THE CASE FOR CASE REVISITED

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In his recent article in this journal, "What Case is This Case? An Application of Semantic Case in Biblical Exegesis,"[1] Simon Wong makes a valiant and insightful case for Case Theory as found in the work of the well-known modern linguist Charles J. Fillmore.[2] In this brief paper, I do not attempt to offer a thorough analysis of case (although my own perspective will emerge),[3] but I wish to raise several questions regarding Wong's model and propose that an analysis he rejects along with the traditional model—one that makes a useful linkage between form and function—still has much to offer in the study of the Greek cases. I wish to thank the editors of the journal for making this opportunity available to further discussion of a very important topic with far-ranging implications for understanding and exegesis of the Greek of the New Testament, something for which Dr Wong and I share important concerns.

One of the major problems with discussing cases in Greek is that the word "case" may be defined and used in a variety of ways. On the

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[1] S. Wong, "What Case is This Case? An Application of Semantic Case in Biblical Exegesis," *Jian Dao* 1 (1994), 49-73.

[2] C. J. Fillmore, "The Case for Case," in *Universals in Linguistic Theory,* ed. E. Bach and R.T. Harms (London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 1-88; "The Case for Case Reopened," in *Syntax and Semantics.* VIII. *Grammatical Relations*, ed. P. Cole and J. M. Sadock (New York: Academic, 1977), 59-81.

[3] See S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (Biblical Languages: Greek 2; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 80-100, for my view of case, to which I will refer below.

one hand, it is often used to refer to the declensional forms of nouns, adjectives, etc., found in inflectional or fused languages (some might even wish to refer to Greek as a fused inflectional language, since the inflectional morphemes are fused to the stem of the word).[4] Thus Greek is often spoken of as an inflectional language with five cases: nominative, accusative, genitive, dative and vocative (we will return to this ordering below), although the vocative is clearly not a case like the others (it does not enter into the same kinds of grammatical relations).[5] On the other hand, another use of the word "case" is in terms of various recent proposals that can conveniently be labeled case theories, in that they attempt to describe fundamental categories of meaningful relations in languages. Wong is clearly dependent upon the work of Fillmore, although there are other case theorists he uses as well.[6] In the first framework mentioned above, case is a morphological category, that is, it refers to various paradigmatic groupings of Greek forms. In the second framework, case is a semantic category, concerned to define meaningful relations. Immediately, one sees that there is potential ambiguity in the use of the word "case." When one speaks of case, is one speaking of morphology or meaning, or both? And what is the relationship between the two?

In and of themselves these two categories of case morphology and case semantics need not be a cause for concern, however. If one were explicit every time one used the terms confusion could be minimized. However, as the use of the common terminology indicates, there seems to be some kind of relationship between the two. Wong is correct to point out that throughout the history of Greek grammatical discussion there have been various attempts to define the meanings of the inflectional case forms, not all of them consistent. The traditional theory has been the so-called localist theory, in which various literal spatial categories have been equated with each of the morphological cases and extended

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[4]B. J. Blake, *Case* (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 20.

[5]See Porter, *Idioms*, 87-88; Blake, *Case*, 9.

[6]See, for example, W. L. Chafe, *Meaning and the Structure of Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); W. A. Cook, *Case Grammar: Development of the Matrix Model 1970-1978* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1979); R. E. Longacre, *An Anatomy of Speech Notions* (Lisse: Peter de Ridder, 1976); cf. also J. M. Anderson, *The Grammar of Case: Towards a Localist Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); *On Case Grammar* (London: Croom Helm, 1977).

to include the various uses of the particular form. Wong's major criticism of the traditional theory is that these figurative extensions seem to show significant overextension, making it difficult to find the original image in the extended definition.[7] A second criticism of this and other traditional attempts at defining the cases is that various criteria are sometimes applied to the individual cases, and are further applied to defining the cases in relation to each other. The nominative case (if it is defined at all)[8] may be defined in terms of its grammatical relations, for example, as subject, while the genitive case may be defined in terms of semantics, such as indicating possession. Some grammarians never even bother to define the cases but simply list individual usages.[9]

