Accordance Bible Software 10: Essential Collection.

Altamonte Springs, FL: OakTree Software, Inc., 2014.

$499.99.

Nick Norelli
Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
New Jersey

INTRODUCTION

In the world of Bible study software there are really only three programs that vie for the exegete's attention: Accordance, BibleWorks, and Logos. Other programs exist but none are as powerful or useful as these three. Until recently I owned Windows machines so I had only used Logos and BibleWorks and came to know and love them both. I had heard great things about Accordance for years but never had occasion to use the program other than a short lived test run with a stripped down version of Accordance 8 running on the Basilisk II emulator. That was a horrible experience. The program performed poorly (very slow) and the user interface seemed clunky. I did however note at the time that I was "quite sure that running the latest version of Accordance on a Mac is infinitely better."

So now I'm a Mac user and I wanted to see if Accordance could live up to all the hype I'd been hearing for the better part of the last decade. I contacted the fine folks at Accordance Bible Software and after a series of email exchanges they decided to take a chance on me and let me use their software in exchange for this review. In the interest of full disclosure I'd note that I've had the program for less than three months so I haven't come close to exploring all of its features but I've familiarized myself with enough to be able to offer up some preliminary thoughts. This review, then, is a work in progress; probably the first in a series of reviews as I continue to explore and discover what Accordance can do.
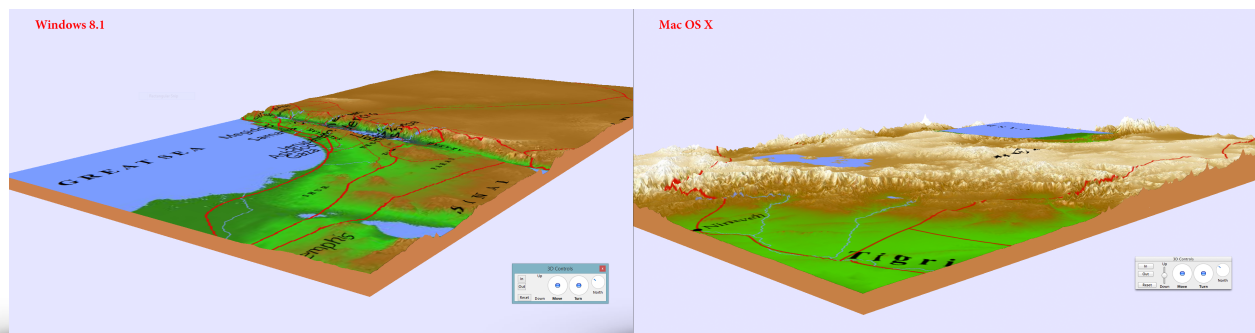
INSTALLATION

The first thing to mention is that Accordance 10 is available to run natively on both Mac OS X and Windows (XP & later). This is a welcome development! Accordance users are licensed to install the program on up to 5 machines so I've opted to install it on my Retina MacBook Pro running OS X Mavericks; my Toshiba Satellite Pro running Windows Vista; and just for kicks and giggles on Windows 8.1, which I run on the MacBook via Parallels. I have also downloaded the Accordance app to my iPad Air.

The installation process was fastest in Mavericks. The Windows 8.1 installation was also quick and easy. No problem on either front. I did, however, have a problem installing the program on my Toshiba running Vista. To be fair, the installation wasn't the issue, but downloading the Essential Collection once the program was installed gave me fits. I attempted the download several times with no success. I uninstalled and reinstalled Accordance multiple times to no avail. The resource download would freeze up every time. I concluded that my machine was simply not powerful enough to handle the operation and contented myself to simply use it on my MacBook. But I'm persistent by nature so I gave it another shot and it worked the last time!

