

THE CLASSIFICATION OF INFINITIVES A STATISTICAL STUDY

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Detailed information is provided here regarding the various functional classifications of the infinitive, much of it never before generally available. Special attention is given to the listing and classification of governing words; the semantic interrelationship between concepts which use the infinitive, even when they occur in differing structural patterns; the long-debated question of the "subject" of the infinitive with an attempt to state clearly what actual usage indicates, and a brief, rather negative discussion of the use and non-use of the article with infinitives.

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INTRODUCTION

STARTING with a listing generated by a GRAMCORD¹ computerized search of all infinitives occurring in the UBS Greek NT, a detailed study was made. Each infinitive was analyzed for classification, the "subject" of the infinitive, the use or non-use of the article, tense, voice, and the word governing the infinitive. This information was then sorted and counted in many pertinent combinations by the computer to provide the material basis and statistical data for this study. Three major areas are explored in this article the functional classification of infinitives, the problem of the "subject of the infinitive, and the use or non-use of the article with infinitives.

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A CLASSIFICATION OF USAGES

Subject Infinitives

An infinitive may function as the subject of a sentence or clause, i.e., the doer of the action or that to which the state or condition of the verb is predicated. The abstract character of the infinitive as a verbal noun gives an impersonal character to the verb of such sentences. This use of the infinitive is also common in English, although usually in English the pronoun 'it' is used to signal a delayed subject and the infinitive subject follows the verb; "it is necessary to go" is more natural to the English ear than "to go is necessary," although the infinitive functions as subject in either case.

Subject of Impersonal Verbs

Luke 20:22 provides an example of this usage: ἔξεστιν ἡμᾶς Καίσαρι φόρον δοῦναι ἢ οὐ; / 'Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar?'² The subject infinitive most frequently occurs with certain verbs which are either always or predominantly impersonal. The verbs actually found with an infinitive subject in the NT are δεῖ³ (120 times),⁴ γίνομαι when it means 'it came to pass that' (36 times),⁵ ἔξεστιν (29 times), δοκέω when it is impersonal (5 times),⁶ συμφέρει and ὠφελεῖ (2 times each), and eight others (1 time each).⁷ One example shows an infinitive without a governing verb expressed; the sense suggests that δεῖ be supplied. The infinitive in this usage is almost always anarthrous. Only once⁹ is an article used, the genitive τοῦ. The infinitive follows its verb 95% of the time.

Subject of a Predicative Verb

The subject infinitive also appears with the copula εἰμί which predicates some quality or condition to the infinitive subject. This, too, is an impersonal construction, but differs from the previous one in that the impersonal verbs contain their own predication (it is lawful,

² Unless otherwise stated, translations of the Greek text of the NT are from the New American Standard version (NASB).

³ The actual forms used are δεῖ (92), ἔδει (22), δέη (2), and δεῖν (4).

⁴ The number of occurrences listed in parentheses here and throughout this article counts the number of infinitives occurring with each verb, not the occurrences of the verb. Frequently one verb governs a series of infinitives.

⁵ γίνεται (1), ἐγένετο (32), γένηται (2), γένοιτο (1).

⁶ δοκεῖ (1), ἔδοξε (4).

⁷ ἀνέβη, ἀπόκειται, ἀπολείπεται, ἐνδέκεται, ἔπρεπεν, κάθηκεν, συνέβη, χρή.

⁸ Rev 13: 10, ἀποκτανθῆναι.

⁹ Acts 10:25.

it is *necessary*) whereas these state the predication as a predicate complement, either adjective, noun, or otherwise. An example is found in Mark 9:5: [Ῥαββί, καλόν ἐστὶν ἡμᾶς ὧδε εἶναι / Ῥαββί, it is good for us to be here'. In addition to the 57 instances where the predicative verb is present,¹⁰ there are 31 instances where it is not expressed but clearly must be supplied.

The predicate complement may be an adjective (71 times),¹¹ a noun (7 times),¹² a participle (7 times),¹³ or the genitive personal pronoun, ὑμῶν (1 time). In two instances¹⁴ infinitives seem to require ἔστιν to be supplied in the sense 'it exists', with no predication being stated. The infinitive is anarthrous 75 times; it has the nominative article (τό) 10 times, the genitive (τού) twice, and the accusative (τό) once. The frequencies for word order when the predicative verb is present are Predicate/Verb/Infinitive (46 times), Verb/Predicate/Infinitive (7 times), and Infinitive/Verb/Predicate (4 times). When no predicative verb is expressed, the infinitive usually follows the predicate complement (25 of the 31 total).

Subject of Passive Verbs

Infinitives which would have been the object of a verb in the active voice may become the subject of its passive transform (22 instances). For example, Matt 13:11 has Ὑμῖν δέδοται γινῶναι τὰ μυστήρια / 'To you it has been granted to know the mysteries'. The verbs found in this construction are δίδωμι (9), χρηματίζω (4), ἐπιτρέπω (3), γράφω (3), χαρίζομαι (2), and συμφωνέω (1). The infinitive is anarthrous 20 times; the other two have the nominative τό.

Subject of Other Verbs

In light of the fact that the infinitive is a verbal noun and can function as a subject, it is rather surprising that, apart from the three categories previously listed, there are only three other instances of a subject infinitive in the NT. They are Matt 15:20 (τὸ δὲ ἀνίπτους χερσὶν φαγεῖν οὐ κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον / 'to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man') and twice in Rom 7:18 (τὸ γὰρ θέλειν

¹⁰ The forms used are ἔστιν, ἦν, ἦ and εἶεν.

¹¹ καλόν (24), εὐκοπώτερον (8), κρεῖττον (5), ἀδύνατον (4), αἰσχρόν (4), δίκαιον (4), ἀναγκαῖον (4), ἀθέμιτον (4), δυθνατόν (3), μακάριον (2), περισσότερον (2), ἐμόν (2), (2), and the following with one each: ἀνένδεκτον, ἀναγκαιότερον, ἀρεστόν, ἄξιον, δύσκολον, ὀκνηρόν, περισσόν, σκληρόν and φοβερόν.

¹² ἀνάγκη (2), ἔθος (2), and one each of ἀπαγμόν, Χριστός, and κερδος.

¹³ ἔξον (3), δέον (2), and πρέπον (2). These participles may be predicate adjectives or perhaps periphrastic; note that each is a participle of an impersonal verb.

¹⁴ 2 Cor 8:11 and Phil 1:22.

παράκειται μοι, τὸ δὲ κατεργάζεσθαι τὸ καλὸν οὐ / 'to will is present with me, but to perform the good is not [present]').¹⁵ All three have the nominative article τό.

Subject Infinitives

By far the most frequent usage of the infinitive is in the predicate of a sentence--either as a complement of the verb, part of an object clause, or as the direct object itself. Here the basis for classification centers in the character of the verb which governs the infinitive.

The Complementary Infinitive

Many verbs take an infinitive as a complement to their meaning; in a sense, the infinitive functions as the direct object of the verb. The interdependence of the verb and the infinitive is often so close that it forms a verb phrase or "chain." Verbs of this type are sometimes called catenative. The chain may be composed of two, three, or more links; the last one is always an infinitive or participle and the preceding ones must all be catenative.

