

THE COMFORTER, THE HOLY GHOST, & THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH: NOUN-PRONOUN ASSOCIATIONS IN JOHN 14, 15, & 16

Jeremiah J. E. Wierwille

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Abstract — This study investigates the noun-pronoun associations in John 14, 15, and 16 surrounding the titles the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth. The conclusion of the study is that all noun-pronoun constructions agree in gender with their referent object, and thus, a natural gender assignment for the object of such titles cannot be based on the grammatical gender in the Greek text. Any gender assignment for these titles must be derived based on contextual analysis and other theological considerations.

General Research Topic(s) — The Holy Spirit, The Gospel of John, Pneumatology, NT Greek, Exegesis/Hermeneutics.

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper will investigate the grammatical structure and association of specific nouns and pronouns in John chapters 14, 15, and 16 as they relate to the usage of *pneuma* (“spirit”) in connection with “The Comforter”, “The Holy Ghost”, and “The Spirit of Truth”. It has been claimed by many that gender-specific pronouns are used in reference to such titles in these sections of Scripture to indicate personhood (i.e., that “The Comforter”, “The Holy Ghost”, and “The Spirit of Truth” refer to a person in the Trinitarian sense).¹ By

studying the original Greek, tracing the context, and presenting the grammatical construction of the text in these passages will reveal the true relations between the nouns and pronouns in these chapters of the gospel of John.

It is of necessity that the Greek language in these chapters be studied scrupulously, for the English translations offer no authority and no assistance to the actual grammatical associations abiding in the original language of the scriptures. By fully understanding the grammatical relationships among the pivotal nouns and pronouns in John chapters 14, 15, and 16, the meaning that John was intending to communicate to God’s people will become evident and any confusion or presuppositions that may have been introduced through the English translation of the scriptures concerning the noun-pronoun associations in these sections will be dispelled.

Only after a thorough study of the grammar in the original language can one begin to address any doctrinal implications in the scriptures. One final note is that a thorough knowledge of the Greek language is not required to comprehend and confirm for yourself the research presented herein. Simply a working knowledge

¹ “Personhood” describes having a distinct center of consciousness and function that enables acting independently

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of all other influences. This description is the opposite of the idea of an inanimate, impersonal force or power.

of the original language will suffice and will enable you to follow along with the research presented. An attempt will be made to define and explain any relatively obscure linguistic or grammatical terms utilized. Furthermore, important grammatical terms and their general definitions will also be given at the end of the study for the reader's convenience (see Grammatical Terms below).

The main point of interest in John chapters 14, 15, and 16 is the noun-pronoun associations in relation to "The Comforter", "The Holy Ghost," and "The Spirit of Truth." Hereafter the titles will be presented without quotes for ease of reading. Moreover, both titles, the Comforter and the Spirit of Truth, are directly connected to the Holy Ghost in these sections of Scripture.² All three nouns are synonymously expressed in the scriptures and indeed represent one common object, i.e., the same referent.³ With these three separate nouns relating to the same object in John, one can easily see the need to clearly distinguish to which noun each pronoun that appears refers to, especially when there are different grammatical genders among the nouns and they are in close proximity to each other.

Confusion will arise if the multiple pronouns used to refer to these nouns are not correctly recognized and distinguished. This is why a careful study of the Greek grammar in John 14, 15, and 16 is warranted. It is in respect to the various pronouns that are intermingled among the nouns in these chapters that the intent of this study is to present the Greek grammar of the noun-

pronoun associations pertaining to the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost. This information will provide an exegetical syntax to help understand the true relations among these nouns and pronouns and whether gender-specific pronouns are being used to suggest personhood.

All occurrences and references to the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost are only observed in just a handful of scriptures in John chapters 14, 15, and 16, but the subject entailed by these scriptures and the truth they convey comprises a main focal point of Jesus Christ's teaching to his disciples. Thus, this study will systematically investigate all pronouns which claim the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, or the Holy Ghost as their object of reference in John 14, 15, and 16. As such, the grammatical relationships among these nouns and their associated pronouns are the sole intended aim of research in this section. Any significant contextual observations in the scriptures essential to understanding the grammatical structure will be presented concurrently but all theological discussion and extending doctrinal implications will be reserved. The associated pronouns will be examined in light of their grammatical form and the context in which they reside in order to establish what noun they refer to.

Lastly, but most important of all, the biblical reader will understand and profit the greatest by acknowledging the objective focus of this study and to withhold any doctrinal partiality until fully examining the research presented herein.

II. GREEK GRAMMAR

Since Greek grammar is the foundational research focus of this study, some fundamental Greek grammar vital to understanding the presented research will be explained here before proceeding forward.

First, a grammatical principle prominent in the Greek language and foremost necessary to detail is

² These noun associations are construed in verses 16-17 and 26 of John chapter 14 where the Spirit of Truth in verse 17 is the Comforter from verse 16, and then the Comforter is referred to directly as the Holy Ghost in verse 26.

³ The specific identification of the 'one common object' referred to by the titles the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost in these sections is beyond the scope of this paper. Such explanations will be left to be detailed in another work. This paper adheres solely to the investigation and understanding of the grammatical constructions in the original text among these nouns.

noun-pronoun agreement. Any Greek grammar manual or reference volume will concur that the general rule with noun-pronoun associations in the Greek language is that the pronoun is obliged to agree in gender and number with the antecedent to which it refers.^{4,5,6} Figures of speech are employed in scripture, however, which deviate from the rules of grammar for a particular emphasis or cause. The figure of speech that departs from the standard rule of noun-pronoun agreement is called *heterosis*. *Heterosis* is a figure defined as the exchange of one voice, mood, tense, person, number, degree, or gender for another (different) one.⁷ When used to deviate from expected noun-pronoun agreement, *heterosis* can apply to the categories of person, number, or gender. The replacement of gender could be masculine for feminine, feminine for neuter, masculine for neuter, etc. The replacement of number could be plural for singular, singular for plural, or even plural for indefinite; the replacement of person could be first for third, third for first, second for third, etc. Each of these unexpected exchanges indicates an intentional emphasis for a particular reason by violating the rules of Greek grammar.

Along with the rule for noun-pronoun agreement in the Greek language is the extrication between grammatical gender and natural gender.⁸ The natural gender of an object, that is, the literal sex of the object, is distinct and independent from the grammatical gender

of that object. For example, the Greek word for “sword” is *machaira*, which is a feminine noun. A sword is an inanimate object and does not have a natural gender as a person or animal would (e.g., masculine or feminine). The Greek word for “bread” is *artos*, which is a masculine noun, and the Greek word for “water” is *hudōr*, which is a neuter noun. All three of these objects: sword, bread, and water, carry a natural neuter gender but differing grammatical-specific genders. In the English language, these nouns are all neuter gender, not only grammatically, but literally (because they have no gender of sex). In English, a noun that has no gender of sex is labeled as neuter.

Unlike English, though, the Greek language does not assign the grammatical gender of an object based upon the natural gender of that object. The grammatical gender of Greek nouns have been determined from antiquity and do not alter.⁹ In Greek, the grammatical gender of a noun remains consistent in every occurrence of the word with rare exceptions. Regarding referent pronouns, the gender agreement of a referent pronoun with its antecedent is also consistent except when employing *heterosis*. A linguistic axiom (to state the principle of the grammatical gender versus the natural gender in Greek) is:

The grammatical gender of an object in no way reflects the natural gender of the object, nor can the natural gender be established or inferred from the grammatical gender of that object.

Finally, the noun-pronoun agreement rule imposes that pronouns must follow their referent noun’s grammatical gender regardless of natural gender, except

⁴ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 316.

⁵ William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 117.

⁶ H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan Co., 1955), 122-125.

⁷ E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), 533-34.

⁸ The terms “gender” and “sex” are used interchangeably in this study without any intended distinction as to their nuanced differences as some employ in other contexts of writing.

⁹ The origination of Greek gender assignments is proposed to rest on semantic and morphological criteria during the formulation of the language around the 15th – 14th century B.C. Some scholars assert, though, that grammatical gender assignments were merely arbitrary during the language’s early growth and development and were not assigned by any common scheme.

in cases of the figure *heterosis*. Concerning this principle, Charles Welch precisely states, “The gender of a word has no relation to the sex of the thing signified.”¹⁰ To summarize and restate for emphasis, in the Greek language the natural gender of an object is discrete from and unrelated to the grammatical gender of the object, and the grammatical gender is completely irrelevant and unhelpful in the determination of the object’s natural gender.