Wong's frustration with previous attempts to define the Greek cases seems to focus on the issue that no consistent or simple definition of individual cases can be found, and that many of the various definitions seem haunted by what he calls the "ghost of historicism."[10] With regard to the second of his points of exasperation, although he does not explicate what he means by "ghost of historicism" it appears that he is accusing traditional Greek grammarians of engaging in diachronic analysis and definition of the cases (although the examples that he cites of the use of localist theory do not necessarily indicate this). Although one of the hallmarks of modern linguistic study has been that synchronic analysis takes precedence, ever since Meillet diachronic or historical analysis has had its place in linguistic analysis, and has had a resurgence of importance, especially in the study of what has been called grammaticalization or grammaticization. Grammaticalization can be defined as "the process whereby lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions, and, once grammaticalized, continue to develop new grammatical functions."[11] We need not explore this subject in more detail here, except to note that one tendency in diachronic development is relevant for the discussion of case. That pattern involves two tendencies, the first is for periphrastic or phrasal forms to coalesce and become morphological or single unit

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[7]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 49-50; Porter, *Idioms*, 80.

[8]Blake, *Case*, 32.

[9]See Porter, *Idioms*, 80-81.

[10]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 50.

[11]P. J. Hopper and E. C. Traugott, *Grammaticalization* (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), xv.

forms and the second is for periphrastic forms then to replace morphological forms, a process called renewal.[12] This has special significance in analyzing the relation between the inflectional case forms and prepositions in prepositional phrases. With regard to Wong's first frustration, although his concern is a legitimate one in that one desires meaningful and useful linguistic categories for exegetical analysis, complexity is not necessarily a fault, and it waits to be seen whether the model he proposes is more useful.

In his formulation of the problem, it appears that Wong himself has fallen victim to a certain amount of ambiguity regarding the word "case." For example, his stated intention is to utilize what he calls "the semantic function of each case in language communication."[13] Is he referring here to the morphological cases of Greek (e.g. nominative, accusative, etc.), or to a set of cases that are semantically defined and have application to Greek (and what would the relationship between semantics and inflected forms be?), or to a set of universal cases that exist apart from any particular language (in which case, what would their relationship be to Greek?). Although Wong claims that Case Theory is a "more consistent"[14] model, it is unclear what this means in terms of Greek, when he speaks of the benefits of the model as a "more universal description of various semantic intrapropositional relations which are then readily transferable to other languages" and in terms of its being more "helpful and indeed necessary to the discovery of the meaning of a text."[15] These purported benefits appear to function apart from and in fact independently of the formal realizations of the language being studied.[16] In the light of Fillmore's Case Theory, however, this is to be expected.

Apparently in defense of this analysis, Wong sets out three major points with regard to Fillmore's Case Theory. The first is that in the light of semantics being central, there is a finite set of "universal,

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[12]Hopper and Traugott, *Grammaticalization*, 8-9.

[13]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 50-51.

[14]Wong, "What Case in This Case?" 51.

[15]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 51.

[16]See Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 49, where he refers to Case Theory as referring to the "underlying semantic roles, independent of the surface form."

presumably innate, concepts"[17] that describe surrounding events, and these are the various cases. Secondly, there is a "clear contrast" between traditional morphologically based cases and the semantic cases, since the semantic cases can fill various surface syntactical positions. Thirdly, Wong claims to depart from Fillmore, who emphasizes the "noun" as having governance over these categories, and adopts and modifies Chafe's concept of the centrality of activity or action, especially as realized in the surface structure by the verb. With this framework in mind, Wong defines fifteen cases, which he claims to be more case roles than found in any other study.