At least 72 verbs are followed by 892 complementary infinitives in the NT. Most of these verbs have a corresponding verb in English which also takes an infinitive complement. There is little agreement among grammarians in classifying these verbs, so the attempt made here must be a tentative and rather hesitating one. This study classifies six categories of verbs that take complementary infinitives.

1. Verbs Expressing Will or Desire, and their Opposites. The complementary infinitive is found with verbs meaning 'to will, to wish, to desire' (θέλω [130], βούλομαι [39], ἐπιθυμέω [9], and ἐπιποθέω [4]) and the closely associated idea 'to choose, to prefer, to be pleased', expressed by εὐδοκέω (9), συνευδοκέω (2), αἰρέω (2), φιλέω (2), and φροντίζω (1). An opposite sense, 'to be ashamed' (ἐπαισχύνομαι [2] and αἰσχύνομαι [1]) also takes the complementary infinitive.

2. *Verbs Expressing an Activity to the End that Something Shall or Shall Not be Done.* This rather cumbrous heading is taken from Smyth¹⁶ and includes a great number and variety of verbs which take a complementary infinitive. Some express 'attempt, effort, force' (ζητέω [35], συμβουλεύω [2], and once each: ἀγωνίζω, ἀναμιμνήσκω, ἀναπείθω, ἀσκέω, ἐπιζητέω, φιλοτιμέομαι, πειράομαι, and ζηλώω).

¹⁵ This is a literal translation. *NASB* uses the gerunds "the wishing" and "the doing" to translate the Greek infinitives.

¹⁶ Herbert W. Smyth, *A Greek Grammar* (New York: American Book Co., 1916) 304.

Some express the concept of 'undertaking' or 'accomplishing' (μέλλω [93], ἄρχομαι [92], τολμάω [13], ποιέω [12], κινδυνεύω [4], προστίθημι [3], ἐνεργέω [2], προενάρχομαι [2], and one each: ἐτοιμάζω, παρρησιάζω, προλαμβάνω, προμελετάω, and προσποιέομαι). Other verbs express the opposite idea, 'to thwart, to hinder, to delay' (ὀκνέω [12], φοβέομαι [4], ἐγκόπτω [3], ὑποστέλλω [3], and one each: ἔξα-Πορέω, ἐνεδρεύω, κατέχω, and χρονίζω).

3. *Verbs of Permitting and Allowing, and their Opposites.* These include ἐπιτρέπω (16), ἀφίημι (15), ἔάω (4), λαγχάνω (1) and the opposite sense of 'refusing, forbidding, preventing': κυλύω (10), παραιτέω (2), ἀπαρνέομαι (1), and ἀρνέομαι (1).

4. *Verbs Denoting Ability and Know-How.* 'Ability' is expressed most frequently by δύναμαι (213); other verbs related to this concept are ἰσχύω (17), ἐξισχύω (2), and κατισχύω (2). Also related are δίδωμι in the sense 'give [the ability] to' (11), ἔχω in the sense 'have [the ability] to' (23), εὐκαιρέω 'have time to' (3), εὐδοόομαι 'to succeed, to get along well' (1), and εὐκαιρέω 'to find [by study]' (1). 'Know-how' is represented by οἶδα (13), γινώσκω (2), μανθάνω 'to learn how to' (9), and μυέομαι (4).

5. *Verbs denoting Fitness, Propriety, Custom.* Verbs used in this sense are ἀξιόω 'to consider worthy' (3), the passive of καταξιόω in the sense 'be counted worthy' (2), and εἴωθα 'be accustomed to'. Δίδωμι in the sense 'to give [the privilege] to' (5) also belongs here.

6. *Verbs Denoting Need or Obligation.* This class is composed of ὀφείλω 'to be obligated to, to owe' (25), along with δίδωμι in the sense 'to give [the need] to' (2).

Less than 2% of the complementary infinitives have the article. Eight are found with the genitive article and eight with the accusative, compared to 878 anarthrous complementary infinitives in the NT.

Infinitive in Indirect Discourse

When an infinitive stands as the object of a verb of mental perception or communication and expresses the content or the substance of the thought or of the communication it is classified as being in indirect discourse.¹⁷ Compared with the previous category, the list

¹⁷ The term "indirect discourse" is used in various ways by grammarians, from a very broad sense (such as A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* [Nashville: Broadman, 1934] 1029, 1031ff.) to the strict (sense of only indirectly quoted words (as in H. P. V. Nunn, *A Short Syntax of New Testament Greek* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1951] 97-99). My usage here will

of verbs found with this usage of the infinitive is a little larger (82 versus 72) but the number of infinitives involved is much smaller (362 versus 892). I offer here an attempt to classify these verbs.

1. *Verbs of Mental Perception: Recognizing, Knowing, Understanding.* An example of this usage is found in Heb 11:3: Πίστει νοούμεν κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ / 'By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God'. The infinitive κατηρτίσθαι expresses the content of the mental perception--what was understood. Verbs found with this usage of the infinitive are ἀκούω (2), καταλαμβάνω (1), νοέω (1), οἶδα (1), and θεωρέω (1).

2. *Verbs of Mental Perception: Thinking, Believing, Feeling, Deciding.* For this usage see, e.g., Luke 2:44: νομίσαντες δὲ αὐτὸν εἶναι ἐν τῇ συνδίᾳ / 'His parents supposed Him to be in the caravan'. The infinitive εἶναι tells what they thought--that he was in the caravan. The following verbs are used in this category: δοκέω (29), κρίνω (12), νομίζω (10), λογίζομαι (6), πείθω (6), τίθημι in the sense 'to make up one's mind, to resolve' (4), δοκιμάζω (2), ἐπιλανθάνομαι (2), οἶομαι (2), πιστεύω (2), σθμντίθεμαι (2), ὑπονοέω (2), ἡγέομαι, and one each: ὀρίζω, προορίζω, προτίθεμαι, στηρίζω and ὑποκρίνομαι.

3. *Verbs of Mental Perception: Hoping, Expecting.* 1 Tim 3:14 provides an example of this category: ἐλπίζων ἐλθεῖν πρὸς σὲ ἐν τάχει / 'hoping to come to you before long'. The infinitive ἐλθεῖν expresses the substance of this hope--the thing he hoped for. Verbs used are ἐλπίζω (13), προσδοκάω (2), and προσέχω (2).

4. *Verbs of Communication: Indirect Statement.* For an example see 1 John 2:6: ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν / 'the one who says he abides in Him'. The infinitive expresses the content of what was said; in direct discourse it would be a statement, "I abide in Him." The following verbs are classified in this category: λέγω (42), μαρτυρέω (4), ἀναθεματίζω (3), ἀπαγγέλλω (3), ἀποκρίνομαι (3), φάσκω (3), ἐπαγγέλλω (2), ὁμνύω (2), ὁμολογέω in the sense 'to promise, to agree to' (2); and once each: βοάω, δυσχυρίζω, ἐπιδείκνυμι, ἐρῶ, φημί, κατακρίνω, προαιτιάομαι, σημαίνω, and συνίστημι.

5. *Verbs of Communication: Indirect Question.* Acts 10:48 has an example of this classification: τότε ἠρώτησαν αὐτὸν ἐπιμεῖναι ἡμέρας τινάς 'then they asked him to stay on for a few days'. The

be two-fold: (a) mental activity and perception when it states the content or substance of the thought, and (b) indirect communication, whether as statement, question, or command.

direct quote would be a question, "Will you stay on . . . ?" Verbs used with an infinitive in indirect discourse are ἐρωτάω (10), αἰτέω (6), εὐχομαι (6), δέομαι (4), προσεύχομαι (3), παραιτέω (2); and once each: ἐπερωτάω, ἐπικαλέομαι, κατανεύω, and κατασεύω.