Another grammatical principle in the Greek language that is critical to understand before proceeding is the designation of implicit pronouns in verb phrases. This is exemplified when a Greek verb is translated into English and an explicit pronoun is supplied to the verb despite the absence thereof in the Greek text. The grammatical principle is that Greek verbs imply an unexpressed subject which is not always independently expressed outside the verb with a pronoun or other indicator. This unexpressed subject in a Greek verb is explicitly supplied when translating into English because English does not have conjugated verbs the same way Greek does.

Pronouns designate an already mentioned object or an unnamed subject of inquiry, and the already mentioned object or the intended subject to be revealed is determined through the number/person of the verb and the surrounding context. Therefore, to determine the object that is performing the verbal action with an unspecific subject, the verb and linguistic context must be examined closely to identify the implied subject. A common mistake in understanding English verb phrases is attempting to utilize the explicit pronoun supplied in translations to correlate the actual expressed subject of the verb phrase without examining the Greek text. To avoid this error, the Greek text must be consulted to understand where there is an implicit subject supplied

through translation and where an explicit subject in the original text.

English translations with supplied pronouns hold only the accuracy and authority of the scholar translating and therefore can be fallible. Not only that, but supplied subjects will unavoidably carry the theological bias of the translator.¹¹ Inevitably, the supplied pronouns carry doctrinal implications. So, to discover the true noun-pronoun associations that are indeterminable in English versions, one is constrained to return to the original language and ascertain the grammatical associations unimpeded by the linguistic trammels of translation.

Note: All scriptures are quoted from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. Pertinent words to the analysis of the grammatical associations under investigation are bold-faced with their corresponding transliterated Greek word(s) following in brackets. For the reader’s convenience, the grammatical genders of relevant nouns and pronouns are abbreviated in parentheses within the brackets for quick reference. Verb phrases with relevant pronouns are bold-faced as well with the Greek verb following in brackets. All Greek words are provided directly from the Greek text of the *Textus Receptus*¹², and as such, are not normalized to their standard lexical forms. Many textual discrepancies are addressed in the footnotes where incurred, but an extensive discussion and criticism is not afforded in this study.

¹⁰ Charles H. Welch, *Just and the Justifier* (London: Berean Publishing Trust, 1972), 209.

¹¹ This statement is made with all due respect for the knowledge and effort of translators. No acrimony or slight of their expertise is intended in claiming the fallibility of prominent translations of the Scriptures, such as the King James Version, the New Revised Standard Version, the New International Version, the New American Standard Bible, The New Living Translation, and others. The fact is that every translation is fallible and there is no denigration in affirming that fact.

¹² The *Textus Receptus* is the Stephens critical Greek manuscript from 1550 A.D. compiled by Robert Estienne, from which the King James Version was translated.

III. JOHN 14

The first scripture necessary to study in John 14 is verse 16 where there is an occurrence of the noun “Comforter.” Here Jesus Christ is teaching his disciples about things which are soon to come after his death, resurrection, and ascension. From the beginning of the chapter, Jesus teaches about his close connection and relationship with God and many truths pertaining to the great works his disciples will do in the near future. Verse 16 reads:

John 14:16

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another **Comforter** [*paraklēton* (masc.)], that **he may abide** [*menē* (3rd sing.)] with you for ever

The word “Comforter,” commonly translated in English versions as Helper, Counselor, or Paraclete, is the Greek word *paraklēton*, a masculine noun in the accusative case.¹³ *Paraklēton* can be defined as a helper, intercessor, advocate, or basically one who is called to someone’s aid.¹⁴ *Paraklēton* is the accusative form of *paraklētos*. The accusative case assigns a noun to be the direct object of a verb. Here, *paraklēton* is assigned to be the direct object of the verb “give.” As the direct object of the verb “give,” the Comforter is the object that Jesus Christ will pray the Father to give to his disciples. Jesus Christ also specifies that he will ask for

¹³ The accusative case of a noun is formed by taking the stem of the noun (with *paraklēton* the stem is *paraklēto*) and adding an ending to the stem. For the singular accusative case, regardless of the gender, the ending letter is nu. Thus, *paraklēto* + *n* = *paraklēton*, the singular accusative masculine form of *paraklētos*. Every form in the declension of a noun follows the same procedure of stem + case ending. (Some forms have contractions, though, which alter the appearance of the conjugated form). The lexical form of any noun is always the nominative singular. For a masculine noun the nominative singular case ending is sigma, therefore the lexical entry of *paraklēton*, which is a masculine noun, is *paraklētos*.

¹⁴ Joseph Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 483.

“another” Comforter to be with his disciples. “Another” is the Greek word *allon*, which is the accusative form of *allos*, and is intentionally used here to describe the Comforter that the Father will give. *Allos* is one of two important Greek adjectives meaning ‘other’ or ‘another.’¹⁵ The second Greek adjective is the word *heteros*. When placing a distinction in the quality, kind, or function between the successions of one to another, *heteros* is employed, but when associating a similar quality, kind, or function in the succession, *allos* is employed.¹⁶ *Allos* specifically identifies a numerical distinction, whereas *heteros* accentuates a stronger difference associated with another kind or type.¹⁷

Without entering into a discussion on the various theological implications which have been applied to the adjective *allos* in verse 16, Jesus Christ simply uses *allos* to categorize the Comforter as another of the same capacity and function as himself that will be with the disciples. Examining the disputations that have arisen and discussing further the similarities between Jesus Christ and the coming Comforter are not within the confines of this section. However, to establish the numerical distinction between the Comforter and Jesus Christ intrinsic in the adjective *allos*, it is noted in 1 John 2:1 that Jesus Christ is referred to as an “advocate” with the Father for those who believe. The word “advocate” is translated from the same Greek word as Comforter (*paraklētos*). Jesus Christ was a ‘Comforter’ to his disciples when he was with them on the earth, and he continues to be one at the right hand of God for every Christian to this day. John 14:16 says that Jesus Christ will ask the Father for another Comforter to take his place after he departs. Thus, a second Comforter is foretold of that will come and be with his disciples. It is important with correlations such as this that implications which the scriptures do not clearly evidence are not

¹⁵ Ibid., 29.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 54.

drawn from the use of certain words. Researching and defining the Comforter is an immense study on its own and will not be handled here.

The pronoun after *paraklēton* in verse 16 is “he,” located in the subsequent subordinate clause at the end of the verse. In the Greek text, however, there is no pronoun written in the verb phrase “he may abide” (*menē*) to explicitly indicate what object is being referred to. This is the first occurrence of an implicit pronoun designation.¹⁸ *Menē* is a conjugation of the Greek verb *menō* in the third person singular present subjunctive form. Translated as “he may abide” at the end of verse 16, *menē* refers to an implicit subject previously mentioned. One need not look far to see the context pointing to the masculine noun *paraklēton* at the beginning of the verse. The supplied pronoun “he,” translated from *menē*, was actually inserted by translators to amend the difference in structure between Greek and English grammar. Translators attempted to supply the appropriate pronoun in the English translation to satisfy the context of the Greek verb *menē* connected to the Comforter. The grammatical principle that the gender of an English pronoun reflects the natural gender of its associated object creates a dilemma in translation here. The supplied English pronoun for *menē* in verse 16 could correctly be “he”, “she”, or “it”, depending on what is the understanding of the natural gender of the Comforter.

A note on the Greek in the phrase “he may abide” is that multiple critical Greek manuscripts have the Greek word *ē* in place of *menē* in verse 16.¹⁹ *Ē*, a conjugation of *eimi* in the third person singular present subjunctive

form, means “to be” or “to exist.” The determined pronoun for the verb phrase is not affected by noting this textual variation for either *menē* or *ē*. Important to be aware of is that the common translation of *menē* or *ē* in 14:16 with a third person singular MASCULINE pronoun is purely arbitrary and must not be understood to be biblically authoritative toward the natural gender of the Comforter in any way.²⁰ The natural gender of the Comforter must be gathered from the immediate and remote contexts of the scripture and other places it is mentioned. No consideration of various English translations concerning the apparent gender of the Comforter’s referent pronoun can be guaranteed and trusted to support the true natural gender of the Comforter.

Alternate readings translated from the Greek verb *menē* or *ē* exist in different English versions. In going directly from Greek to English, the verb phrase *menē* or *ē* is commonly translated with a masculine pronoun as “he may abide,” “he may remain,” or “he may be.” But, as addressed above, English grammar does not coalesce with Greek grammar. The correct pronoun to supply for the unexpressed subject in the verb phrase could be “he”, “she”, or “it” to correspond with the third person singular verb *menē* or *ē*.²¹ And so, throughout this study I am going to propose the gender translation be neuter, making the translation here for *menē* or *ē* “it will abide” in order to indicate a neuter referent object.