Although Wong makes Fillmore's Case Theory look like one of the latest and most important innovations in recent linguistic theory, a more realistic estimate is that this is a theory that has already "fallen somewhat into disrepute."[18] The reasons for this are several. Fillmore's was one of the earliest of a number of similar theories originally put forward in the 1960s and 1970s that were concerned with linguistic universals. Fillmore's apparent goal was to define and describe a universal set of discrete roles.[19] His attempt was part of a discussion of language universals that has in many respects given way to a different kind of pursuit, linguistic typology. As Blake says of the efforts of Fillmore and those like him, "To establish a set of universal semantic roles is a formidable task."[20] Not only is it a formidable task, but one that seemed to take linguistic discussion further away from discussion of actual language usage and more towards a mentalism consonant with the Chomskyan model out of which some of these efforts grew (see below). Typological study, however, has a different frame of reference: "a typological study is concerned with similarities and differences between languages, and does not rest upon the assumption that there are universal (and identical) features across languages."[21] The distinction between the study of universals and typology allows for a productive distinction (one which Wong does not make by his use of the term semantic cases as opposed to syntactic cases) between what Palmer

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[17]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 51, citing Fillmore, "Case for Case," 24.

[18]Blake, *Case*, 75.

[19]Blake, *Case*, 67.

[20]Blake, *Case*, 67.

[21]F. R. Palmer, *Grammatical Roles and Relations* (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1.

calls notional roles and grammatical ones. He puts schemes such as those of Fillmore into the category of defining notional roles, where "In purely notional terms, it is possible to identify a large number of roles that are played by the terms of a predication."[22] For the discussion of the kinds of relations that one actually finds within languages, and in a terminology that allows productive typological comparison, Palmer utilizes a distinction between grammatical roles, that is, the semantic roles that a particular grammatical structure may play such as Agent, Patient, Beneficiary, and grammatical relations, that is, the kinds of relations established by grammatical structures, such as subject, object, instrument. The kind of confusion that Wong falls victim to in his use of Fillmore's concept of notional roles could be avoided, at least in part, by abandoning the attempt to find universals and confining discussion to typologically comparable categories that are at least in the first instance language specific. As Palmer says of grammatical roles, "like all typological categories, [they] are defined both in terms of language-specific grammatical features and, across languages, by similarity in meaning."[23] Whereas Wong defines his notional roles consonant with Fillmore's model, and gives examples from Greek that he claims illustrate these notional roles, he never makes the vital distinction between notional roles and other relations, and never clearly establishes a relationship between grammatical roles and grammatical relations, especially in a way specific to Greek. This is due in some part to the lack of a category of grammatical roles in Wong's scheme and in larger part to the failure to define semantic categories in terms of the structures of the language. This link would appear to be vital, especially when an ancient language is being analyzed.

Problems with the notional roles themselves have been widely acknowledged, and can be recounted here briefly.[24] The first is that these notional features cannot be defined in a sufficiently precise way and therefore they cannot be applied in a way that is unambiguous. For example, in Wong's analysis of Agent, at one point he states that "It is important for the analyst not to transport information from the immediate context into the verse." He cites Jonah 1.4a and b, where he claims that

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[22]Palmer, *Grammatical Roles*, 4.

[23]Palmer, *Grammatical Roles*, 4.

[24]The following criticisms are given in Palmer, *Grammatical Roles*, 5, and Blake, *Case*, 67-68.

the Agent is the "violent storm" and not the Lord, but in another example, Acts 12.23, he insists that "eaten by worms" is only the instrument and not the agent of Herod's death, with the angel of the Lord the agent, referred to two clauses above.[25] In discussing the difference between Experiencer and Agent, Wong admits in a footnote that

> By definition, the one who arouses emotion of this kind [one of the definitions of Experiencer] can also be interpreted as Agent, just as in verbs of knowing and learning; however what should be taken as a guideline is whether the particular semantic component which gives such a connotation of a certain case is *marked* or not. Sometimes the notion of markedness is based on the analyst's personal interpretation, and different analysts may analyze the notion of *markedness* differently.[26]

This does not seem to be a serious improvement on the theories that Wong rejects, and for several reasons. First is his apparent rejection of anything larger than immediate context, second is the failure to define precise, transferable categories, and third is his lack of analytical criteria grounded in the features of the Greek text.

