the verb in the indirect statement is modified to maintain

agreement with the time of the main verb; note John 4: 1, "When Jesus knew [aorist] that the Pharisees had heard [aorist] that Jesus was

[p.145]

making and baptizing [present] more disciples than John…". The two direct statements underlying the clauses, then, are, "Jesus is making and baptizing…" and "the Pharisees have *heard*…". This principle governing tenses in indirect statements is significant; for example, in John 6: 22, where in the noun clause the verb is in the imperfect tense, implying that the underlying direct statement is, "There was no other boat there except one". The main verb is aorist, "They saw". The sense, therefore, is that when the people came the next day they realized that there *had been* only one boat at that place on the preceding day and that Jesus had not entered it; hence they were wondering how Jesus had gotten to the other side of the lake. (Incidentally, I trust that the fact that ἵνα can introduce a substantive clause does not need to be labored, in spite of the reluctance of some of the older commentators at this point.)

My final word concerning clauses is a comment on clauses of condition—that is, "if" clauses. Some writers have mistakenly maintained that the type of conditional clause which is used in Greek has something to do with the certainty or uncertainty of the condition. It is true, of course, that a condition contrary to fact (which takes the past tenses of the indicative mood) does reveal the speaker's point of view—e.g., John 11: 21 and 32, "Lord, if you had been here (which you weren't), my brother would not have died (which he did)". On the other hand, the two other common types of conditional clauses—with the indicative mood (condition of fact), and ἐάν with the subjunctive (condition of contingency)—have nothing to do with the speaker's assumption of the truth or falsity of the condition assumed. εἰ with the indicative simple means, "If it is a fact that…", or, "If it is not a fact that…", while ἐάν with the subjunctive means; "If at some time or other it should be true that…", or, "If at some time or other it should not be true that…". These two types of conditional clauses have nothing to do with the degree of certainty of the condition assumed. In 1 John 2: 28 and 3: 2, for example ἐάν with the subjunctive, "if he appears", is used with regard to the Second Coming of Christ, where the author surely believes that the condition will be fulfilled. In Gal. l: 18, on the other hand, "If we or an angel from heaven should at any time preach to you contrary to what we have preached to you…" (again ἐάν with the subjunctive), St. Paul obviously thought that the condition would *not* be fulfilled. ἐάν with the subjunctive is used in both instances simply because both are conditions of contingency—i.e., situations which have not yet occurred. Likewise, in John 15: 20,

[p.146]

"If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you", where Jesus knows that the condition is true, the condition is expressed by εἰ and the indicative. In the very next thought, however, "If they have kept my word, they will keep yours also", εἰ with the indicative is again used, but here Jesus knows that the condition is not true. εἰ with the indicative is used simply because the assumed conditions are in the realm of fact or actuality—that is, they deal with what either is or is not true rather than with what might or might not occur at some time. (Matt. 12: 27-28 contains a similar pair of conditions of fact.)

To summarize, then—we have pointed out some of the ways in which the relationship of words and other units of discourse to one another affects the meaning of the New Testament.

We have left unmentioned many other important aspects which are significant in the exegesis of the New Testament. Some which we have mentioned have been mentioned not because they were more important than others but because we feel that they are too commonly neglected or not adequately understood.

All things considered, there is such great wealth in the exegesis of the New Testament that I am inclined to sympathize with the Greek scholar who on his death bed reportedly lamented the fact that he had not devoted his entire career merely to the dative case! (I think, however, that I would make a different choice of fields─perhaps functions of the participle!) Nevertheless I covet for each person who has the privilege of working in the Greek New Testament the realization of the riches in this book, from the human point of view; but especially of these riches as they are illumined by the Holy Spirit of God, since we recognize that, in the last analysis, as 1 Cor. 2: 15 reminds us, "the natural man does not receive" these riches, "because they are spiritually discerned".