¹⁸ See *Grammar* section above where the determination of implicit subjects is explained.

¹⁹ The critical Greek texts referred to that contain *ē* in place of *menē* are Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Alford, as well as Wescott-Hort (1881) and Nestle-Aland (27th). There are three observed alternate readings between these manuscripts, but the alterations only reside in the order of the words and not in the vocabulary and conjugations.

²⁰ The inherent power in claiming a statement to be biblically authoritative is to decree its truthfulness and accuracy originating from God’s inspired prophecy to holy men. An objective of this study is to prove from scripture that biblical authority cannot be claimed when inferring, implying, or determining the natural gender of the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost from the pronouns associated with them in John 14, 15, and 16.

²¹ The truth is that all the pronouns in association with the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost could be translated “he” or “she” just as correctly as “it” if the context supports that determination. The only necessary rule which must be enforced regardless is the consistency of gender in the translation of all the pronouns referring to these nouns so as to not confuse English readers.

A definitive explanation for which English gender to choose is not pertinent in analyzing the grammatical associations surrounding the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost in these sections. In addition, the basis of gender determination rests upon extensive contextual understanding and scriptural interpretation and therefore lies heavily in the realm of exegesis and hermeneutics and thus is beyond the scope of this study on grammatical associations.

John 14:17

Even the Spirit of Truth [*to pneuma tēs alētheias* (neut.)]; **whom** [*ho* (neut.)] the world cannot receive, because it seeth **him** [*auto* (neut.)] not, neither knoweth **him** [*auto* (neut.)]: but ye know **him** [*auto* (neut.)]; for **he dwelleth** [*menei*] with you, and shall be in you.

Proceeding to the next verse, “the Spirit of Truth” (*to pneuma tēs alētheias*) begins this verse due to the word “*Even*” being omitted on the premise that it was added during translation as indicated by italics and unnecessary given the juxtaposed position of verse 17 with verse 16. By observing the scriptural context, the Spirit of Truth in verse 17 refers back to the coming Comforter proclaimed in verse 16. In this relation, the Spirit of Truth is a co-direct object along with the Comforter from verse 16 which Jesus Christ says the Father will give. Thus, the Spirit of Truth is also in the accusative case but is neuter and therefore has no case ending for its conjugation. Furthermore, the title ‘he Spirit of Truth,’ is also a co-appellation with the title the Comforter. The two titles are designated as synonymous names for the same object. As will be seen later, the Holy Ghost contributes a third synonymous title with these other two. This parallelism of multiple titles for the same subject is an interesting study but is too extensive to be dealt with here.

Appearing after the Spirit of Truth in verse 17 are a number of descriptive clauses in which Jesus Christ pronounces the Spirit of Truth as an object that the

world cannot receive, see, or know. Numerous pronouns appear in these descriptive clauses. The first pronoun which immediately follows the Spirit of Truth is “whom,” which is translated from the Greek word *ho*, a derivative of the relative pronoun *hos*.²² *Ho* is the singular neuter form of *hos* in the accusative case and as such is translated “that” or “which” in various other scriptures.²³ If one wants to be consistent with neuter gender in English, *ho* should be translated as “which,” rather than “whom” because in English “whom” implies a masculine or feminine gender. Relative pronoun *ho* forms a dependent clause depicting the object, the Spirit of Truth, as what the world cannot receive, see, or know. Even though the Spirit of Truth refers to the Comforter, the neuter pronoun *ho* indicates its referent object to be the Spirit of Truth and not the masculine noun Comforter. The context also confirms this association albeit later cases in John like this will not be so apparent.

The next three occurring pronouns, “him (*auto*),” are all singular neuter possessive pronouns in the accusative case and follow suit after the neuter gender of *ho* because they all have the same common antecedent, the neuter object, the Spirit of Truth. All three neuter pronouns *auto* can be translated “it” instead of “him” to reflect their grammatical connection to the Spirit of Truth and be consistent with the neuter gender

²² The Greek relative pronoun *ho* (ὁ) differs from *ho* (ὁ), the Greek article, by an acute accent over the omicron. With the accent, *ho* (ὁ) functions as a relative pronoun. Relative pronouns are subordinate words employed in language to introduce a relative clause in order to modify an object or another clause.

²³ The Greek relative pronoun *hos* (ὃς) is very versatile and covers the masculine, feminine, and neuter genders in Scripture and is found to be translated, not exclusively, as “which,” “whom,” “that,” “who,” “whose,” “what,” and “whereof.” *Hon* (ὅν; masc.) or *hē* (ἣ; fem.) are other forms of *hos*. *Ho* (ὃ), the neuter form, is commonly translated as “which” or “that” in scripture (e.g., Mt.1:23; Mk 10:38; Lk 12:2; Jn 20:7).

declaration mentioned before.²⁴ In the final clause of verse 17, the phrase “he dwelleth” was translated from the Greek verb *menei*, another conjugation of *menō* in the third person singular present indicative, from which “he may abide” (*menē*) in verse 16 was also translated. Like *menē* in verse 16, the English translation of *menei* supplies a masculine pronoun, demonstrating a second example of implicit pronoun designation. *Menei* and the occurrences of *auto* are translated most often with the masculine inflection, but in a number of English versions and interlinear translations they are translated with the neuter inflection.^{25,26,27,28,29,30} Either gender translation of “he” or “it” is solely the interpretation of the understood natural gender of the verb phrase’s subject. Therefore, if maintaining a neuter gender for the Comforter and the Spirit of Truth, *menei* should have the neuter pronoun “it” supplied instead of “he.”

The last scripture in chapter 14 with an occurrence or reference particular to this section is verse 26 where the Comforter is mentioned again, and for the first time in this chapter, the Holy Ghost. This is the only scripture

²⁴ The second “him (*auto*),” in the phrase “neither knoweth him” is omitted in the Nestle-Aland text (27th) and Wescott-Hort text (1881), and is noted as doubtful from the Lachmann text.

²⁵ Berry, George R. *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament, (KJV)*. Grand Rapids. Baker Books. (2005). Marshall, Alfred. *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament, (NASB)*. Grand Rapids. Zondervan Co. (1980).

²⁶ The Westcott-Hort text from 1881 combined with the Nestle-Aland 26/27 variants including Concordant Greek Text Sublinears.

²⁷ *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. International Bible Students Association. Brooklyn. (1970).

²⁸ Rotherham, Joseph B. *The Emphasized Bible*. Kregel Publ. Grand Rapids. (1971).

²⁹ Goodspeed, Edgar J. *The Bible: An American Translation*. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago. (1945).

³⁰ Even though *The New American Bible* has the masculine inflection in the translation, a note is provided after verse 17 to explain the translation. It reads: “The Greek word for “Spirit” is neuter, and while we use personal pronouns in English (“he,” “his,” “him”), most Greek MSS employ “it.”

in the Bible which contains a direct connection between titles of the Comforter and the Holy Ghost.

John 14:26

But **the Comforter** [*ho paraklētos* (masc.)], ~~which is the Holy Ghost~~ [*to pneuma to hagion* (neut.)], **whom** [*ho* (neut.)] the Father will send in my name, **he** [*ekeinos* (masc.)] shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Here in verse 26 “the Comforter” (*ho paraklētos*) appears in the nominative case to declare it as the subject. After the Comforter, “*which is*” is omitted from before “the Holy Ghost” (*to pneuma to hagion*) because it is not in the Greek text. However, the suppletion of “*which is*” is not improper or unnecessary and therefore can remain if desired, because the Holy Ghost, also in the nominative case, functions to characterize the Comforter. In other words, the verse is saying that the Comforter is the Holy Ghost. By resting in apposition to the Comforter, the Holy Ghost indisputably equates itself with the Comforter.³¹ This apposition with the Comforter and the Holy Ghost only occurs here in 14:26 and is a critical connection to recognize. The doctrinal significance of the Comforter being called the Holy Ghost is part of another study and will not be introduced here.