The second criticism of notional roles is that it is always possible to make more distinctions in their number.[27] Wong's claim that he has made more case distinctions than any other that he knows raises a number of questions regarding the basis for making such distinctions. In his explication of his cases, Wong states that one of the reasons for the larger number is "to avoid overloading the content (i.e. definition) of each case,"[28] something he had accused the traditional grammarians of doing when they discussed cases. As a result, he accepts the definitions offered by other case theorists, although he also alters terminology. One indicative apparent anomaly is that he specifies three different locales, Source, Goal and Path, which he admits are sub-cases of the case Locative. This raises a question regarding the status of these various notional roles, not only how they are differentiated but their status in relation to each other (he differentiates another set of secondary cases). When Wong actually defines and exemplifies his categories, however, even with fifteen categories he must include sub-categories or sub-

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[25]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 66.

[26]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 67 n. 53.

[27]Palmer, *Grammatical Roles*, 5; Blake, *Case*, 71-72.

[28]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 55.

definitions, some of them apparently contradictory. For example, when he defines Agent, Wong states that "two features, *animate* and *intentionally* are crucial to this definition."[29]   But then he states that natural forces can be considered Agents, since a first-century person would have thought of them as deities (even though other case theorists have a separate case of Force for these kinds of entities). In a language such as Greek where prepositions are available, the situation is made even more complex. The question must be raised of how many notional distinctions are really needed, since each of these prepositions is capable of expressing distinctions that could in theory become independent notions.[30]

The third criticism of notional roles is that they are not truly notional since they are often at least in part based on grammatical distinctions and thus are not entirely consistent.[31]   For example, Wong defines Range as "any surface structure noun which completes the predicate by specifying the information which is complementary to the predicate,"[32] which is a syntactically and not semantically based definition. The same could be said of Reference, which is defined in terms of "a kind of nominal complement."[33]

A final criticism may be raised regarding the relationship of Case Theory to various kinds of formalist, mentalist or generative theory (there are elements of each and do not need to be differentiated here) from which Case Theory seems to be derived. Its origins in a generative theory concerned with determining deep structures are clear in Fillmore's writings, and these are perpetuated by Wong. He wants to limit the sentences for analysis to basic structures without a larger context. Furthermore, he wants to speak not of the verb but of the concept of the action that underlies the individual images in the memory, and of the cognizance of this activity that motives the speaker to use a class of verb which selects what surface realization is found in the surface structure.[34] This is not the place to enter into a full-scale critique of

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[29]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 66.

[30]See Blake, *Case*, 72.

[31]Palmer, *Grammatical Roles*, 5.

[32]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 68.

[33]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 70.

[34]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 54.

such linguistic models, since these are readily available elsewhere. I simply wish to point out that my own research indicates that functional linguistic models, especially those concerned with larger linguistic units than the single clause out of context and those that pay more attention to surface structure before attempting to find the deep structure, are far more useful for the description of ancient languages, where the only available linguistic evidence is the formal features of texts. In fact, the useful concepts of grammatical roles and grammatical relations have already been well utilized in functional linguistics[35] without being encumbered with the baggage of mentalism and generative grammar found in Case Theory.

It is clear from what I have said above that I remain unconvinced that Case Theory as defined by Wong in terms of Fillmore and others is the way forward in analysis of the use and meaning of inflectional cases in Greek. In Wong's analysis the notional roles take clear precedence, with the notional role (apparently conflated with semantic or grammatical roles) generating the surface structure, the two of which are independent of each other. I need not say anything more about the limitations of the concept of notional roles, but even if we adopt the framework of grammatical roles and relations, there must be a close relation between the two that does not neglect the formal features of the language. This is clearly illustrated by the following Greek example, a simple sentence like one that might be encountered in almost any Greek text: ἡ γυνὴ φιλεῖ τὸν ἄνδρα. As I understand Wong's theory, it would be impossible from this limited context to determine the notional roles played by these two participants in this structure, since there is no necessary correlation between notional roles and grammatical relations. A shift away from the preeminence of unsubstantiated notional roles, and a useful distinction between formally marked grammatical roles and grammatical relations would seem to be the best way forward in discussing the cases. By these criteria, one could legitimately conclude that the subject is "the woman" and the object is "the man," no matter what roles one assigns to these grammatical relations (agent and beneficiary?). This is in fact what Wong's teacher, J. P. Louw, attempted to do in his article, "Linguistic Theory and the Greek Case System,"[36]

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[35]See, for example, M. A. K. Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (London: Edward Arnold, 1985), 32ff., and *passim*.

