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Word order and information structure in New Testament Greek

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Allison Kirk

Word order and information structure in New Testament Greek

This dissertation examines word order variation in the Koine Greek of the New Testament Greek in a variety of domains: declarative clauses, questions and relative clauses. In particular, I examine the way in which word order corresponds to information structure.

It is argued that although New Testament Greek shows a variety of possible permutations of the sentence elements subject (S), verb (V) and object (O), in declarative clauses, questions and relative clauses, the word order is not free. Rather, it is partly governed by phrase structure and partly by information structural considerations such as Topic and Focus. This is manifested in all of the domains investigated. I argue that the basic word order is best described as VSO with an SVO alternative basic word order. Marked clauses, such as SOV, OVS, OSV and also some SVO clauses involve topicalization or focus movement of the arguments.

This thesis is of interest to syntacticians who are interested in word order and the syntax-pragmatics interface as well as to historical linguistics and classics scholars.

Allison Kirk

Word order and information structure in New Testament Greek

Ἀπολῶ τὴν σοφίαν τῶν σοφῶν,
καὶ τὴν σύνεσιν τῶν συνετῶν ἀθετήσω.
οὐ σοφός; ποῦ γραμματεὺς; ποῦ συζητητὴς τ
ος τούτου; οὐχὶ ἐμώρανεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν σοφίαν τ
ιον; 21 ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔγ
σμος διὰ τῆς σοφίας τὸν θεόν, εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεὸς ὁ
μωρίας τοῦ κηρύγματος σῶσαι τοὺς πιστεύοντ
πειδὴ καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι σημεῖα αἰτοῦσιν καὶ Ἕλλη
αν ζητοῦσιν, 23 ἡμεῖς δὲ κηρύσσομεν Χριστὸν ἑστα
έρον, Ἰουδαίοις μὲν σκάνδαλον ἔθνεσιν δὲ μωρί
υτοῖς δὲ τοῖς κλητοῖς, Ἰουδαίοις τε καὶ Ἕλλησ
τὸν θεοῦ δύναμιν καὶ θεοῦ σοφίαν. 25 ὅτι τὸ μωρ
θεοῦ σοφώτερον τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐστίν, καὶ τὸ ἀσθε
θεοῦ ἰσχυρότερον τῶν ἀνθρώπων.
Βλέπετε γὰρ τὴν κλήσιν ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι
οἱ σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα, οὐ πολλοὶ δυνατοί, οὐ πολ
νεῖς. 27 ἀλλὰ τὰ μωρὰ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελέξατο
ἵνα κατασχύνη τοὺς σοφοὺς, καὶ τὰ ἀσθενῆ
μου ἐξελέξατο ὁ θεὸς ἵνα κατασχύνη τὰ ἰσχυ
αὶ τὰ ἀσθενῆ τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὰ ἐξουθενημένα ἐξε