“The Holy Ghost” (*to pneuma to hagion*) is a neuter noun in the nominative case agreeing with the nominative noun the Comforter as an apposition and as a co-subject of the sentence. Following the Holy Ghost in verse 26, “whom” is the first pronoun appearing immediately in a subordinate clause describing the Holy Ghost. “Whom” is the Greek word *ho*, the same form of

³¹ An apposition is a noun, noun phrase, or noun clause which follows a noun or pronoun and renames, describes, or characterizes the prior noun or pronoun. The apposition in verse 26 between the Comforter and the Holy Ghost as already asserted is functioning to establish that the Comforter is being identified as the Holy Ghost.

hos as in verse 17, a singular neuter relative pronoun in the accusative case. *Ho* agrees in gender with its antecedent, the neuter object the Holy Ghost. *Ho* does not refer to the Comforter because:

1) Of its obvious gender discrepancy with the Comforter.³²

2) Its supportive juxtaposed position after the Holy Ghost.³³ Like in verse 17, *ho* can be translated as either “that” or “which” depending on whether to make the clause restrictive or not.

In beginning a clause modifying the Holy Ghost, *ho* should be translated “which,” same as in verse 17, to make a nonrestrictive dependent clause describing the Holy Ghost as what the Father will send in Jesus Christ’s name.

The next pronoun present in verse 26 is “he,” which commences the second half of the verse. “He” is the Greek word *ekeinos*, a singular masculine demonstrative pronoun in the nominative case that reinstates the subject. But what subject is *ekeinos* relating to here – the Comforter or the Holy Ghost? Both are previously mentioned subjects in the verse. *Ekeinos* is a masculine pronoun whereas *ho* is a neuter pronoun. This contrast in gender is a vital key in understanding which object *ekeinos* refers to. The previous pronoun *ho* was

³² Why *ho* does not refer to the Comforter is well substantiated because no figure of speech is apparently being used in verse 26 between the masculine object “the Comforter” (*ho paraklētos*) and the neuter pronoun “whom (*ho*).” If *ho* was a referent pronoun of the Comforter, the neuter natural gender would be emphasized by the figure *heterosis*. But, this association disrupts the connection with the dependent clause and the Holy Ghost and forces an obscure structuring of the verse considering a masculine pronoun follows in the next clause. This awkward association would be most confounding to the reader.

³³ The position of *ho* after “the Holy Ghost” provides a different contextual understanding than if the clause followed “the Comforter” and occurred before “the Holy Ghost.” Thus, its placement after “the Holy Ghost” is indicative of its relation to that object.

determined to refer back to the Holy Ghost. *Ekeinos* does not agree in gender with the Holy Ghost, but it does agree with the Comforter. Associating *ekeinos* with the Comforter returns the reader to the primary subject of the verse, reestablishing the focus for the subsequent clauses. The latter clauses of verse 26 explain purposes that the Comforter will accomplish; he will teach the disciples all things and bring to remembrance all things that Jesus said to them. The determination that *ekeinos* refers to the Comforter in the beginning of the verse is evident because:

1) *ekeinos* correlates with the Comforter to re-instate the original subject of the verse giving a natural discourse to the scripture’s structure in the surrounding context.

2) If *ekeinos* refers to the Holy Ghost by employing the figure *heterosis*, the reader would be puzzled by two consecutive pronouns of different genders referring to the same object with a figure of speech being applied to only one of them. The second reason alone advocates the simplicity in recognizing that *ho* and *ekeinos* indeed refer to independent objects according to their respective genders.

Addressing the translation of *ekeinos*, it is most commonly translated as “that,” occurring 99 times in the Authorized Text of the New Testament. Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament specifies the most accurate translation of *ekeinos* as “the one there” with the sense of “that one,” emphasizing the remote object over the proximal.³⁴ As a demonstrative pronoun, *ekeinos* belongs more to the remote object to emphasize “that person or thing,” denoting a stronger relationship to or identification of the object than a personal pronoun.

³⁴ Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 194-95.

IV. JOHN 15

Coming to John chapter 15, there is only a single scripture in the entire chapter where the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, or the Holy Ghost is mentioned or where any pronouns which refer to them reside.

John 15:26

But when **the Comforter** [*ho paraklētos* (masc.)] is come, **whom** [*hon* (masc.)] I will send unto you from the Father, ~~even~~ **the Spirit of Truth** [*to pneuma tēs alētheias* (neut.)], **which** [*ho* (neut.)] proceedeth from the Father, **he** [*ekeinos* (masc.)] shall testify of me:

Resembling 14:26, “the Comforter (*ho paraklētos*),” in the nominative singular masculine form, begins 15:26 as the subject in a conjunctive clause. Immediately following this conjunctive clause, “But when the Comforter is come,” appears the first pronoun in verse 26. The pronoun is “whom” and it begins a dependent clause describing the coming Comforter. “Whom” is the Greek word *hon*, a conjugated form of the relative pronoun *hos*, written in the accusative singular masculine form. In 14:26, “whom (*ho*),” neuter gender, is preceded by the Holy Ghost and identifies the Holy Ghost as its antecedent. Similarly, here in 15:26 “whom (*hon*),” masculine gender, can be seen to identify the preceding subject, the Comforter, as its antecedent.³⁵ Both scriptures are very comparable in structure and wording – they both contain a main object followed by a dependent clause describing that object. One difference is that 15:26 has a dependent clause following the Comforter before mentioning the Spirit of Truth where

³⁵ An object simply preceding a pronoun does not automatically designate that object as the antecedent of the pronoun. Only context truly determines what object a pronoun refers to. In Greek, though, grammatical associations provide clues concerning what object a pronoun does refer to. Correlating with the obvious contextual associations in John 14:26 and 15:26, the pronouns’ (*ho* and *hon*) grammatical genders and placements in both scriptures are strong indicators for identifying their antecedents.

14:26 does not. By paralleling these two scriptures it is simple to understand how two different objects, the Holy Ghost and the Comforter, which have two different grammatical genders, neuter and masculine, are referred to by the same relative pronoun *hos* in two different conjugated genders, *ho* (neuter) and *hon* (masculine). Even though “whom” (*hon*) is written in the masculine gender in 14:26, it should be translated as “which,” in the neuter to classify the Comforter as a neuter object in English. The translation of *hon* as “which” forms a nonrestrictive relative clause describing the Comforter as what Jesus will send from the Father, echoing again Jesus’ statement in 14:16.

Next, the word “*even*,” which is written before “the Spirit of Truth (*pneuma tēs alētheias*),” does not appear in the Greek text and can be omitted. The Spirit of Truth is a new title introduced in the verse and is immediately followed by a dependent clause describing it. Here, the Spirit of Truth stands in apposition to the Comforter in a similar way as it did in 14:16-17. The dependent clause following the Spirit of Truth begins with the pronoun “which,” translated from the Greek word *ho*. *Ho* is a form of the same Greek relative pronoun *hos* that has appeared in all other scriptures discussed thus far, but here in its second occurrence in verse 26 it is in the nominative singular neuter form, whereas previously in the verse it is in the accusative singular masculine form (*hon*).³⁶ *Ho*, now neuter compared to previously

³⁶ *Ho* (ὃ) is the neuter form of *hos* used in John 14:17 and 26. In both verses it is in the accusative case, but why is the same form, used here in John 15:26, in the nominative case? In John 14:17 and 26 *ho* is the object of the relative clause in which it functions. Examining John 14:17, the object *ho* refers to the Spirit of Truth as what “the world cannot receive” and in verse 26 the object *ho* refers to the Holy Ghost as what “the Father will send” in Jesus’ name. But here in John 15:26 the object to which *ho* refers (the Spirit of Truth) is not the object of the verb but the subject. The Spirit of Truth is that which “proceedeth from the Father.” Thus, *ho* is in the nominative case in John 15:26 and not the accusative, even though, *ho* is the neuter form of *hos* in both the accusative and nominative cases.

masculine, claims the Spirit of Truth as its referent object by its contextual and grammatical agreement. It is difficult *not* to see the clear distinction of reference between *hon* and *ho* in verse 26.

Restating an earlier point, it is simple to understand how two different objects, the Comforter and the Spirit of Truth, which have two different grammatical genders are referred to by the same relative pronoun in their respective genders – masculine and neuter. This is why the Comforter has a masculine referent pronoun and the Spirit of Truth has a neuter one, to correctly indicate which noun each pronoun refers to. In accordance with the determination in 14:26 and the surrounding context, *ho* should be translated as “which,” as it already is in the KJV, in association with the Spirit of Truth as a neuter object in English. Translating *ho* as “which” forms a nonrestrictive relative clause asserting that it is the Spirit of Truth as that “which proceedeth from the Father.”

As stated above, the change in gender from *hon* (masculine) to *ho* (neuter) in the two subordinate clauses is indicative of their separate antecedents. The placement of *ho* adjacent to the Spirit of Truth is identical to the syntax of 14:26 where it is in the same position after the Holy Ghost. John 14:26 and 15:26 are structured with alterations in the gender of the relative pronouns because they both contain two nouns with differing grammatical genders.