[36]J. P. Louw, "Linguistic Theory and the Greek Case System," *Acta Classica* 9 (1966),

whose analysis Wong must reject, although he does not do so explicitly, and whose framework I have used in my *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*.[37]

Palmer suggests what I consider a proper relationship among the categories of roles and relations that can help to define a workable model to discuss the Greek cases.[38] The first is that notional roles must be seen as the realization of the grammatical roles, which shifts the emphasis to beginning with the phenomena of the language itself rather than a set of unprincipled universals. The second is that grammatical marking is specific to a given language, and grammatical roles are in the first instance determined for a given language by their grammatical marking. However, they may be able to be compared typologically across languages in terms of notional roles. The third is that grammatical roles, since they are defined by their grammatical form within a specific language, can be clearly identified and are finite in number, both within the given language and also typologically. The fourth is that notional and grammatical categories seldom if ever have a one to one correlation. Grammatical roles can be indicated in a variety of ways, and one of them is through the use of inflectional cases, such as Greek uses.[39]

Although one of the problems in dealing with the Greek case system is in terms of distinguishing the forms of the cases (since e.g. there is syncretism of certain forms), the major issues relate to meaning.[40] In terms of what these inflectional cases may mean, it appears that there are at least two kinds of meaning. One is the kind of meaning indicated by the case marking itself (sometimes called synthetic case marking), and the other is the kind of meaning that is indicated by other means, such as the immediate syntax or co-text including the use of prepositions (sometimes called analytic case marking),[41] and even the larger context.[42] With regard to typology, Greek is consonant with a number of languages that have prepositions that normally are used to make

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[37]Porter, *Idioms*, 82 and *passim.*

[38]Palmer, *Grammatical Roles*, 5-6.

[39]Palmer, *Grammatical Roles*, 8.

[40]See Blake, *Case*, 20.

[41]See Blake, *Case*, 9-10.

[42]See Porter, *Idioms*, 82; Louw, "Linguistic Theory," 75-78.

finer distinctions than the inflectional system can make on its own.[43]
Whereas the traditional means of distinguishing the meaning of the
cases is to describe their various functions,

> There is another approach in which cases are seen as a system, each one having a
> single, general meaning. These general meanings are not self-sufficient; one cannot
> predict from the generalised meaning to the set of contexts in which a case can be
> used. However, generalised meanings, or at least generalised characterisations,
> can form the basis for a componential analysis of case which enables one to
> capture similarities between sets of cases.[44]

As opposed to the methods of such grammarians as Winer, Brugmann,
Blass and Debrunner, Moulton, Robertson, Dana and Mantey, and Brooks
and Winbery, this method merits further attention in the light of its
endorsement in recent linguistic thought as a viable method of analysis
of the cases.[45] Without necessarily excluding the place of notional
roles in analysis, it would seem that there is still a case to be made for
this apparently more traditional though also apparently linguistically
informed understanding of case.

This is not the place to re-iterate what I have said elsewhere in
outlining this proposal regarding case, but there are several particular
problems that Wong raises regarding this kind of analysis, and it is
perhaps wise to address several of them here. First, in a footnote in
which he cites me quoting Louw, Wong claims that my description of
the fundamental or foundational character of the nominative case is not
clear.[46] He introduces the idea that I might be referring to the nominative
case being the oldest or most persistent, although he cites Aristotle and
Robertson who purportedly claim that the nominative is not even a case
and the accusative is the oldest one. There are two issues here. The first
is a red herring that Wong has drawn across the argument. His introduction
of the issue of which is the oldest or most persistent case is extraneous
to my argument, as is Aristotle's or Robertson's theory. What I do say
is quite different than Wong seems to imply that I say:

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[43]Blake, *Case*, 11; Porter, *Idioms*, 140; Louw, "Linguistic Theory," 82.

[44]Blake, *Case*, 47.

