Book Reviews


The Book of Psalms has a special place in the Bible. It has more than once been called a Bible in miniature. All the great themes of the Old Testament (OT) have their place in the Psalms: creation and redemption, the expectation of the coming Messiah, the longing for Zion, the desire that Zion will be rebuilt. In the Psalms, we find laments, confessions of guilt, but also thanksgivings and praises. The Psalms are given us by God both as a directory of worship and as a prayer book. When we worship God, we ought to give a special place to the Psalms in both individual and corporate worship. Our prayers ought to be full of the words and phrases of the Psalms.

As well as having a special place in the Bible itself, the Book of Psalms has also had a special place in the life of the church over the centuries. As Protestant Christians, we reject the phenomenon of monasticism, but we cannot object to the custom that in the monasteries the Psalms were prayed daily; praying through the whole book of Psalms just in a week or a month. Psalm 51 was prayed daily. Luther, the great sixteenth-century Reformer, was originally an Augustinian friar. Towards the end of his life, it was his habit, just as he had done when he was a friar, to pray the Psalms daily.

Many commentaries have been written on the Psalms over the centuries. It can only be to our spiritual disadvantage if we neglect the great treasures to be found in commentaries, tractates and sermons penned in former ages. Even leaving aside other aspects, it is theologically that the old material very often surpasses contemporary commentaries. In particular, when commenting on psalm, the depth or shallowness of one’s own Christian experience will influence the way in which he interprets the psalm. More than once, the contemporary Christian reader will find cause enough for lament over his own shallowness when comparing his own theological insight on a psalm with that of a commentator from the past.

In the postmodern era, the notion has arisen that each biblical scholar
and exegete reads Scripture by operating from the perspective of a certain tradition. This has denied the stance of the Enlightenment that one can read the Bible in a purely neutral way: even what has heretofore been regarded as neutral study of the Scripture must now, it is asserted, be seen as standing within a given tradition. In this climate, fresh attention has been paid to commentary given in past centuries upon the text of the Bible. We can see this as gain. Chronological snobbery, as C. S. Lewis called it, must actually be considered a very serious shortcoming; certainly from a Christian perspective but also from an academic one.

Our great reservation on postmodernism must be regarding its denial that the Scriptures have any fixed or objective meaning. The assertion of such meaning must be something we hold to firmly, while acknowledging that we can never fully grasp it. Nevertheless, it is also true that each exegete has his own limitations and interests. This makes it especially useful for us to listen to voices from other ages. But how can the Christian easily find the most relevant insights of former ages? In 2010, Bruce K. Waltke and James M. Houston wrote *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). In 2014, the same authors, together with Erika Moore, wrote *The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary*. This volume has the same format as the former one, but now the authors concentrate on the Psalms of Lament, as the title indicates.

There are four rubrics or templates applied to each selected Psalm. In the first rubric, we hear the voice of the church. This rubric is authored by James M. Houston, Professor Emeritus of spiritual Theology at Regent College, Vancouver. Then follows the translation, one which does full justice to the character of Hebrew poetry. The third rubric is the commentary proper. Apart from the exegetical portion on Psalm 39, which was written by Erika Moore, Professor of OT at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambrige, Pennsylvania, this central part of the treatment is written by Bruce K. Waltke, Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Regent College. Full attention is given not only to actual content but also to the literary structure of each selected psalm. In the final rubric, conclusions are given and remarks are made with regard to the abiding relevance of the psalm surpassing the original context. In the fourth rubric to Psalm 130, it is stated that this song, placed within the canon of Scripture, is based on the New Testament (NT) as enacted through the suffering and blood of Jesus Christ. In this context, a line from a hymn of Edward Mote (*My Hope is Built on Nothing*
Less) is quoted: ‘His oath, His covenant, His blood, Support me in the whelming flood. When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my Hope and Stay.’

I regard The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary, just as its predecessor The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary, as a useful introduction to help the reader see the profit of combining exegesis with all our contemporary exegetical tools and with exegesis from the past.

The Psalms as Christian Lament starts with an introduction on the place and importance of lament in the OT and especially in the Psalms. Following Calvin, the authors rightly remark that the Psalms are the mirror of the soul. More than one third of the Psalter consists of lament psalms. The predominance given to lament at the heart of Israel’s prayers shows us that there is nothing marginal about lament for the OT believer. Lament and confession are not central features of Christianity in Western society, but they were in the history of the church. In the introduction, the authors point to the penitential psalms having been selected from among the psalms of lament, even as early as by the church fathers.

I think it a shortcoming that the authors do not explicitly address in the introduction the objection not seldom heard that the Psalms can only to a limited extent express the experience of a believer living under the NT dispensation. Even without giving attention to all aspects of this question, they could have pointed to Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. When we as NT believers are filled by the Holy Spirit and the word of Christ dwells richly in us, we sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and address one another with them. We find the three Greek words used in these verses as category titles given to individual OT psalms in the Septuagint.