MAC AND WINDOWS

My initial plan was to simply use Accordance on a Mac. It was an added bonus to learn that I'd be able to install it on Windows as well. Using the full program on OS X is indeed infinitely better than the free trial version run on the Basilisk II emulator, but I can honestly say the same about running it natively on Windows! The interface is slightly different between the OS X and Windows versions but the functionality is pretty much the same. I had read that the 3D Atlas did not work in Windows but this doesn't seem to be the case; it works just fine although I think the controls are a bit smoother and the maps look a little better in OS X.
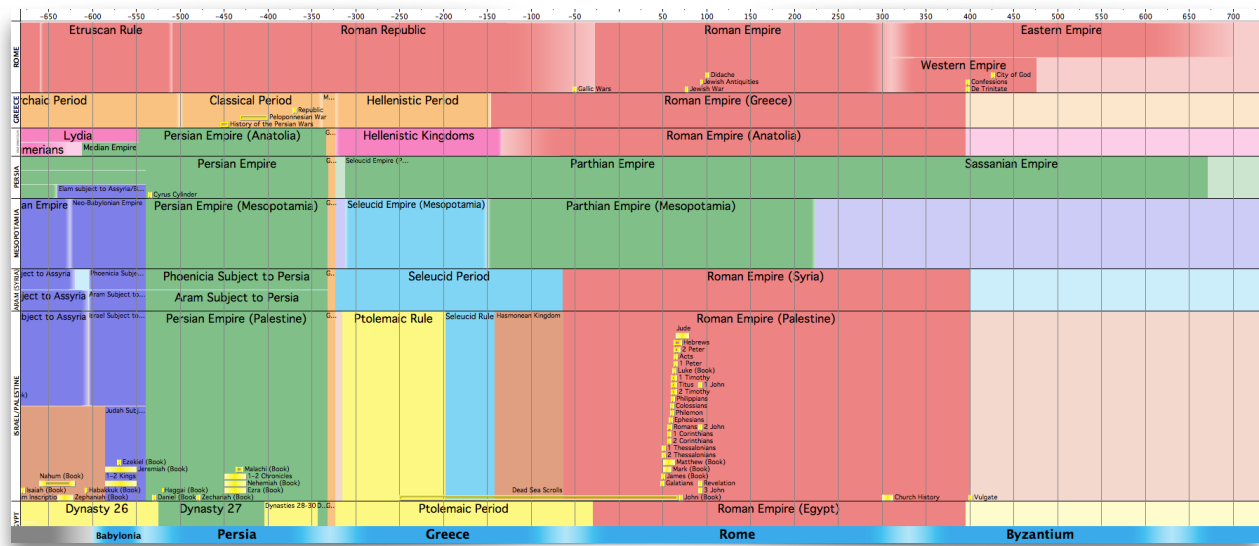
RESOURCES

Interested readers can follow this link to see a complete description of all the resources included in the collection, which number in the hundreds. For my purposes the most important resources are the biblical texts, which are numerous but not superfluous. The most popular modern English translations are included (e.g., NIV, ESV, NLT, NRSV) along with old standbys like the Geneva Bible, KJV, and ASV to name a few. I was most pleased to see Robert Mounce's wonderful translation of the NT included among the bunch, even if it is called by the unfortunate title of "Mounce Reverse-Interlinear NT." It is, of course, the translation that the elder Mounce provided for *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament*, but the translation itself is far from being a "reverse interlinear."

The non-English translations are sparse but smartly chosen. The 1909 Reina-Valera is the Spanish translation of choice although the 1960 edition would have been preferable. The Geneva Bible Society's 1951 edition of Franz Eugen Schlachter's German translation is included, which is nice, but having the Luther Bible available as well would have been better. It is however available to add on as a standalone module or as a part of the International Bibles package. We have the 1994 Nuova Riveduta Italian translation and the 1979 Edition de Genève French translation as options as well.

But it's the primary language texts that likely occupy most of the exegete's time. We have access to a tagged version of the Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia, which is basically the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia without the critical apparatus. Those doing text critical work in the Hebrew Bible can get a hold of the tagged BHS with apparatus if they really need it. The Rahlfs-Hanhart edition of the Septuagint is included sans apparatus along with an additional LXX module for books that have two separate versions (e.g., portions of Joshua; Judges; Daniel; etc.). And while not a primary text, I'm happy to have the New English Translation of the Septuagint in this package; it's a marked improvement over Brenton's translation, which comes stock as well.