[45]See Porter, *Idioms*, 80ff., for a critique of the grammarians noted above and an attempt to
analyze the cases of Greek in this way; and Louw, "Linguistic Theory," 78-87.

[46]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 59 n. 41.

> The Greek case system can be arranged hierarchically as well [besides in relation to formal meaning, syntax and context], indicating particular internal relations among the cases. Recent research indicates that the nominative case is the fundamental or foundational case in the Greek case system. The so-called oblique cases (accusative, genitive and dative) are to be distinguished from the nominative case. But the oblique cases maintain a set of relations as well. The accusative case is the foundational case of these three, followed by the genitive and then dative cases.[47]

My argument, rather than being historical, is concerned with the hierarchy of semantic relations of the cases (note that I use the word foundational for the accusative case as well, although in the context of the hierarchy of the oblique cases).[48] In so far as this correlates with other research in the typology of cases, Greek is consistent with other four case languages in displaying a hierarchy that moves from nominative to accusative to genitive to dative, with the first the most restricted in use and the last the most diverse. This kind of hierarchy seems to put more emphasis on subjects and objects than on peripheral grammatical relations, such as location or instrument, which like other lower related relations often use prepositions rather than simple inflected forms.[49] Greek follows this pattern as well.

A similar distinction between the nominative and oblique cases has recently been reiterated by Blake in his analysis of cases. Showing that historical knowledge is not necessarily detrimental to meaning, he states,

> One of the distinctions that goes back to the Greeks is that between the nominative and the other cases, collectively the oblique cases .... The term nominative ... means 'naming'; the nominative is the case used outside constructions, the case used in isolation, the case used in naming .... Indo-European case languages are unusual in having a marked nominative in most paradigms. In chapter 2 of *Peri hermeneias* Aristotle declared that only the nominative is a noun, the other forms being cases of nouns.[50]

After citing several attempts to define the nominative case, Blake concludes that "Behind all these views lies the notion that the nominative simply denotes an entity not a relation between an entity and a predicate."

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[47]Porter, *Idioms*, 82, with footnote reference to Louw, A. C. Moorhouse and A. Kenny.

[48]Porter, *Idioms*, 88.

[49]See Blake, *Case*, 157-62.

[50]Blake, *Case*, 31.

Of the nominative, he states, "It is true that it has fewer functions and is used in a smaller range of syntactic contexts than any of the oblique cases.... In sum, the nominative is the case used in isolation and is usually morphologically unmarked. It is the case in which the subject is normally encoded ... and since the subject is characteristically associated with the topic of a sentence, there is an association of nominative and topic."[51]

My own statement, published two years earlier, is very similar, and shows that analysis of a particular language such as New Testament Greek can have application to language typology. After offering a number of opinions on the nominative case, including one that sees it as "the 'unmarked' or purely nominal case, in other words, as the case that simply designates," I state that

> This is similar to seeing the nominative case as the naming case, but without the implication of specificity. The semantic designation of the nominative case as purely nominal circumscribes the fundamental meaning which allows the various syntactical and contextual configurations in which it is used. These include its frequent use as subject or as an independent clause, as well as other independent uses.[52]

Concerning the accusative case, after citing Moorhouse's description of it as the "oblique case *par excellence*,"[53] I state that "Like the nominative case, which simply expresses the nominal idea, the accusative case in syntactically restricted (oblique) contexts expresses an idea without defining it. This fundamental meaning accounts for its several syntactical and contextual uses."[54] This description, and the descriptions of the other cases, is followed by discussion of various uses of the individual cases. Although Wong resists this kind of formulation, it is a regular occurrence in case usage across a number of languages. The fact that a single case is able to express a number of different functions is what Blake calls "complementary distribution": "The functions can usually be distinguished by the choice of governor or the choice of lexical item

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[51]Blake, *Case*, 32.

[52]Porter, *Idioms*, 83-84.

[53]A. C. Moorhouse, "The Role of the Accusative Case," in *In the Steps of R. Kühner*, ed. A. Rijksbaron, H. A. Mulder and G. C. Wakker (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1988), 209.