6. *Verbs of Communication: Indirect Command or Entreaty.*

Luke 18:40 has the following example: ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὸν ἄχθῃναι πρὸς αὐτόν / 'Jesus commanded that he be brought to Him'. The direct quotation would have been a command or exhortation, "bring him to Me." Several verbs fall in this category: παραγγέλλω (32), παρακαλέω (30), κελεύω (26), εἶπον (11), γράφω (7), διατάσσω (7), ἐντέλλομαι (4), ἐπιτάσσω (4), διδάσκω (3), νεύω (2), συμβουλεύω, (2), τάσσω (2), ὑποδείκνυμι (2); and once each: ἀπειλέω, δείκνυμι, διαμαρτυρέω, ἐνορκίζω, ἐπικρίνω, ἐπιστέλλω, εὐαγγελίζω, in the sense 'to proclaim that', κηρύσσω, παιδεύω, παραινέομαι, προστάσσω, and συμφρονίζω. In one passage the governing verb is unexpressed; some form of διδάσκω probably should be supplied (1 Tim 4:3; cf. v 1).

Object Infinitive with Other Verbs

It may be surprising, but there are only two (or perhaps three) other instances where an infinitive stands as the true object of a verb. 2 Cor 8:11 reads νυνὶ δὲ καὶ τὸ ποιῆσαι ἐπιτελέσατε / 'but now finish doing it also'; the infinitive seems to be a true object rather than a complement to ἐπιτελέω. In Phil 4:10 (ὅτι ἤδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν / 'that now at last you have revived your concern for me'), φρονεῖν seems to be functioning as a simple noun object. One other passage that perhaps belongs here is Rev 13:10: εἴ τις ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀποκτανθῇναι, αὐτὸν ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀποκτανθῇναι / 'If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed'.¹⁸ The first ἀποκτανθῇναι is clearly the predicate of a verb which needs to be supplied (perhaps "is destined" as the *NASB* supplies in the first half of the couplet, or perhaps simply the copula as the *NIV* does in both halves of the couplet; in the latter case the infinitive would not strictly be *object*, but rather a subjective complement).

It might well be argued that some of the infinitives which I have classed as complementary might be considered simply as noun objects of the verb. In such cases I have tried to follow the lead of other

¹⁸ The translation given in this instance is from the *NIV* which follows Codex A. *NASB* follows a different text and translates, "if anyone kills with the sword." The whole passage is greatly compressed and difficult to interpret.

grammarians¹⁹ who list the governing verb as one which elsewhere takes an infinitive to complete its meaning.

Adverbial Infinitives

In many instances the infinitive is used, in effect, as a subordinate adverbial clause which usually expresses time but may also express cause, purpose or result.

Infinitive of Purpose or Result

The most natural adverbial use of the infinitive, either articular or anarthrous, is to express the end or direction of an action, whether intentional (purpose) or consequential (result). Grammarians who have studied the historical development of the Greek language point out that the Greek infinitive originated as a verbal substantive with a fixed dative or locative case form.²⁰ Thus, as Robertson says, "This notion of purpose is the direct meaning of the dative case which is retained. It is the usual meaning of the inf. in Homer, that of purpose"²¹ and "This dative inf. was probably a survival of the old and once common dative of purpose."²² In later Greek, especially in Hellenistic Greek, the infinitive in this and all other uses gave way increasingly to the ἵνα-clause until it disappeared entirely in modern Greek where it is replaced with *vá* (i.e., ἵνα) + subjunctive. In the NT it is still very common as an expression of purpose, along with ἵνα.

The relation between purpose and result is a close one and often difficult, sometimes impossible, to distinguish. Intended result is purpose; accomplished or realized purpose is result, and it is not clear in every instance which is in the mind of the author.²³ For example, in Rev 5:5 ἐνίκησαν ὁ λέων . . . ἀνοῖραι is an accomplished fact, but the speaker might be pointing to the reason for the action. Another factor contributing to this confusion between purpose and result in the NT may be the theological context which presents a sovereign God whose purposes always become results and results always arise out of his purposes.

In this classification I label each example as either infinitive of purpose or of result where it seems reasonably clear to do so, and I put in another category those which might reasonably be either.

¹⁹ See particularly BDF, 201-5.

²⁰ For a discussion of the origin and development of the infinitive in the Greek language see Robertson, *Grammar*, 1051-56.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1087.

²² *Ibid.*, 1053.

²³ For a rather thorough discussion of this problem see Robertson, *Grammar*, 1089-91.

1. *Infinitive of Purpose*. Two clear examples of infinitives of purpose are Matt 2:2: ἤλθομεν προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ / 'we have come to worship Him' and Luke 15:15: ἔπεμψεν αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς ἀγροὺς αὐτοῦ βόσκειν χοίρους / 'he sent him into his fields to feed swine'. Verbs found with an infinitive of purpose are (a) 'to send': ἀποστέλλω (19), ἐξαποστέλλω (2), πέμπω (4); (b) 'to give': δίδωμι (17), παραδίδωμι (3); (c) 'to choose': ἐκλέγομαι (4), προχειρίζομαι (3); (d) more than 40 others with three or less infinitives involved; and (e) a special category of intransitive verbs of motion: 'to go' or 'to come'; compounds of βαίνω (13), ἔρχομαι and its compounds (79), πορεύομαι and its compounds (12), compounds of ἄγω (5); verbs meaning 'to be present, to have come', ἦκω (2), παραγίνομαι (2), πάρειμι (1); and miscellaneous intransitive verbs of motion (19).

2. *Infinitives of Result*. Sometimes a particle indicates that an infinitive is an infinitive of result. ὥστε is a combination of the comparative particle ὥς 'as' with the enclitic τε 'and' (note the accent: not ὅστε as it would have to be if it were one word) and means 'and so' or 'so as'. The Blass-Debrunner grammar says, "The introductory particle for the infinitive of result is ὥστε as in classical."²⁴

There are 64 infinitives in the NT introduced by ὥστε or ὥς. Of these, all but 8 are infinitives of result, the result being either an actual occurrence (51), a fictional occurrence as part of a parable (3) (Matt 13:32 twice, Mark 4:32), or the occurrence which could follow if some condition were met (Matt 24:24; 1 Cor 13:2). Of the remaining eight, five may perhaps be explained away. In Matt 15:33 the ὥστε may be understood as the co-ordinate of τοσοῦται: "so many loaves as it would take to actually feed so great a crowd." In Matt 10:1 (two occurrences), 27:1, and Acts 20:24 the results intended were actually realized later; this was known at the time when the record was written and may be reflected in the choice to use ὥστε or ὥς. But the three remaining passages are different. In Luke 9:52 there is some doubt whether the intended result was actually realized. If ὥς ἐτοιμάσαι αὐτῷ means to prepare the people of Samaria to receive Christ, it was not realized, as the following verse shows. But probably these words should be understood to mean "to make arrangement for Him" (NASB); if so it is clearly actual result. In Luke 20:20 it is true that Jesus was actually delivered over to the rulers, but it did not come about by the tactics reported in this verse, that is, by listening to Jesus' teaching in order to trap him by his speech. Thus, the purpose

²⁴ BDF, 197. They go on to explain that there is uncertainty whether the simple ὥς is used, just as there is about its use in customary Attic. In the UBS³ text ὥς appears with the infinitive twice (Luke 9:52 and Acts 20:24), both with textual variants including ὥστε and both with the meaning of intended result (i.e., purpose).

in this context failed. There seems to be no doubt, however, that in Luke 4:29 ὥστε is used with an infinitive to express an intended result which, obviously, was in no sense realized. Jesus was not thrown down from the hill, as is explicitly stated in the next verse. Apparently the confusion over purpose and result, between intended and actual result, must sometimes be recognized even when ὥστε occurs.