The last pronoun to examine in 15:26 is “he,” translated from the Greek word *ekeinos*, a nominative singular masculine demonstrative pronoun that begins the main clause of the verse. Here in the main clause there is a switch back to a masculine gender by the use of *ekeinos* in contrast to the previous neuter gender of *ho*. Once again, noting this variation in grammatical gender is a key in determining what antecedent *ekeinos* belongs to. The recurrence of the masculine gender signals the attention of the reader to either an exchange in referred objects or the emergence of a figure of speech. Evidence that the figure *heterosis* is operating in

a relation between *ekeinos* and the Spirit of Truth cannot be ascertained syntactically. If *ekeinos* is professed to refer to the Spirit of Truth rather than the Comforter, the same discussion and reasoning for its refutation (as presented above in 14:26) regarding alternating genders is applicable. As with the gender exchange between *hon* and *ho* in the previous subordinate clauses for reference to their respective objects, *ekeinos* also follows noun-pronoun agreement being written in the masculine gender to identify the Comforter at the beginning of the verse as its object of referral. The grammatical association between *ekeinos* and the Comforter can be seen clearer by removing all the subordinate clauses except the initial conjunctive clause in which the Comforter resides and the final, main clause of the verse where it is referred to again. John 15:26 would then simply read:

“But when the Comforter is come, he shall testify of me.”

As a demonstrative pronoun, *ekeinos* gives emphasis in association with the more remote object, the Comforter, like in 14:26, and can be translated as “that” or “that one,” attributing greater distinction and significance when returning the reader to the subject of the Comforter than a mere personal pronoun would. But it would not be improper to translate *ekeinos* as simply “it” as well.

V. JOHN 16

John chapter 16 contains two relevant passages of scripture for this study. One mentions the Comforter and the other the Spirit of Truth. These passages of scripture share the same context in Jesus’ teaching to his disciples and connect together things that Jesus says will soon come to pass. In returning to the topic of the Comforter from 15:26, Jesus presents his disciples with reasons necessitating his imminent departure from them and then follows by assuring them of the invaluable

acquisition of the Comforter that will come to them shortly.

John 16:7

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, **the Comforter** [*ho paraklētos* (masc.)] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send **him** [*auton* (masc.)] unto you.

In verse 7, Jesus provides substantiation for his approaching departure in light of the coming Comforter. Here “the Comforter (*ho paraklētos*),” nominative singular masculine, is the subject and main reason that Jesus is telling his disciples about the necessity of his going away. Jesus presents this explanation as a follow-up to verses 5-6 because his assertion that he was going to leave his disciples and their hearts would be filled with sorrow. Thus, Jesus begins verse 7 with the adverb “Nevertheless” and proceeds to assert the need for him to leave (in spite of what he just said in verse 6), again giving assurance that he would send the Comforter to them after leaving.

In the follow-up statement of verse 7, Jesus consoles his disciples by making known the requirement of his departure so the Comforter can come. Part of his consolation was attesting that his parting is “expedient” for his disciples. The word “expedient” is translated from the Greek word *sumpherei*, a form of *sumpherō* which means to be of use, service, or advantage.³⁷ The sense of *sumpherei* in the context is toward something which is profitable or favorable. Jesus is proclaiming the truth concerning the benefit inherent in his departure – if he departs, the Comforter will indeed be sent unto them, and this would be favorable or useful for his disciples.

³⁷ Gerhard Kittle et al., eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 1252.

In giving attention to the pronouns, only a single relevant pronoun can be found in verse 7 and it undoubtedly refers to the Comforter. Jesus says in the last phrase that if he departs, he will send “him,” referring to the Comforter, to his disciples. “Him” is the Greek pronoun *auton*, an accusative singular masculine third person personal possessive form of *autos*.³⁸ As a third person pronoun, *auton* is written with the masculine gender to demonstrate its connection to the Comforter mentioned two phrases prior. It is clear to see both grammatically and contextually that the Comforter is the sole object that *auton* can refer to. The Comforter is the only observable object agreeable with a third person masculine pronoun, and the Comforter is linked in the immediate context about the reason and profit for Jesus’ departure and his promise to send the Comforter to them thereafter. Simple associations such as this are helpful in determining more difficult ones as will be encountered later in John 16.

Corresponding with the previously stated pattern of neuter natural gender of the Comforter, *auton* should then be translated as “it,” keeping the gender of the Comforter consistent throughout translation. Remember, the gender of a word in Greek is used to structure the grammatical mechanics of the language. In English, though, an object would not be labeled an *it* at one place, and then later a *he*, and then later maybe a *she* if referring to the same object. Gender assignment in English is determined according to the natural gender of the object because it *does* represent the natural gender of that object and does not vary with differing grammatical constructions. This distinction cannot be overemphasized when studying the grammatical syntax in Greek versus English scriptures.

³⁸ *Autos* is used extensively in the New Testament and is translated in the Authorized Version not exclusively as: him, his, their, he, her, and they. As a personal pronoun, *autos* reflects the gender of the *word* to which it refers unless it diverges from proper grammar for ulterior reasons (e.g., figure of speech).

Now, continuing to the next verse, Jesus gives details on the immeasurable benefit of the coming Comforter.

John 16:8

And **when he is come** [*elthōn*], **he** [*ekeinos* (masc.)] will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

A conjunctive clause about the objectives of the coming Comforter, which contains the Greek verb *elthōn*, transitions Jesus' teaching from the last phrase of verse 7 into verse 8. Translated in the KJV as "when he is come," *elthōn* is a nominative masculine aorist participle of the verb *erchomai* which means "to come or go, or to set out or arrive."^{39,40} In the context of what Jesus is stating, and by being an active participle in the aorist tense, *elthōn* is most accurately represented by "when having come" or "after coming" in verse 8.⁴¹ The translation "when he is come" with the supplied pronoun "he" is another occurrence of an implicitly designated pronoun because there is no pronoun written in the Greek text. If choosing to translate *elthōn* with a supplied pronoun, the pronoun should be "it" to concur with the established neuter gender of the Comforter. A

³⁹ E. W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 159.

⁴⁰ H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), 694-95.

⁴¹ The aorist tense is used often in Greek to define simply the 'happening' of an action. The aorist tense essentially does not specify the time of an action (whether continuous or completed) giving understanding to the duration and subsequent accomplishment of the action but more so just to indicate the occurrence of that action. English, however, does not employ an aorist tense. Many translators use the English perfect tense for both the aorist tense and perfect tense in Greek, thus not allowing the English reader to differentiate between the two. When attempting to distinguish the Greek aorist tense in English, a subordinating conjunction and the active progressive verb form can be presented together to show the occurrence of an action without using the English perfect tense or simple past tense. This is what has been suggested for the best rendering of the verb *elthōn* – "after coming" – in 16:8. Mounce, *Biblical Greek*, 259.

better rendering of the phrase, though, is "after coming," or "when having come" utilizing an English participle to depict the undefined, puncticular action of the aorist tense in the participle.

The only explicit pronoun in the text of verse 8 is "he," the Greek word *ekeinos*, a nominative singular masculine demonstrative pronoun. As previously discussed in 15:26, *ekeinos* means "that one," pointing to a specific object with additional emphasis.⁴² The context provides no doubt that *ekeinos* claims the Comforter as its antecedent here just as clearly as *auton* does in verse 7. In referring to the Comforter, *ekeinos* also properly employs the masculine gender to abide by noun-pronoun agreement, as did *auton*. The use of *ekeinos* continues in the context of verse 7 revealing that it will be the Comforter, which after coming shall "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."⁴³

In the following verses Jesus continues by enumerating the manner in which the Comforter will accomplish the reproof of sin, righteousness, and judgment in the world.

John 16:9-12

Of sin, because they (those in the world) believe not on me (Jesus Christ); of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

Jesus concludes his enumeration of the three specified categories of the Comforter's reproof in verse

⁴² See above discussion on *ekeinos* in John 14:26.

⁴³ Those things that the Comforter will carry out and do, such as teach Jesus' disciples and bring to remembrance all things he said to them (14:26), testify of Jesus (15:26), glorify Jesus (16:14), and as well as reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8) are of great importance in understanding the identity and function of the Comforter that Jesus will send after he leaves.