Four editions of the Greek New Testament are available (well, five if you count the Textus Receptus twice since they have a version tagged with Strong's numbers and one without). Constantin von Tischendorf's version; B. F. Westcott & F. J. A. Hort's; and the latest edition of the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece (NA28) are all included and morphologically tagged. As with the Hebrew Bible or even the Septuagint, those engaged in textual criticism can purchase the critical apparatuses if need be. I was surprised to that no edition of the Latin Vulgate is included. In a resource heavy collection such as this, this is an odd omission indeed.
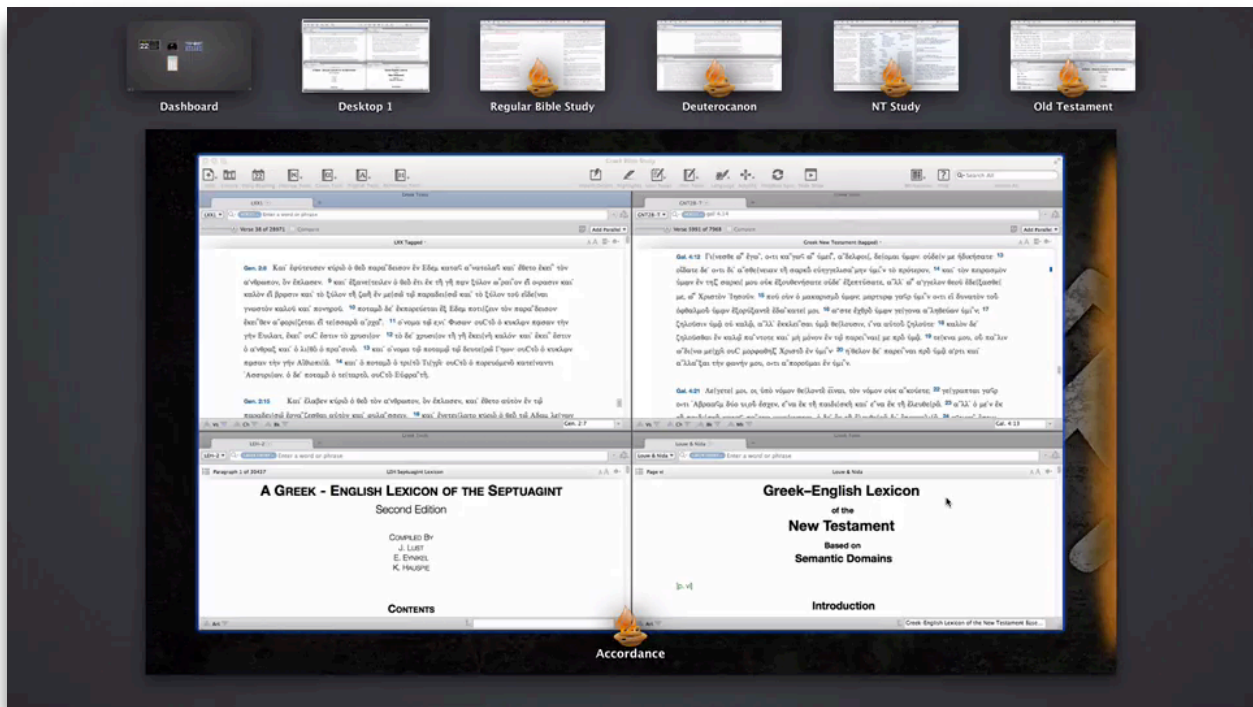
There are a ton of reference materials to include Bible translation notes, lexicons, grammars, commentaries, and monographs. The parallel collections (Epistles [both Pauline and Catholic]; Gospels; Harmony; Old Testament; OT in NT; Q; Synoptics) are especially helpful And to this we can also add devotional material and nice visual tools like the biblical history Timeline (pictured in part below), which has more features than I can possibly mention, although I will note that it can be set to show the biblical books that correspond to a particular time period, or even viewed according to "critical" and "conservative" dates. The 3D Atlas (pictured above) is quite useful and comes with a number of visual filters to enhance the viewing experience. All of these resources leave the user in a great position to do solid sermon or lesson prep.
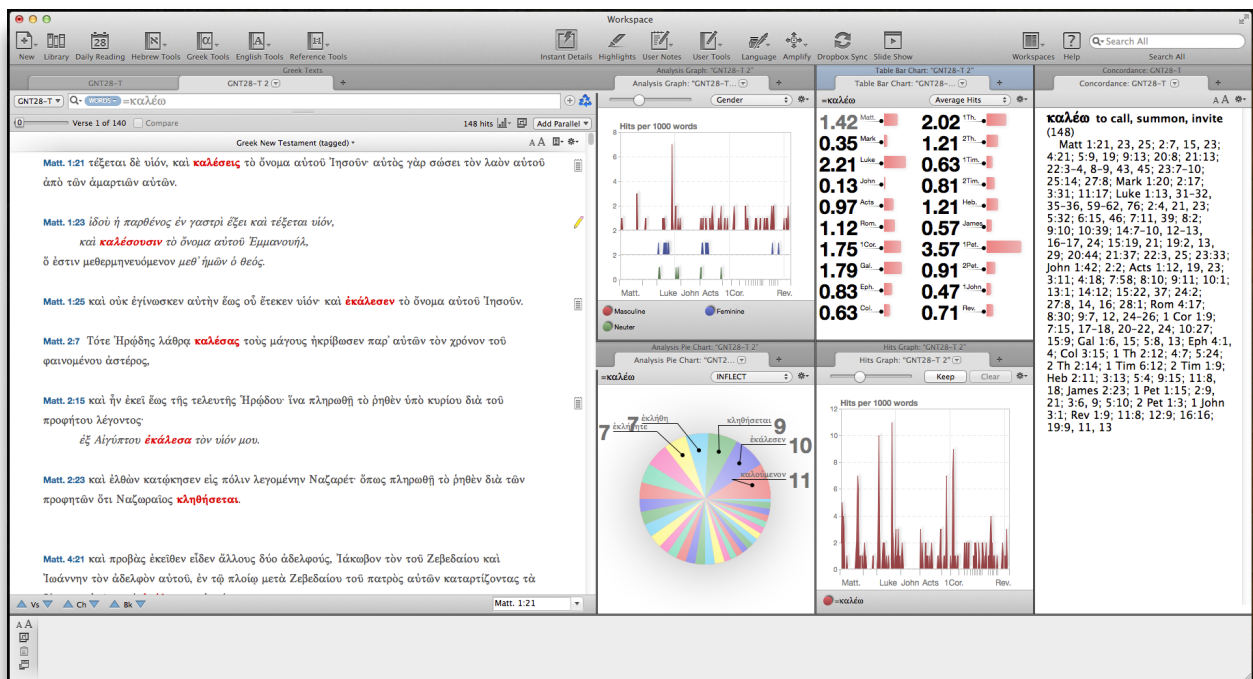