The other five infinitives identified in this study as infinitives of result do not use ὥστε or ὡς. In Matt 21:32 belief, expressed by the infinitive πιστεῦσαι, was not the purpose for repentance but the result of it. So also in Rom 7:3 the wife's freedom from the law of her dead husband is not "in order that she may not be an adultress," but it results in her not being so. In Heb 11:8 Abraham obeyed "with the result that" he went out, not "in order to" go out. And in Rev 2:20 (twice) it is preferable to understand the immorality and eating of idol-sacrifices as the result rather than the purpose of Jezebel's false teaching.

3. *Infinitives either Purpose or Result.* The fact that the infinitive may express either purpose or result requires the interpreter to make a subjective decision or admit uncertainty as to the precise significance of the infinitive. The preceding sections include those instances where this writer has made that decision. The present category includes 19 places²⁵ where there was uncertainty regarding classification. The reader is called upon to use his own judgment in these cases.

Perhaps this whole issue should prompt us to look again at our own language. Is it always possible to make distinctions between purpose and result in the English use of the infinitive? And, do we need to do so?

Articular Infinitives with Prepositions

Of all the many uses of the Greek infinitives, this one is the most foreign to English speakers. English uses infinitives in all the ways that Greek does as subjects of verbs, as objects (both complementary and in indirect discourse), as adverbs expressing purpose or result, and in apposition to nouns, adjectives, and pronouns. But there is nothing in English to prepare the beginning Greek student for the use of the infinitive when it stands as object of a preposition and functions as an adverbial clause.

It is impossible to translate these constructions literally into any understandable English. They most naturally are translated by

²⁵ Mark 7:4; Luke 1:25; 24: 16, 45; Acts 7: 19; 10:47; 15:10; 20:30; Rom 1:24, 28; 11:8 (twice), 10; 2 Cor 10:16 (twice); Gal 3:10; I Thess 3:3; Rev 16:9, 19.

TABLE 1

Articular Infinitives with Prepositions

Preposition	Tense of					Meaning
	Infinitive:	Article	Number	Pres.	Aor. Perf	
εἰς	τό	71	32	37	2	Purpose: "in order to"
ἐν	τῷ	56	44	12		Temporal: "while, as, when"
διὰ	τό	32	24	1	7	Causal: "because"
μετά	τό	15		14	1	Temporal: "after"
πρός	τό	11	3	8		Purpose: "in order to"
πρό	τοῦ	9	1	8		Temporal: "before"
ἀντί	τοῦ	1	1			Substitution: "instead of"
ἕνεκεν	τοῦ	1		1		Causal: "because, for the sake of"
ἕως	τοῦ	1		1		Temporal: "until"
πρίν	-	8		8		Temporal: "before"
πρίν ἢ	-	3		3		Temporal: "before"

converting them into subordinate clauses, choosing the conjunction according to the meaning of the preposition and changing the infinitive into a finite verb. For example, Luke 11:27 (ἐν τῷ ἔγχοι αὐτὸν ταῦτα) may be translated "while he was saying these things." A literal translation would be, "in the him to say these things," and, less literal, "in the process of his saying these things." Table 1 sets forth the basic information regarding these constructions.

Only those prepositions listed in Table 1 are used in this construction. There are two examples which conform completely to this pattern but which clearly do not belong to this category: 2 Cor 8:11; ἐκ τοῦ ἔχειν / 'by your ability' (NASB), and Heb 2:15: διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν / 'through [their] whole life' or 'all their lives' (NASB). These will be considered later under the category *Infinitives as Simple Nouns*.

A characteristic of this construction is the use of the article with the infinitive; the only exception is with πρίν. Robertson explains, "The use of πρίν with the inf. was common in Homer before the article was used with the inf. The usage became fixed and the article never intervened."²⁶ He points out that the case used with πρίν is Ablative (Genitive).

The tense of the infinitive signifies, of course, not time, but aspect. The present is used for a durative aspect and the aorist for simple occurrence or indefinite. This produces a subtle distinction especially in the case of ἐν τῷ with the infinitive. When the present is used the

²⁶ Robertson, *Grammar*, 1075.

sense is durative; it is continuing action going on at the same time as the main clause. When the tense is aorist it is simple occurrence, simultaneous but not emphasizing the continuing action. Usually *NASB* translates ἐν τῷ with the aorist infinitive by "when" (9 of the 12 times it occurs). They use "while" or "as" 31 times and "when" only 7 times with the present infinitive.

Six of the prepositions used with infinitives are temporal in significance and express time relative to the main sentence as either antecedent (πρό, πρίν, πρὶν ἢ, ἕως), contemporary (ἐν), or subsequent (μετὰ). Two express purpose or end (εἰς, πρὸς); two express cause (διὰ, ἕνεκεν); and one, substitution (ἀντί). The meanings given in Table 1 are the more common ones, but they are not exhaustive. With ἐν the sense is sometimes instrumental (Acts 3:26, Heb 8:13). The εἰς τό + infinitive construction seems sometimes to be the same as the simple infinitive of purpose or result; in two instances it seems exactly equivalent to the simple epexegetical infinitive of an adjective (Jas 1:19, twice).

Causal Infinitive

The one passage which alone shows the infinitive without a preposition functioning in the adverbial sense of cause is 2 Cor 2:13: τῷ μὴ εὑρεῖν με Τίτον / 'because I did not find Titus'. The case of the infinitive is instrumental-dative (with τῷ), which is appropriate to the causal sense. The construction is structurally parallel to the purpose and result categories already discussed.

Absolute Infinitives

The Infinitive Absolute

The classical infinitive absolute is described by Goodwin in his grammar of classical Greek: "The infinitive may stand absolutely in parenthetic phrases, generally with ὥς or ὅσον. . . . The most common of these expressions is ὥς ἔπος εἰπεῖν or ὥς εἰπεῖν to put it in a word or if one may say so, used to soften a statement."²⁷ This construction occurs only once in the NT and is in fact the very example Goodwin quoted--Heb 7:9: καὶ ὥς ἔπος εἰπεῖν / 'and, so to speak'.

The Imperative Infinitive

In grammatical terminology *absolute* is often used to refer to something which appears alone, without object or grammatical connection.

²⁷ W. W. Goodwin, *Greek Grammar*, revised by C. B. Gulick (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1930) 323.