12 by saying that there are “yet many things” he has to tell his disciples. These things concern the purpose and influence of the Comforter and things which are to come, but he says they “cannot bear them now.” Not being able to bear what Jesus had to say meant his disciples did not have the strength to receive the information with any sense of repose. Jesus’ disciples were not ready at that time to grasp and retain with composure the other things that Jesus wanted to communicate to them about the Comforter and the future.

Connecting from verse 12, Jesus declares in verse 13 the way his disciples will learn all the things that he had yet to tell them regarding the Comforter and things to come. Verses 13 through 15 are the final scriptures to be investigated relating to the Comforter here in the gospel of John. They contain numerous relevant pronouns and one occurrence of the Spirit of Truth. These scriptures conclude Jesus’ teaching throughout John 14, 15, and 16 pertaining to the coming Comforter, the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit of Truth. These couple verses convey that what the Comforter “hears” and “receives” will be delivered to Jesus’ disciples and will guide them into “all truth.”

John 16:13

Howbeit when **he** [*ekeinos* (masc.)], **the Spirit of Truth** [*to pneuma tēs alētheias* (neut.)], is come, **he will guide** [*hodēgēsei*] you into all truth: **for he shall not speak** [*ou gar lalēsei*] of **himself** [*heautou* (masc.)]; but whatsoever **he shall hear** [*akousē*], that **shall he speak** [*lalēsei*]: and **he will shew** [*anangelei*] you things to come.

Verse 13 contains probably the most debated noun–pronoun association out of any of the scriptures examined within this study. The noun–pronoun connection in verse 13 is difficult because the first clause of the verse contains a pronoun with no proximate preceding noun as an antecedent. “He” is the

demonstrative pronoun *ekeinos* written in the nominative singular masculine form. By being the subject of the verse with no preceding object in the near vicinity to be its antecedent, careful attention must be given to *ekeinos* to determine the object to which it refers.

The first detail to note is that the verse begins with a conjunctive clause implying continuation from a previous discourse. Stepping back one verse, verse 12 begins with Jesus’ disclosure to his disciples that he has yet many things to say unto them, but they cannot bear them now. After withholding what more he had to tell his disciples, Jesus reassures them by saying, “Howbeit when *he* is come, *he* will guide you into all truth....”⁴⁴ The Bible reader might then wonder ‘But when *who* or *what* is come?’ This is simply a natural question to Jesus statement. To identify the object of reference Jesus is point to one must find what subject the conjunctive clause is connecting to in the context. That is, what subject is being passed through the surrounding scriptures that Jesus would refer to here in the beginning of verse 13?

Verse 13 is Jesus’ continued explanation about how the Spirit of Truth will reveal those things that he had yet to tell his disciple, as he proclaimed in verse 12. Jesus stopped describing how the Comforter will reprove the world and simply stated there are yet many things he has to say but now is not the time for them to know (v. 12). Reverting farther back, verses 9-11 are Jesus’ explanation of how the Comforter will reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The list of how the Comforter will reprove the world originates in verse 8 where Jesus says, “And when *he (it)* is come, *he (it)* will

⁴⁴ The Spirit of Truth was omitted from the quote for clarity of the subject–verb interaction which carries the meaning of the sentence. By removing the Spirit of Truth, the meaning of what Jesus was saying has not been changed, except in the descriptive identification that the Comforter is the Spirit of Truth. The function and significance of the Spirit of Truth in this scripture will be examined shortly hereafter.

reprove the world...” referring to the coming Comforter from verse 7 as already pointed out.⁴⁵

From verse 8 to 12 everything funnels to the point that Jesus has more to say to his disciples concerning what he began in verse 8 but would not continue because they were not able to “bear” what he had to say to them at that time. So thus, Jesus replies in verse 13, “Howbeit when *he* is come, *he* will guide you into all truth...” reassuring his disciples that the Comforter will complete the task he deferred in verse 12. By tracing the context of Jesus’ teaching in the surrounding scriptures, *ekeinos* can be seen to refer to the Comforter in verse 7. This association in verse 13 recalls to the reader’s mind that it will be when the Comforter is come that the untold truths Jesus began to disclose but halted in verse 12 will be at last revealed. It is expected then for *ekeinos* to be masculine in gender and singular in number to agree with the Comforter in verse 7. As mentioned before, though, *ekeinos* is best understood in being translated as “that one” pointing with emphasis to a particular object.

Another argument, however, could be made for the noun–pronoun association with *ekeinos* in verse 13. Directly following *ekeinos* is the noun “the Spirit of Truth (*to pneuma tēs alētheias*),” which is a neuter noun in the nominative case. With a brief examination, one can easily identify that there is a connection between *ekeinos* and the Spirit of Truth. The question that arises is: Does *ekeinos* refer to the Spirit of Truth? A few key details are necessary to examine in answering this question:

1) *Ekeinos* is a masculine pronoun and the Spirit of Truth a neuter noun.

2) The Spirit of Truth is written after *ekeinos* in word order, not before.

3) The Spirit of Truth is written adjacent (in apposition) to *ekeinos* in the scripture indicating a specific function in association to *ekeinos*.

First, the discrepancy between the grammatical gender of *ekeinos* and the Spirit of Truth is of great significance. The implications of this discrepancy are twofold. Either the figure *heterosis* is employed to emphasize the natural gender of the Spirit of Truth by its relation to the masculine pronoun *ekeinos*, or the Spirit of Truth is not the postcedent of *ekeinos*, thereby fulfilling a different role in this relation. Determination of the former instance supplies the reader with the sole scriptural occurrence in the New Testament where the grammatical gender association between the neuter noun *pneuma* and a referring pronoun is broken to stress the natural gender of the Spirit of Truth. Conversely, the latter then evokes the inquiry: What then is the proper object of *ekeinos* if not the Spirit of Truth, and what function does the Spirit of Truth perform in verse 13 if not being a referent object for *ekeinos*? These questions will be revisited shortly.

The other two noted details (#2 & #3 above) are necessary to examine to help confirm the referent object of *ekeinos* and its relation to the Spirit of Truth. The second detail, that the Spirit of Truth follows *ekeinos* in word order, is a substantial observation. The standard Greek idiomatic usage of the demonstrative pronoun *ekeinos* refers the reader more so to a prior object with a more remote sense whereas the other Greek demonstrative pronouns *houtos* and *hode* direct the reader more toward a proximal object of reference.⁴⁶ This grammatical observation is a generality and is not universal and absolute nor can be said to be exclusive here in verse 13. Therefore, it may be deemed merely circumstantial but some weight can be attributed from it

⁴⁵ Previously mentioned in John 16:8 was the determination that the verb phrase “when he is come” (*elthōn*) and the pronoun “he” (*ekeinos*) referred to the Comforter and should be translated in the neuter gender as “it.”

⁴⁶ Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 194, 437, & 467.

because the abnormal syntax would likely puzzle a reader of the Greek NT.

Studying the final detail mentioned, where the Spirit of Truth is positioned juxtaposed to *ekeinos* in the verse, considerable evidence can be deduced regarding the placement of the Spirit of Truth in the verse. Noting that the Spirit of Truth is written immediately after *ekeinos* puts the Spirit of Truth in apposition to *ekeinos* and presents a vital indication as to its function in the verse.⁴⁷ Its location as an appositive delegates a grammatical relation to *ekeinos* that strongly excludes the possibility that it is postcedent of *ekeinos*. As an appositive, the Spirit of Truth describes or explains *ekeinos*, characterizing the proper object to which *ekeinos* ultimately refers. In the same manner which “the Holy Ghost” (*to pneuma to hagion*) characterizes “the Comforter” (*ho paraklētos*) in John 14:26, “the Spirit of Truth” (*to pneuma tēs alētheias*) characterizes *ekeinos* here in John 16:13.

But, *ekeinos* is only a pronoun, a referent of a proper noun, so the Spirit of Truth as an appositive to *ekeinos* is literally clarifying or distinguishing *ekeinos*’ referent object. To answer the one unresolved question from before, “What is the proper object of *ekeinos* if not the Spirit of Truth?” and to reaffirm the previously established referent of *ekeinos*, all scriptural evidence (contextually and grammatically) points to the conclusion that the proper object of *ekeinos* is undoubtedly the Comforter in verse 7. This determination coincides with the reasons #1–#3 listed above. The validity for the grammatical and contextual harmony asserted by this conclusion will be reviewed next.

Ascertaining the true referent object of a pronoun can only be accomplished by examining and thoroughly understanding the context encompassing the pronoun. So, the context surrounding *ekeinos* in verse 13 will be

revisited to demonstrate its concord with the Comforter in verse 7. By being the referent pronoun of the Comforter, *ekeinos* is considered to be a *distant pronoun*.⁴⁸ While *ekeinos* might be spatially distant, it is not contextually distant from the Comforter for the context pertaining to the Comforter from verse 7 to verse 15 is coherent throughout with no prominent subject change.