[54]Porter, *Idioms*, 88.

bearing the case."[55] Case distinctions in Greek can be made along these lines.[56]

Secondly, in his lengthy discussion of the genitive case, Wong makes some telling observations. The first is that he distinguishes between what he calls adnominal and adverbal usage, that is, whether the genitive element is in relation to a noun or noun-like word or a verb or verb-like word.[57] This is a standard distinction to make in discussing cases, although it is not always one that leads to significant insights. Wong then spends some time analyzing the adnominal usages according to four standard grammars (Blass and Debrunner, Robertson, Turner and Porter). Whereas Blake's conclusion regarding the subjective and objective genitives is that the distinction can only be "done on the basis of extra-linguistic knowledge,"[58] Wong tries to create a more objective set of analyses. He contrasts what he labels as entity propositions and activity propositions, that is, propositions that either identify an entity (often with a copula verb implied) or consist of a single activity.[59] But scrutiny of individual examples does not confirm the lucidity or clarity of this distinction. For example, although Wong takes Rom 2.4 τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ to mean "the kindness of God," he equates this with "God is good." Although this uses a copulative verb (as an entity should, in Wong's scheme), the sense has been changed from attribution to equation, and may well be argued to reflect not entity but activity ("God is good" means that God acts justly, righteously, compassionately, etc.). More problematic is the phrase in Rom 2.4 πλοῦτος τῆς χρηστότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀνοχῆς (the riches of his kindness and patience), which Wong equates with "he is very kind and patient." Rather than entities, these appear to be activities. At least this phrase appears to be on the same order as τὸ βάπτισμα τοῦ Ἰωάννου(similar but not identical phrasing in Matt 21.25; Mark 11.30; Luke 20.4; Acts 19.3), which Wong translates as "the baptism of John" = "John baptized people" (= "John the Baptist"?). In all three examples one acts in a certain way. In any event, whether one accepts my categorizations or not, the entire enterprise of classification raises the question of how one decides the

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[55]Blake, *Case*, 36. See also his discussion of the "notion of a generalised meaning."

[56]See Porter, *Idioms*, 83ff.

[57]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 61-62.

[58]Blake, *Case*, 99.

[59]Wong, "What Case is This Case?" 56.

meanings of the individual cases. Whereas Wong has proposed that his method begins with the underlying notional role, which may be manifested in various surface forms, his procedure appears otherwise. It appears that his system is no more objective or free from ambiguity than a more traditional method, and that it inevitably must consider if not begin with the actual phenomena of language, in this instance the inflectional cases themselves.

Whereas Wong has painted with a broad brush in his attempt to distinguish his Case Theory from what he characterizes as traditional approaches, I have attempted to clarify these issues in several ways. First, I hope to have shown that Case Theory introduces a number of unresolved issues into the discussion, and does not offer the clear way forward that its advocates have claimed. Confusion over terminology and conceptualization, as well as its overt eschewing of surface structure, renders it less than useful when dealing with a language such as the Greek of the New Testament. Secondly, I hope that it has become clear that not all approaches other than Case Theory can be lumped together. Traditional methods that have not been methodologically astute or linguistically informed, despite occasional insights, do not present a coordinated framework for further discussion of the cases. As the recent work of Blake shows as well as my *Idioms*, however, an approach that begins with inflectional cases and attempts to define grammatical relations and grammatical roles in language-specific terms, with an eye towards linguistic typology, may well serve as a useful starting point for further discussion of the Greek case system.

ABSTRACT

In a recent article of *Jian Dao* (issue 1), Simon Wong has made a case for semantic Case Theory as applied to the Greek of the New Testament. This response raises necessary questions regarding the applicability of Case Theory to Greek, in the light of recent work in modern linguistics. Issues raised include the principles of functional versus formal grammars, the relationship between notional roles and grammatical roles, and the place of hierarchy in discussion of cases, among others.

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　　《建道學刊》創刊號曾登載一篇由黃錫木撰寫的專文，內容討論「語意格」理論在新約希臘文中的應用。本文乃根據現代語言學近期的著作回應其文章，並提出若干在應用上必須注意的問題，例如：功能及規範文法的原則，表意及文法作用之間的關係，等級體系在「格」討論中的位置等。