Robertson uses the term to describe an infinitive construction other than the infinitive absolute already described (he deals with the category under a different heading). He applies this term to those instances where an infinitive seems to stand as the main verb of a sentence in a context of imperatival sentences, functioning as if it were an imperative. The infinitive is absolute in the sense that there is no "main verb on which it depends." It is true that in classical Greek there was such an imperatival infinitive. Goodwin describes it, "The infinitive with a subject nominative is sometimes used like the second person of the imperative" (emphasis added). He says of a similar construction (infinitive with a subject accusative):

This construction has been explained by supplying a verb like δός or δότε *grant*. . . or γένοιτο *may it be*. . . . In *laws, treaties, and proclamations*, the infinitive often depends on ἔδοξε or δέδπλται *be it enacted*, or κεκέλευσαι *it is commanded*; which may be expressed in a previous sentence or understood.²⁸

A few infinitives in the NT have been accounted for as imperatival, and in order to present as complete a picture as possible I have identified eleven examples.²⁹ However, it should be noted that there is no instance in the NT of a subject in the nominative case as required in the classical pattern. Also, as Goodwin pointed out, even the classical construction could be explained by supplying a governing verb expressed or understood in the context. Blass says, "a governing verb (of 'saying', *χρή, δεῖ*) can readily be supplied everywhere in the New Testament passages (which was not the case with the old imperatival inf.)"³⁰ He would limit the NT examples to Rom 12:14 and Phil 3:16. It is my judgment that all these so-called imperatival infinitives should be considered elliptical and assigned to the complementary or indirect discourse categories already presented.³¹

Limiting Infinitives

An infinitive often is used with nouns, adjectives, and pronouns to limit, describe, or explain them by adding some qualifying or restrictive factor. An example is found in Rev 5:9, 12: Ἄξιός εἰ λαβεῖν τὸ βιβλίον καὶ ἀνοῖξαι τὰς σφραγίδας αὐτοῦ, . . . Ἄξιός . .

²⁸ Ibid., p. 324.

²⁹ Acts 15:23; 23:26; Rom 12:15 (twice); Eph 4:23 (twice); 4:24; Phil 3:16; 2 Thess 3:14; Tit 2:9; Jas 1:1.

³⁰ BDF, 196.

³¹ Compare a similar problem and solution of the so-called imperatival participle discussed in my previous article, "The Classification of Participles: A Statistical Study," *GTJ* 5 (1984) 163-79.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Words Which Govern or Are Limited by Infinitives

Nouns	Adjectives	Verbs	Periphrastic Verb Phrases
ἀνάγκη (7)	ἀναγκαῖον (4) ἄξιος (11)	ἀναγκάζω (10) ἄξιόω (3)	ἔχειν ἀνάγκην
ἀρχή (1)		ἄρχομαι (92)	ἀρχὴν λαβεῖν
βουλή (1)		βούλομαι (39)	ἔθεντα βουλήν
γνώμη (1)		γινώσκω (2)	
		δεῖ (120)	δέον ἐστίν
δύναμις (1)	δυνατός (10)	δύναμαι (213)	
ἐλπίς (3)		ἐλπίζω (13)	
ἐνέδρα (1)		ἐνεδρεύω (1)	ἐνέδραν ποιοῦντες
ἐνέργεια (1)		ἐνεργέω (2)	
ἐντολή (1)		ἐντέλλομαι (4)	ἐντολὴν ἔχειν
ἐξουσία (25)		ἔξεστιν (29)	ἐξουσίαν ἔχειν or δίδοναι, ἔξον ἐστίν, ἔξον [ἐστίν]
ἐπαγγελία (2)		ἐπαγγέλλω (2)	
ἐπιτομία (1)		ἐπιποθέω (4)	ἐπιποθίαν ἔχειν
	ἔτοιμος (8)	ἐτοιμάζω (I)	ἐτοίμως ἔχειν, ἐν ἐτοιμῳ ἔχειν
		εὐκαιρέω (3)	
εὐκαιρία (1)		θέλω (130)	
θέλημα (1)			
	ὀκνηρόν (1)	ὀκνέω (1)	
ὀφειλέτης (2)		ὀφείλω (27)	
παρρησία (1)		παρρησιάζω (1)	παρρησίαν ἔχειν
πίστις (1)		πιστεῦω (2)	
		πρέπει (11)	πρέπον ἐστίν
προθυμία (1)	πρόθυμον (I)		
σπουδή (1)		σπουδάζω (1)	σπουδὴν ποιούμενος
ροῖου<meno>j			
χάρις (2)		χαρίζομαι (3)	
χρεία (9)			χρείαν ἔχειν
χρόνος (1)		χρονίζω (1)	

λαβεῖν τὴν δύναμιν καὶ ... κ.τ.λ. / '(the Lamb) is worthy to take the book and to open its seals. . . worthy to receive power, etc.' The infinitives explain in what respect worthiness is ascribed. Some grammarians use the term 'epexegetic' for this usage.

The nouns or adjectives used in this construction are very commonly those which are in the semantic range of verbs which customarily take the complementary infinitive (those which denote ability, fitness, readiness, need, desire, etc.). Table 2 gives a comparative listing of words which govern or are limited by infinitives.

Infinitives Limiting Nouns

The largest category of these limiting infinitives occurs with nouns (88 instances). An example is found in 1 Cor 9:4: μὴ οὐκ

ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν φαγεῖν καὶ πεῖν / 'Do we not have a right to eat and drink?' The noun ἐξουσίαν is explained by referring it to eating and drinking. Nouns limited thus by infinitives express either (1) 'power, ability, authority' (ἐξουσία [25], δύναμις [1]); (2) 'desire' (θέλημα [1], ἐπιποθία [1], προθυμία [1]); (3) 'need, obligation' (χρεῖα [9], ἀνάγκη [5], ὀφειλέτης [2]); (4) 'time' (καιρός [6], ἡμέρα [3], ὥρα [1], εὐκαιρία [1], χρόνος [1]); and (5) a miscellaneous list of 31 others. The infinitive has the genitive article 14 times, the accusative once; the article is absent 73 times.

Infinitives Limiting Adjectives

The infinitive limits an adjective 43 times. An example is in 2 Tim 2:2: οἵτινες ἱκανοὶ ἔσονται καὶ ἐτέρους διδάξαι / 'who will be able to teach others also'. Applying the classifications used before for nouns, these adjectives express (1) 'power, ability, authority' (δυνατός [8], ἱκανός [6], ἄρκετός [1]); (2) 'desire' (ἔτοιμος and ἐτοίμως [8], πρόθυμον [1]); (3) 'need, obligation' (ἀναγκαῖον [1]); (4) 'time' (βραδύς [2], ὀξύς [1], ταχύς [1]); (5) miscellaneous (ἀδίκος [1], δυσερμήνευτος [1], ἐλεύθερος [1]); and a new category, (6) 'fitness' (ἄξιος [11]). Two of the infinitives have the genitive article, two the accusative, and 39 are anarthrous.