Summarizing concisely the structure of the context, Jesus leads into the content of verse 13 with the abrupt verse 12, connecting which connects verses 7 through 11 to verses 13 through 15 by alluding to the brief instruction on the purpose and capacity of the coming Comforter. The context of verses 7-12 is then linked to verse 13 with Jesus’ statement that it will be the coming Comforter that will guide his disciples into “all truth.” The “all truth” in verse 13 refers to the things which Jesus declared he had yet to say to his disciples in verse 12.

All the remaining verb phrases in verse 13 are written with a masculine inflection assumedly because of their contextual relation to *ekeinos*. Like other verb phrases they do not actually have a pronoun in the Greek text and can be added to the list of implicit pronoun designations encountered in this passage. These verb phrases, even though associated with the masculine pronoun *ekeinos*, should be translated with the supplied pronoun “it” in order to continue to be consistent with the proposed gender of the Comforter in English.

⁴⁸ Distant pronouns are pronouns which are placed spatially far from their antecedents and sometimes are not clearly associated with their referent objects and typically are used to recall to mind a former subject that still resides within the context. They guide the reader backward in the text, whereas near (proximal) pronouns prompt the reader to consider the antecedent as immediately present in the communicative situation. Carl Bache and Niels Davidsen-Nielsen, *Mastering English: An Advanced Grammar For Non-Native and Native Speakers* (New York: Walter De Gruyter, Inc., 1997), 422.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 194.

The only other written pronoun besides “he” (*ekeinos*) in verse 13 is “himself” located in the middle of the verse where Jesus is stating that the Comforter “shall not speak of himself.” The Greek word for “himself” is *heautou*, a singular masculine personal reflexive pronoun in the genitive case.⁴⁹ As a masculine pronoun, *heautou* is in perfect agreement with *ekeinos* and continues to refer to the Comforter in conjunction with *ekeinos*. Even though it is a masculine pronoun like *ekeinos*, *heautou* is also to be translated as “itself” following the consistent gender assignment in English. *Heautou* can also be translated with a possessive pronoun and the pronoun “own” (e.g. “its own” rather than “itself”), depending on the context and verb action.⁵⁰

Verse 14 follows in the same discourse and gives more details on what Jesus taught his disciples concerning the Comforter.

John 16:14

He [*ekeinos* (masc.)] shall glorify me (Jesus Christ): for **he shall receive** [*lēpsetai*] of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Verse 14 begins with the pronoun “he” which is another occurrence of the masculine demonstrative pronoun *ekeinos* in the nominative case, same as in verse 13. Contextually, verse 14 continues Jesus’ explanation from verse 13 regarding the purpose and function of the coming Comforter. Other than the Spirit of Truth in verse 13 there is no alternative object which *ekeinos* could claim as its object of referral. No considerable effort need be made to apprehend that a

⁴⁹ A reflexive pronoun is employed when an action expressed by a verb refers back to its own subject. Reflexive pronouns are useful constructs which convey and emphasize to the reader that the subject performing the action of a verb also participates in the verbal action (could be a direct object, indirect object, intensifier, etc.).

⁵⁰ Eric G. Jay, *New Testament Greek: An Introductory Grammar* (London: Camelot Press, 1958), 129-130.

diversion of subject between verses 13 and 14 is not plausible because they undoubtedly relate to the same subject in Jesus’ teaching. Therefore, being in contextual union with verse 13, *ekeinos* in verse 14 concomitantly refers to the Comforter in verse 7 too. Abiding with the translation pattern from verse 13 and before, *ekeinos* should be rendered as “that one.”

The last pronoun in verse 14 is located in the verb phrase “he shall receive (*lēpsetai*).” This pronoun, however, is not written in the Greek text. It is an implied pronoun in accordance with the masculine subject *ekeinos* and should be translated “it shall receive.”

Finally, coming to verse 15, the last scripture to be considered in this study of the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost in John 14, 15, and 16, the content connects seamlessly with verse 14. Jesus continues his teaching to his disciples:

John 16:15

All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that **he shall take** [*lēpsetai*] of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

In verse 15 Jesus provides justification for his final statement concerning the Comforter from verse 14 and then proceeds to reiterate the phrase, “he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you,” an exact duplication of his previous statement.⁵¹ Jesus substantiates his statement in verse 14 by further explaining its truthfulness. He consummates this justification by utilizing a common Greek idiom composed of a preposition and demonstrative pronoun (*dia touto*) to indicate the purpose for the repetition of his previous proclamation from verse 14.

⁵¹ The phrase “he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” in verse 14 and “he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you” in verse 15 are identical phrases in the Stephens Greek text. The only change in the KJV is the translation of *lēpsetai* as “receive” in verse 14 and “take” in verse 15. However, there is a minor textual variant that will be discussed below.

Translated as “therefore,” *dia touto* is employed to offer causation for Jesus’ inclusion of the previous phrase, “all things the Father hath are mine.” *Dia touto* in the literal sense means “on account of this” or “for this reason” referring to what just preceded.⁵² Jesus asserts that because all things the Father has are his, he told his disciples in verse 14 that the Comforter “shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” No new subject is introduced between the two verses. Verse 15 is only a clarification of the last phrase Jesus states in verse 14. The pronoun in the phrase “he shall take” (*lēpsetai*) is simply another occurrence of a supplied pronoun. The verb *lēpsetai* is a third person singular future indicative form of the verb *lambanō*.⁵³ *Lambanō* means to “receive” or “take,” but in verse 15 it should be translated as “receive” as in verse 14 because of the parallelism between these verses.⁵⁴ The supplied pronoun for *lēpsetai* should be “it” to agree with the same translation in verse 14.

Discrepancies exist within the critical Greek manuscripts as to what tense of the verb *lambanō* should be written.⁵⁵ Regardless of the textual variations, though, the two different verb tenses which appear stem from *lambanō* and do not change the description of what Jesus is trying to say, merely the time of the action it conveys.

⁵² Charles C. Mierow, *The Essentials of Greek Syntax* (Boston: Ginn And Company, 1911), 20.

⁵³ Harold K. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 251.

⁵⁴ Verses 14 and 15 follow the same context and contain identical expressions save the difference in the verb tense of *lambanō*. No diversion of translation is warranted though, and hence the alteration in many English versions from “receive” in verse 14 to “take” in verse 15 has no lexical basis, simply the translator’s doctrinal motive or bias. In contrast to the common variation of *lambanō* in English versions, most Greek-English interlinear translations render *lambanō* “receive” for both occurrences.

⁵⁵ All the critical Greek texts aside from the Stephens have *lambanei* written rather than *lēpsetai* as the form of *lambanō*. *Lambanei* is a present active indicative form whereas *lēpsetai* is a future indicative form.

VI. CONCLUSION

After reviewing the material introduced in this study, hopefully a better understanding of the grammar and context associated with the pertinent scriptures in the gospel of John 14, 15, and 16 relating to the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost has been attained. However, this progress must be accompanied by humility in order to see the significance of the material presented and the conclusions to which they point.

Here are a few final remarks to make to clarify some of the most vital elements put forth in this study. Firstly, the importance of understanding the difference in the mechanics of grammar between the biblical Greek and English languages cannot be overstated. This difference is the key to discerning grammatical associations in the Greek language apart from those in English. Grammatical gender in Greek, which is independent of natural gender, follows fixed grammatical principles such as noun-pronoun agreement. The English language does not utilize grammatical gender in linguistic mechanics and syntax, only natural gender. This poses a gap in comprehension between the two languages. To be grammatically correct in English, gender consistency is required among *all* pronouns referring to the same object, but in the Greek language, gender consistency is only required between a noun and *its* referent pronoun(s) and not among all nouns and pronouns referring to the same object. Gender inconsistency is common among pronouns in Greek if the grammatical gender of their separate antecedents differs. This, of course, is negated if the figure *heterosis* is employed which deviates from proper grammatical usage to indicate a particular emphasis in the scripture. But such a figure is not the normal usage of the language.

To reconcile the difference between the Greek and English languages during translation, all pronouns referring to the same object must be consistent in gender throughout their translation to English. As mentioned

several times in this study, the object identified by the three nouns, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost, must have a consistent natural gender throughout all references in English. To recount again, it is illogical for the Comforter to be referred to as a “he,” the Spirit of Truth as an “it,” or the Holy Ghost as an “it” simply on the basis of their Greek grammatical genders when they are all synonymous names for the same object.