FEATURES

But what's better than simply having so many resources at your fingertips is the variety of ways that you can customize Accordance to your specifications in order to make use of them. The user is able to do this by creating various workspaces that can be saved and recalled for use at will. The benefits of this feature are immeasurable. If I'm doing some research in the Old Testament I can open my Old Testament workspace and make use of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, a couple of English translations, some Hebrew & Greek lexicons and pretty much any other resources I have at my disposal.
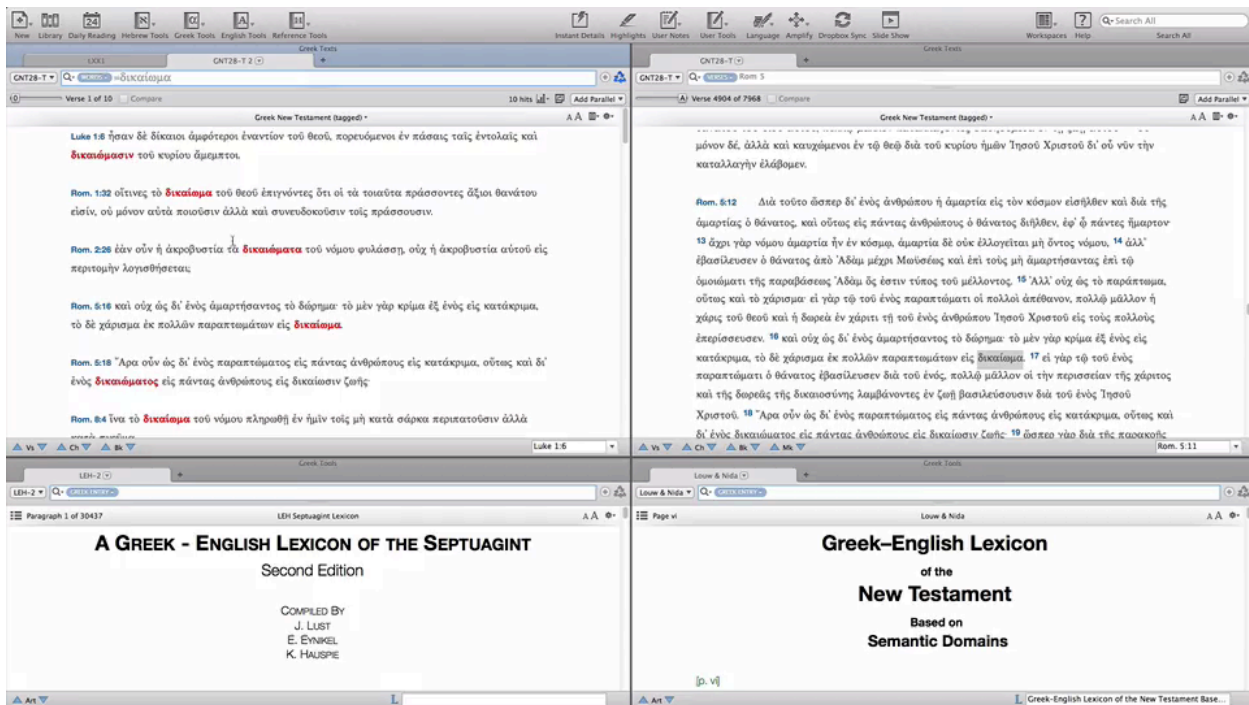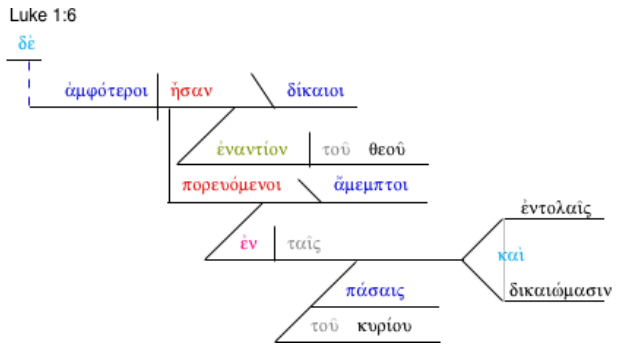
But if my research shifts to the New Testament or Deuterocanon (aka Apocrypha) then I don't have to reconfigure my Old Testament workspace; I can simply switch to the workspaces I've already set up. One of the great benefits of using Accordance on a MacBook Pro is that I can have multiple workspaces opened and switch between them with a simple trackpad gesture (swiping left or right with three fingers). Mac Pro and iMac users can do the same with a Bluetooth Apple Magic Trackpad (which I am currently using with my MacBook Pro in clamshell mode).