Infinitives Limiting Pronouns

The limiting or describing function of the infinitive is seen when it stands in apposition to a pronoun. Jas 1:27 has two examples of this: θρησκεία καθαρὰ ... αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐπισκέπεσθαι ... τηρεῖν / 'This is . . . pure religion, to visit, . . . and to keep'. The pronoun explained by this construction is usually the demonstrative οὗτος (15 times).³² The interrogative τις is predicate after an infinitive subject eight times, although six of the examples are found in one statement reported in three parallel passages.³³ Twice an infinitive stands in apposition to the relative pronoun ὃς or, perhaps more precisely, to the understood antecedent of the relative. The two passages are Acts 3:18: ὁ δὲ θεὸς ᾧ προκατήγγειλεν ... παθεῖν τὸν Χριστὸν αὐτοῦ / 'the things which God announced beforehand, . . . that His Christ should suffer' (in a more direct sentence the infinitive would be the object in direct discourse) and Titus 2:2: Σὺ δὲ λάλει ᾧ πρέπει τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ. Πρεσβύτεας νηφαλίους εἶναι, κ. τ. λ. / 'Speak

³² Acts 15:29; 26:16; Rom 1:12; 14:13; 1 Cor 7:37; 2 Cor 2:1; 7:11; 1 Thess 4:3, 4, 6 (twice); Heb 9:8; Jas 1:27 (twice); 1 Pet 2:15.

³³ Matt 9:5 (twice); Mark 2:9 (twice); Luke 5:23 (twice). The other two are Mark 9:10 and 1 Cor 5:12.

the things which are fitting for sound doctrine, older men are to be temperate, etc.' (the infinitive clause expresses that which is *πρέπει*; in more direct structure this could be stated, "it is fitting to be temperate, etc.").

Other Appositional Infinitives

A few other infinitives have been classified as appositional. In Acts 24:15, *ἀνάστασιν μέλλειν ἔσεσθαι* stands in apposition to *ἐλπίδα*: 'hope. . . that there is going to be a resurrection'. In I Cor 7:25 *ὡς . . . πιστὸς εἶναι* / 'as . . . one who is trustworthy' stands in apposition to the subject of the main verb *δίδωμι*, as *ὥς* would indicate. In Rev 2:14 the two infinitives *φαγεῖν . . . καὶ πορνεῦσαι* are in apposition with *σκάνδαλον*, explaining its constituent parts. Rev 12:7 is a difficult sentence, but the infinitive is most easily explained as being in apposition to *πόλεμος*: "there was war in heaven, Michael. . . waging war with. . ."

The Infinitive as a Simple Noun

In two passages an articular infinitive stands as the object of a preposition in a structure exactly like those already described (articular infinitives with a preposition), but in neither case can these be considered such. Rather, the infinitive seems to be functioning as a simple noun. In 2 Cor 8:11 (*ἐκ τοῦ ἔχειν*), the preposition is one which is not used elsewhere in that construction. *Ἐκ τοῦ ἔχειν* states the source from which the completion of the act should come, 'by your ability' (*NASB*), 'according to your means' (*NIV*), or 'out of that which you have' (*KJV*--probably clearest; certainly the most literal). In Heb 2:15 (*διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν*), the situation is similar. While *διὰ* is used in the adverbial construction in the sense of 'because' (with an accusative), it never is so used in the sense of 'through' (with a genitive). In this passage another factor needs to be considered. This infinitive *ζῆν* is the only one in the entire NT which has an adjectival modifier, *παντός*. There is evidence that this particular infinitive became in actual use a virtual noun (like *ζωή*) to the extent that in Ignatius frequently it was modified by an adjective and even a genitive.³⁴

THE "SUBJECT" OF THE INFINITIVE

The quotation marks in this heading indicate that the term "subject" is being used in a way which needs an explanation. It is

³⁴ A. Buttman, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1891) 262.

customary for elementary grammars to say that the subject of an infinitive is in the accusative case. This gross oversimplification of the matter may be a helpful, generalized first step for beginners, but it soon demands qualification and even correction. One of the major goals for this study has been a clarification of this rather confusing problem.

A thorough discussion of the question may be found in Robertson.³⁵ He insists that "the inf. is not finite, and, like the participle, has no subject."³⁶ With regard to the so-called accusative subject, he considers "the true nature of the acc. with the inf. as being merely that of general reference."³⁷ To the present writer this seems to be technically correct. The infinitive is a verbal noun, a noun expressing the abstract notion of the verb, a name given to the action or condition expressed by the verb. As such it does not need to identify a doer of the action or a possessor of the condition; if it is desired to indicate such, it appears as a limiting adjunct rather than a subject. The accusative of general reference, if used, limits the abstract notion to its particular application.

But this is not the whole picture. In most occurrences the infinitive is referred by the context to a particular doer or possessor of that abstract verbal notion, and most frequently it is not accusative. In almost one-half of the NT infinitives (48.8%), it is referred to the subject of the governing verb which is in the nominative case. The noun to which an infinitive refers is accusative in 33.1 % of the cases, dative in 8.9%, genitive in 3.0%, and vocative in 0.2% of the cases. In 2.5% of the cases, the doer is not explicitly mentioned in the sentence and cannot be identified by case. Those which are truly general or abstract account for 3.6%.

Furthermore, a distinction needs to be made between the "grammatical subject" and the "logical, subject" of the infinitive, that is, the doer or possessor of the verbal idea expressed by an infinitive. Technically, with Robertson, there is no "grammatical subject." Those who speak of the accusative as subject probably have in mind that most commonly, if an explicit "subject" is stated within the infinitive clause, it is accusative.

In translating infinitives it is common to convert them into clauses; in many instances they cannot be translated into English in any other way. That necessitates changing the infinitive into a finite verb and giving a subject to that verb. In the remainder of this discussion I will be using the term "subject" in the sense of the logical

³⁵ Robertson. *Grammar*. 1082-85.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1082.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1083.

subject, the doer of the action of the possessor of the condition expressed by the infinitive. How this subject relates to the rest of the sentence is the basis of the analysis given here.

Same as Subject of the Governing Verb

This is the situation with more than half of the infinitives in the NT. It is most frequently in the nominative case (1115 times), whether expressed as a noun, pronoun, other substantive, or simply by the as personal ending of the verb. However, if the governing verb is a participle (which like the infinitive is not finite and has no grammatical subject), the grammatical case of the doer of the action of the participle is determined by the word with which the participle agrees and therefore may be any case. An example of a genitive is in Luke 21:28: ἀρχομένων δὲ τούτων γίνεσθαι / 'when these things begin to come to pass'. The subject of γίνεσθαι is the same as that of its governing verb ἀρχομένων; the subject of ἀρχομένων is the substantive it modifies, τούτων, which is genitive because it is in a genitive absolute construction (this is the situation in 23 examples). The participle may be a genitive as object of a preposition (7 times), as a possessive genitive a (5), or as the genitive object of ἀκούω (1). Another passage involving a two infinitives is elliptical so that it is difficult to account for the genitive case.³⁸ There are 13 instances of the participle being dative because it is an indirect object (7), a predicate dative of possession (in doxologies) (4), an object of a verb taking the dative (1), or a dative I of reference (1). For example, I Pet 4:5 has οἱ ἀποδώσουσιν λόγον τῷ ἐτοιμῶς ἔχοντι κρῖναι / 'they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge'. The subject of κρῖναι is the same as its governing verb ἔχοντι which is in the dative as indirect object of ἀποδώσουσιν. There are 40 infinitives whose subject is accusative, the same as its governing verb (17 are participles and 23 are other infinitives).

Same as Direct Object of Main Verb

A large number (79) of infinitives have as their subjects an accusative direct object of the main verb. An example is found in Matt 28:20: διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα / 'teaching them to observe all that'. Αὐτούς may be considered to be the direct object of διδάσκοντες, "teaching them" (cf. Matt 5:2), or as the subject of the verbal idea in τηρεῖν, "teaching that they should keep. . . ." It is not always easy to decide which is intended, but it probably is of little significance either way. In two other instances, where the finite verb takes a genitive object, the subject of the infinitive is genitive.