To be consistent with natural gender during translation, a specific gender must be assigned and upheld throughout all references regarding the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost. A consistent gender assignment to these nouns in English, though, is influenced by the scriptures in which they appear or are referenced. The natural gender assignment of the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost must originate from only the context of the scriptures. Thus, it is proposed that the grammatical associations that were shown to be consistent with the established rules of biblical Greek grammar examined in this study are insufficient to claim that they indicate personhood or non-personhood. In other words, there is no grammatical basis upon which a person can claim a doctrinal position one way or the other. Rather, the gender assignment and doctrinal affirmation for the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth and the Holy Ghost must be determined from the context (in John 14, 15, and 16 and elsewhere in Scripture) and not from a grammatical gender observed in the Greek text.

Furthermore, by assigning a consistent natural gender to the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost, the chosen gender will be able to reflect the natural gender of the object represented by these titles. However, this then raises the theological question: “What is the natural gender of the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost?” This question can only be answered by knowing to what object these nouns ascribe. Only from the context of the scriptures relating to these nouns can the natural gender of the object be

determined. The natural gender, however, in the case of the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost is not referring to a literal gender of sex (male, female, or neuter) but of personhood or non-personhood (personality or impersonality) because either way the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost refer to something spiritual.⁵⁶ Spirit has no gender of sex like animals and other living organisms and therefore, in essence, is biologically neuter. Nevertheless, if a *spiritual being* is referred to by these titles, either a masculine or feminine natural gender is typically assigned.⁵⁷ As with the noun “God (*theos*),” “angel (*angelos*),” and other spiritual beings like unclean spirits (*akathartos pneuma*), a natural gender in English, usually masculine, is utilized even though no real natural gender of sex exists. This gender assignment is applied to convey to the reader that the object spoken of is a real, conscious, living being and not just some inanimate object. Therefore, a consistent natural gender assignment for the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost is actually a determination of personality or impersonality, whether the object is alive and intelligent or not.

Following is an extended quote from Daniel B. Wallace, an eminent and foremost authority on New Testament Greek textual criticism and syntax, on the grammatical constructions of noun-pronoun associations in John chapters 14, 15, and 16 concerning the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost.

⁵⁶ The terms ‘personality’ and ‘impersonality’ designate an animate or inanimate nature respectively and are simply another way to distinguish personhood and non-personhood. These terms basically label two categories of ideas in order to define whether the object referred to as the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost is a conscious living being or not.

⁵⁷ A spiritual being is not simply a spiritual entity, but more specifically a being that has consciousness, awareness, and a self-will. More clarification on this topic with respect to the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost will be handled in another work.

“The use of ἐκεῖνος here [John 14, 15, and 16] is frequently regarded by students of the NT to be an affirmation of the personality of the Spirit. Such an approach is based on the assumption that the antecedent of ἐκεῖνος is πνεῦμα: ‘the masculine pronoun ἐκεῖνος is used in John 14:26 and 16:13-14 to refer to the neuter noun πνεῦμα to emphasize the personality of the Holy Spirit’ [Cited from Young, R. A. *Intermediate New Testament Greek*. Trans. and rev. by W F. Moulton. 3d ed., rev. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark (1882), 78].

But this is erroneous. In all these Johannine passages, πνεῦμα is appositional to a masculine noun. The gender of ἐκεῖνος thus has nothing to do with the natural gender of πνεῦμα. The antecedent of ἐκεῖνος, in each case, is παράκλητος, not πνεῦμα. John 14:26 reads ὁ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὃ πέμψει ὁ πατήρ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου, ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα (“the Comforter, the Holy Spirit whom the Father sends in my name, **that one** will teach you all things”). πνεῦμα not only is appositional to παράκλητος, but the relative pronoun that follows it is neuter! This hardly assists the grammatical argument for the Spirit’s personality. In John 16:13-14 the immediate context is deceptive: ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὀδηγήσει ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πάσῃ· ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει (“whenever **that one** comes—the Spirit of truth—he will guide you in all truth...**he** will glorify me”). The ἐκεῖνος reaches back to v 7, where παράκλητος is mentioned. Thus, since παράκλητος is masculine, so is the pronoun. Although one might argue that the Spirit’s personality is in view in these passages, the view must be based on the nature of a παράκλητος and the things said about the Comforter, not on any supposed grammatical subtleties. Indeed, it is difficult to find *any* text in

which πνεῦμα is grammatically referred to with the masculine gender.”⁵⁸

In conclusion, the substance of this study aims to show that evidence and support to determine natural gender the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Ghost in John 14, 15, and 16 *cannot* be derived from the grammatical genders among referent pronouns. All grammatical associations among these nouns and pronouns are structured according to the grammatical rules of the Greek language. Therefore, any attempt to impose doctrinal implications upon the grammatical mechanics of the examined scriptures would be to do so ignorantly and unjustly.

VII. RE-TRANSLATION

John 14:16-17, 26

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that it may abide with you forever; the Spirit of Truth, which the world cannot receive, because it seeth it not, neither knoweth it: but ye know it; for it dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

But the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, which the Father will send in my name, that one shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

John 15:26

But when the Comforter is come, which I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, that one shall testify of me:

John 16:7-8, 13-15

⁵⁸ Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, 331-32. (Emphasis original).

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send it unto you. And when that one is come, it will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Howbeit when that one, the Spirit of Truth, is come, it will guide you into all truth: for it shall not speak of its own; but whatsoever it shall hear, that shall it speak: and it will shew you things to come. That one shall glorify me: for it shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that it shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

VIII. GRAMMATICAL TERMS

Appositive: A figure of speech, in which two elements are placed side by side, with the second element serving to define or modify the first. It is a type of hyperbaton, a figure of disorder, in that it disturbs the natural flow of thought in the sentence.

Demonstrative Pronoun: Demonstrative pronouns uniquely function as a guide to indicate which person, place, or thing is being spoken of or identified. They are words designed to point out objects which a pronoun replaces, particularly when distinguishing between objects. The common English demonstrative pronouns are *this, that, these, and those*.

Dependent Clause: A clause that cannot stand alone as a full sentence and functions as a noun, adjective, or adverb within a sentence. Also called a *subordinate clause*.

Distant Pronoun: Distant pronouns are pronouns (commonly personal or demonstrative) which are placed spatially far from their antecedents and sometimes are not clearly associated. Typically distant pronouns are

used to recall to mind a former subject that still resides within the context. They guide the reader backward in the text, whereas near (proximal) pronouns prompt the reader to consider the antecedent as immediately present in the communicative situation.

Personal Pronoun: A pronoun designating the person speaking (*I, me, we, us*), the person spoken to (*you*), or the person or thing spoken of (*he, she, it, they, him, her, them*).

Possessive Pronoun: A pronoun that attributes ownership or specific relationship to someone or something. It identifies to whom or to what something belongs or is connected or related. There are seven possessive pronouns in modern English: *mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs*.

Reflexive Pronoun: A personal pronoun compounded with *-self* to show the agent's action affects the agent performing the action. In other words, a reflexive pronoun indicates that the complement of the verb is the same as the subject. English reflexive pronouns are *myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves*.

Relative Clause: A dependent clause introduced by a relative pronoun that modifies a noun or a noun phrase in the main clause and is an essential part of the main clause and the meaning thereof.

Relative Pronoun: A pronoun which is used to connect a dependent clause to a main clause and refers to a substantive in that main clause. *Who, which, whom, and that* are the prominent English relative pronouns.

Restrictive/Nonrestrictive Clause: A restrictive (defining) clause gives essential information about the noun or noun phrase it modifies, without which the sentence wouldn't make sense as the listener or reader would not be able to identify the specific subject being spoken of. A non-restrictive (*non-defining*) clause gives extra information about a noun or noun phrase and is

typically marked off by commas at the beginning and end of the clause. The non-restrictive clause is unnecessary to determine the particular subject which is being spoken of in the sentence.

Subordinate Clause: A clause that does not constitute a complete sentence in itself and functions to modify the principal clause or some part of it or serve some noun function in the principal clause.

Verb Phrase: A group of words including a verb that functions syntactically as a verb that may or may not include its complements, objects, or other modifiers.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Author:	Jeremiah Wierwille
Affiliation:	N/A
Street:	06573 Southland Rd
City/State:	New Knoxville, OH 45871
Country:	U.S.A.
Email:	contact@jerrywierwille.com