Aside from seemingly infinite workspace flexibility, Accordance is fast and powerful. It starts up in a matter of seconds and once opened its able to run even the most complicated searches in fractions of a second. Once searches are returned the user can then view a number of different statistical analyses, to include bar, pie, and table charts; hits graphs; an analysis of how many times a particular word is used and in which contexts; and more! There is more information available than most users will ever need, and I might add that most of these features have additional features built into them!

Another wonderful feature I've toyed with a bit is the diagramming. Below you'll see a brief video of diagramming in action (the text is Luke 1:6), which upon playing with the program more extensively I've learned could have been done differently (and to my mind better and more efficiently). Nevertheless, however one goes about creating their diagrams, this is a great tool for discourse analysis and following the flow of the text.

GLITCHES AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Aside from the collection download issue, which I still haven't been able to account for, I had a technical issue with the way that Greek text was displaying in OS X. You can see from the comparison below that the text displayed correctly in Windows Vista and 8.1 but not in OS X. I contacted technical support with an email and was met with a speedy response. I followed the instructions without success and after a couple of emails the tech asked if I was available for a Skype call where we could do a screen share. Unfortunately we weren't able to make that happen but after mentioning the problem on Twitter I was given two suggestions from an Accordance representative. The first was to download the font fixer. I had tried that already and it didn't work. The other was to delete the Helena font, which worked beautifully!

Matt. 1:1 Βι{βλὃ γενε{σεῶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υιοῦ Δαυῐ̈δ υι̦οῦ ¨Αβραα̂μ. **OS X (Incorrect)**	**Matt. 1:1** Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ. **Windows 8.1**
Matt. 1:1 Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ. **OS X (Correct)**	**Matt. 1:1** Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ. **Windows Vista**

MOBILE APPLICATION

As I mentioned earlier, I have the Accordance app downloaded to my iPad Air, and if I'm honest, I'm not a huge fan. There's nothing really special about it as it seems quite plain. It's also not very intuitive. As it stands I find myself always turning to Logos' mobile app over and against any other option. Not much more to say on this front. Perhaps with time and more use I'll come to appreciate the iPad app more than I do presently, but it's going to be tough to find the desire to continue to use it. No worries though, I tend to use my tablets for reading the Bible more than for doing advanced study.

GUIDED INSTRUCTION

The last thing I'd like to comment on is Accordance's various means of guided instruction. Their **Webinar Archive** contains a number of training sessions where instructors show users how to use Accordance to its full potential. I haven't been able to watch any of these sessions in full but I've glanced at no less than three of them and they've all been extremely helpful. I'm looking forward to watching them all and really getting the hang of some of the more technical and tricky aspects of the software. There is also the "Lighting the Lamp" podcast, which is really just a bunch of miniature webinars. They also do free training seminars around the country throughout the year. All in all, Accordance wants its users to be informed, and they're doing everything possible to make sure that happens.

CONCLUSION

Is Accordance 10 the most powerful Bible study software on the market? I'm not the one to answer that but I can say that it's more powerful than anything anyone will ever need. Just about everything that Accordance does, it does extremely well. Dropping hundreds of dollars on any program can be daunting, but you really get your money's worth with the Accordance 10

Essential Collection. If I had one complaint it would be that users are not given a custom install option where they can select which resources in particular they'd like and which ones they wouldn't. As it stands, I have more resources than I need, and a good many will never get used. But this is really just a case of there being an embarrassment of riches.