³⁸ 1 Tim 4:3 (twice).

Same as Indirect Object of Main Verb

More frequent (171 times) is a similar co-functioning of a noun as a dative of indirect object or dative of reference and as the subject of an infinitive. For example, Matt 3:7 reads, *τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς* / 'who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' The dative pronoun *ὑμῖν* functions in the main clause as indirect object of the verb. It is also subject, the doer of the action, of the infinitive *φυγεῖν*.³⁹

There are many indicators, however, which warn against putting the dative on a par with the accusative as subject of the infinitive. First, there are many places where this co-functioning dative occurs where other elements of the infinitive clause show that the writer thinks of the subject as accusative. For example, in Matt 18:8 is found, *καλὸν σοί ἐστὶν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν ζωὴν κυλλὸν ἢ χωλόν, ἢ δύο χεῖρας ἢ δύο πόδας ἔχοντα* / 'it is better for you (dative) to enter life crippled or lame (accusative), than having (acc.) two hands'. While *σοί* is properly dative in the main clause, in the infinitive clause adjectives and participles referring to the same person are accusative, as if to agree with *σέ*. Apparently there was an underlying sense that called for the accusative, but the abbreviated actual statement permitted the co-functioning. Note that the same structure is used again in v 9, and cf. the parallel passages, Mark 9:43, 45, 47 where *σέ* is used in place of *σοί*. The difference, if any, seems to be between "it is good for you to . . ." and "it is good that you should. . . ." This co-functioning dative with participial modifiers in the accusative is found also in Luke 5:7, Acts 20:35, and Acts 25:27. Mark 6:39 has *καὶ ἐπέταξεν αὐτοῖς ἀνακλῖναι πάντα* / 'And he commanded them all to recline'. The indirect object *αὐτοῖς* is immediately adjacent to the accusative subject *πάντας* ('them [dative] all [accusative]'); Acts 17:30 is similar. In 1 Tim 6:18 the predicate complement of the infinitive is accusative even though the subject referred to is present in a co-functioning dative. Gal 2:6 (cf. v 9) is similar, except that a co-functioning genitive is used.

Second, this co-functioning is not limited to the dative. It has already been seen with the accusative direct object. It occurs also with the genitive.⁴⁰ Even the nominative could be labelled as co-functioning,

³⁹ This construction has been studied by E. J. Lovelady, "Infinitive Clause Syntax in the Gospels" (Th.M. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1976) 134-40. One quotation will express the thrust of his conclusion: "The dative word or construction in question is serving *en portmanteau*, for it co-functions, for practical purposes, both on the main finite clause level, and on the more restricted infinitive clause level" (p. 137).

⁴⁰ E.g., Acts 19:16. The subject of the infinitive is expressed in the main clause as genitive object of a preposition (*κατ' αὐτῶν*).

for half of all infinitives show the subject of the main verb co-functioning as the subject of the infinitive. Here also there are indications that an understood subject accusative is in the background. Usually (34 times) when the infinitive is a predicative verb followed by a subjective complement, that complement is put in the nominative case if the subject, as subject of the governing verb, is nominative. But there are two instances where the accusative is used.⁴¹ When the nominative subject is explicitly repeated as reflexive object of the governing verb (Heb 5:5) it is put in the accusative case.

Third, occasionally when the subject of the infinitive is the same as some other part of the sentence it is repeated explicitly as an accusative adjunct of the infinitive. An example of this is found in 2 Cor 2:13: οὐκ ἔχῃκα ἄνεσιν τῷ πνεύματί μου τῷ μὴ εὑρεῖν με Τίτον / 'I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there' (*NIV*). The subject of both the main verb and the infinitive is Paul, nominative as subject of ἔσχῃκα, but repeated as an accusative me in the infinitive clause.

Fourth, even where the subject is abstract or general (see below) and is not mentioned anywhere in the text, it may be modified by a participle in the accusative case.⁴²

Same as Some Other Part of the Sentence

A few times (21) the subject of the infinitive is referred to in other parts of the sentence. There are four instances where those addressed directly in the vocative case are the doers of the action of the infinitive. Once a nominative substantival participle and once a substantive clause introduced by ὅτι and functioning as subject of the sentence (hence, the clause is nominative) are subject of the infinitive. The subject of the infinitive is genitive 30 times (genitive of possession [23 times], genitive object of a preposition [6 times], and a partitive genitive [1 time]). In 20 instances it is expressed by a word in a dative relation to the sentence, (predicate dative of possession [9 times], dative of reference [9 times], dative of advantage [1 time], and dative object of a preposition [1 time]). There are five examples where the subject is accusative as the object of a preposition.

Subject Explicitly Expressed in the Infinitive Clause

A very large number (608) of infinitives have their subject explicitly stated within the infinitive clause, either as a noun (228 times)

⁴¹ Luke 11:8, Acts 18:3. Both are articular infinitives after a preposition.

⁴² E.g., 1 Pet 2: 15. The subject is general-it is true of anyone. But it is modified in the infinitive clause by an accusative adverbial participle ἀγαθοποιοῦντες.

or pronoun (380 times) or some other substantival expression (7 times). The case is always accusative.⁴³ Apparently this is the basis for the prevalent notion that the infinitive takes an accusative subject. It seems to be true when the subject is specifically included as part of the infinitive clause.

Subject Unexpressed; to be Supplied from Context

In 58 instances there is no mention anywhere in the sentence of the doer of the action of the infinitive, but from the general context this subject can be understood. Since it is not part of the sentence its case is undetermined.

Subject is Abstract, General or Indefinite

In 82 instances the subject of the infinitive is best considered to be abstract, general, or indefinite. It applies to any or all; there is no specific doer or possessor involved. Matt 9:5 offers an example: τί γάρ ἐστιν εὐκοπώτερον, εἰπεῖν ... ἢ εἰπεῖν / 'For which is easier, to say. . . or to say'. The one doing the saying is not in mind, it is true whoever says it. Matt 12:12 reads, ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασι καλῶς ποιεῖν / 'it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath'. Compare also Mark 12:33, Jas 1:27.

Indeed, Robertson insists (as has already been pointed out) that this is true of all infinitives by their nature as abstract nouns and this abstract quality is referenced to particular cases by the accusative of general reference. But this seems to ignore the majority of instances where a particular "subject" is present to the minds of the readers in other parts of the sentence. It is not true that all infinitives which do not have an accusative of reference are to be considered abstract and general.

Summary

The following statements will summarize the conclusions of this study regarding the subject of the infinitive. Most frequently the subject is the same as that of the governing verb; hence, in the nominative case except when the governing verb is a participle--then it may be in any case. Very often the subject of the infinitive co-functions in a grammatical relation to some other part of the sentence, such as direct or indirect object, object of preposition, a substantive participle

⁴³ Clyde W. Votaw ("The Use of the Infinitive in Biblical Greek" [Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1896] 58) states, "When the subject of the infinitive is expressed it is always in the accusative case."

TABLE 3
Cases Used as “Subject” of Infinitives

	Easily Under- stood	General or Indefinite	Nom.	Gen.	Dat.	Acc.	Voc.	Total
Subject Same as Governing Verb			1115	38	13	40		1206
Same as Direct Object				2		79		81
Same as Indirect Object					171			171
Same as Some Other Part of Sentence			2	30	20	5	4	61
Explicit in Infinitive Clause						632		632
Not Expressed	58	82						140
Total	58 2.5%	82 3.6%	1117 48.8%	70 3.0%	204 8.9%	756 33.0%	4 0.2%	2291

or adjective, a possessive construction, etc. This co-functioning results in the subject being in any of the cases. When the subject is expressly stated as an adjunct of the infinitive it is always in the accusative case. The accusative also must be understood to be present to the mind even when the subject co-functions with some other non-accusative element of the sentence. These conclusions are summarized statistically in Table 3.

ANARTHROUS VERSUS ARTICULAR INFINITIVES

In the NT the infinitive is anarthrous 1977 times (86.3%). The article appears with it 314 times (13.7%). The reasons for this and the significance of it have been the subject of discussion among grammarians (with most of the discussion long in theory and short in substance). This presentation will attempt to summarize the situation in three negative observations and a positive but general suggestion.

Not for Case Identification

The use of the article does not seem to be for the purpose of identifying the case of the non-declinable abstract infinitive, although it does that incidentally at least part of the time. In the vast majority of instances there is no article, and no reason is apparent why these are not just as much in need of case identification as those where it is present. Even when the article is present it does not distinguish between the nominative and accusative (τό serves for both). But this is particularly demonstrated by the genitive article (τοῦ) with the

infinitive, which is. used for every case function; with subject infinitives which are nominative, with purpose infinitives which are closest to the original dative-instrumental case, and with the accusative infinitive as object of verbs, as well as with some which stand in a properly genitive relationship. J. H. Moulton speaks of the τοῦ as ". . . retaining its genitive force almost as little as the genitive absolute."⁴⁴

Not for Function Indicators

The case of the article does not seem to be related to the classification of infinitive functions.⁴⁵ Every classification except one shows both articular and anarthrous constructions. The one exception, the adverbial use of the infinitive with prepositions, does seem to be characterized by demanding the article, although even one of these is anarthrous.⁴⁶ The article does identify which meaning of the preposition is intended when the preposition can use more than one case. For example, διὰ τό indicates that διά means 'on account of' rather than 'through'. But apparently this is not the reason for its use, since it is used even where the preposition has only one case.

Not for Case Relationships

We have already seen that the genitive article is used with some subject infinitives. Object infinitives have an article only 27 times; 11 are accusative as would be expected, but 16 are genitive, not one of which goes with a verb which normally takes the genitive.⁴⁷ With purpose and result infinitives 41 genitive and one accusative articles are found; none of them use the dative which might be expected. Even with the limiting or epexegetic infinitive the article does not indicate the case relation which exists between the noun or adjective and the infinitive construed with it. The vast majority are anarthrous, and when the article is used it is usually the ambiguous τοῦ. The same

⁴⁴ James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. I, *Prolegomena* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908) 216.

⁴⁵ A. T. Robertson (*Grammar*, 1063) says, "The articular inf. has all the main uses of the anarthrous inf."

⁴⁶ πρίν is not strictly a preposition; it is a temporal adverb which takes the infinitive in this construction. It is used only twice elsewhere in the NT with finite verbs when the sentence is negative. This does not, however, explain the absence of the article; cf. ἕως, which also is a temporal adverb, and uses the article with the infinitive in this construction. See above and n. 26.

⁴⁷ In Rom 15:22 ἐγκόπτω / 'to hinder from' is followed by the genitive infinitive, which seems a natural case for this meaning although there are no other examples of its use with this verb. In 2 Cor 1:8 a genitive infinitive follows the verb ἐξαπορέω as it does elsewhere, although not in the NT.

adjective may be followed by τοῦ (Luke 24:25: βραδεῖς . . . τοῦ πιστεύειν) and τό (Jas 1:19: βραδὺς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι). The noun ἐξουσία is explained by an infinitive 25 times; only once does the infinitive have the article τοῦ, but there is no clear difference in sense. Nouns expressing time have the epexegetic infinitive 12 times, five with τοῦ and seven anarthrous, apparently with no discernible case distinction.

Perhaps the Same as with Nouns

The significance of the article with infinitives, if there is any, apparently must be sought in other directions. Robertson says that "The article has just the effect that the Greek Article has with any abstract substantive, that of distinction and contrast."⁴⁸ He explains varied uses of τοῦ as stylistic, "It is only in Luke (Gospels 24, Acts 24) and Paul (13) that *the* with the inf. (without preposition) is common. They have five-sixths of the examples and Luke himself has two-thirds of the total in the New Testament."⁴⁹ Blass-Debrunner says; "The article with the infinitive, strictly speaking, has the same (anaphoric) significance as it has with nouns. . . . In general the anaphoric significance of the article, i.e., its reference to something previously mentioned or otherwise well known, is more or less evident."⁵⁰ Such statements are general enough to sound impressive but vague enough to provide little help in particular instances. For practical purposes the situation may be summarized in a couple suggestions. In the vast majority of cases no question need be asked; the 86% of the anarthrous infinitives clearly are the normal situation. The 14% with the article seem to be very like those without; perhaps it is worthwhile exploring a general indication of contrast or specific references. But perhaps, as Robertson comments, it is a matter of style or personal whim. Or, may I suggest, it may be simply a grammatical idiom--almost half of the infinitives with the article belong to a grammatical construction (object of a preposition) which apparently required it. The use of the article with infinitives is summarized in Table 4.

A FURTHER STUDY PROPOSED

This article may fittingly close with a suggestion for another very interesting and it is believed very instructive field of study related to the NT usage of the infinitive--a statistical study of word order patterns. Someone familiar with the techniques of tagmemic grammar

⁴⁸ Robertson, *Grammar*, 1065.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1067.

⁵⁰ BDF, 205.

TABLE 4
Use of Article with Infinitives

	Anarthrous	Nom.	Gen.	Dat.	Acc.	Total
I. Subject Infinitives						
Impersonal Verbs	202		1			203
Predicative Verbs	75	10	2		1	88
Other Verbs		3				3
Passive Verbs	20	2				22
2. Object Infinitives						
Complementary	876		8		8	892
Indirect Discourse	353		8		1	362
Other	1				2	3
3. Adverbial Infinitives						
Purpose or Result	291		41		1	333
With Prepositions	11		12	56	131	210
Causal				1		1
4. Absolute Infinitives						
Infinitive Absolute	1					1
Imperative (?)	11					11
5. Limiting Infinitives						
With Nouns	73		14		1	88
With Adjectives	40		2			42
With Pronouns	18	1			5	24
Apposition	5		1			6
6. Simple Nouns			2			2
Totals	1977	16	91	57	150	2291

could explore the whole problem of word order within the infinitive clause--of such elements as subject, object, predicate complement, adverbial modifiers, and other adjuncts along with the infinitive itself, and of the whole infinitive clause within the sentence framework. Perhaps insights of exegetical significance may be discovered; certainly more confidence regarding the language patterns of NT Greek would be the product. An important beginning in this direction has already been made by Dr. Lovelady, "Infinitive Clause Syntax in the Gospels" (Th.M. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1976). It needs to be completed with the assistance now available from the computer.

The use of a *ἵνα*-clause as a substitute for the infinitive will be dealt with in this writer's next proposed article: "A Statistical Study of the Subjunctive."

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