Without seeking to assert that Paul excluded the legitimacy of contemporary compositions of praise, since he wrote some of these partly himself in his letters, I would point out that he certainly gave a place of honor here to the OT canonical Psalms. NT compositions of praise, as we find them in the Magnificat and Benedictus (Song of Zechariah), are full of the language of the OT. We may say that the NT dispensation, even more than the Old, is a dispensation of suffering, and surely the Psalms are very apt sources for Christians to find words to express our lament when we suffer.

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David Mathewson and Elodie Emig are both professors of New Testament at Denver Seminary. Their new Intermediate Greek Grammar aims to provide up-to-date discussions of grammar debates while providing a helpful guide for students. Mathewson and Emig have written an easy-to-read grammar with many helpful points, although a couple terminological and methodological flaws limit the book’s usefulness.

Mathewson and Emig follow the traditional layout for an intermediate Greek grammar. However, their approach differs in some ways from other grammars. On the whole, they follow Porter’s Idioms of the Greek New Testament closely (xv). The authors are versed in recent linguistic studies, which they employ throughout their grammar. The authors draw on a minimalist approach to grammar. Instead of expanding the number of categories to cover each possible use of a grammatical feature, they explain the core idea(s) of a given feature (xvi). They claim this approach as the more natural way of learning a language, whether living or dead. Thus, these authors do not claim theirs is an exegetical grammar (xvi).

It would be superfluous to detail every feature of this grammar. However, it is worth noting some key features. First, Mathewson and Emig discuss tense and aspect at length (111–118). They define aspect as “the author’s perspective on an action (112, italics original).” They deny that Greek verbs indicate time and kind of action in themselves (113). They distinguish aspect and Aktionsart on p. 114, explaining that aspect is subjective, referring to the author’s portrayal of an action, whereas Aktionsart describes the nature of the action more objectively. The authors provide a chart comparing the traditional and aspectual views at the end of the chapter (139).

Second, the authors discuss the deponency debate at length (151–152). They summarize the history of the concept of deponency in Greek grammars, while they demonstrate that grammarians such as A. T. Robertson found deponency to be unsatisfactory. The authors conclude that the concept of deponency should be laid aside and that we should analyze middle-only verbs as true middles (152).

Finally, Mathewson and Emig include a section on discourse analysis.
They define discourse analysis as “nothing less than the recognition that texts are the record of an act of communication in a given context (271).” They proceed to discuss four common features of discourse analysis: cohesion, boundaries, prominence, and participants. The term **cohesion** describes the way an author uses language to bind a text together (272). The term **boundaries** describes how a language marks the end of one unit of thought and the beginning of another (275). The term **prominence** describes the way language marks more important portions of a text (277). The term **participants** refers to the agent(s) or actor(s) of a story: how they are described normally indicates what importance they have (285). Throughout this section, the authors provide New Testament examples of each discourse feature, illustrating the value of discourse grammar for reading and understanding the New Testament.

In many ways, this grammar contributes to the study of Greek. The authors’ minimalist view of language provides a helpful corrective to the multiplication of categories evident in some other intermediate grammars (e.g. Wallace). The present author found linguistic minimalism especially helpful when discussing the genitive case. The genitive case essentially restricts the meaning of its head noun (11). Following Silva, Mathewson and Emig demonstrate that the genitive relationship in Greek is similar to the English phenomenon where two nouns are placed together, the first limiting the second (e.g. research paper). By adducing several examples of this kind, the authors de-mystify the various uses of the genitive, showing that it simply restricts the referent of another noun. When we understand this point, the various nuances of the genitive become clearer in their respective contexts.

This discussion of the genitive is one example of the way the authors approach language. They do not seek to force meaning out of specific grammatical constructions as though language is an algebraic equation to be solved. Instead, they seek to understand semantics of each grammatical feature, leaving pragmatic considerations for the broader context. They warn against forcing too much precision on the language, as though language always functions in a purely logical manner. Although the present author believes that Mathewson and Emig overstate the value of minimalism (see below), they provide an admirable rejoinder to overly precise analyses of Greek grammar.

While other intermediate grammars may double as ready reference tools, this grammar maintains a pedagogical focus. Each section concludes with
practice exercises derived from the New Testament so the student may practice identifying the features just studied. Such immediate practice cements the concepts for students, enabling them to grasp and retain the material. Mathewson and Emig also include comparisons of competing views, especially regarding the verbal system (139). By including these comparisons, the authors initiate the student into the current debates. Additionally, these comparisons make older grammars accessible to the student. The authors teach their readers what terms the older grammars used and how those terms relate to current discussions, thereby allowing the student to track previous discussions of the same grammatical phenomena.

Mathewson and Emig also provide up-to-date discussions of some of the most debated features of the Greek language. They summarize the debates concerning deponency, aspect, and discourse grammar (see above). Their summaries are clear and helpful, illuminating these debates for both teachers and students.

Despite the strengths of this grammar, it falls short in a number of areas. First, the authors contradict their claim that their grammar is not an exegetical grammar (xvi) when they limit their examples to those directly helpful to New Testament exegesis (91). By limiting examples to the New Testament, the authors 1) cut themselves off from other clear examples in either the Septuagint or the Apostolic Fathers and 2) isolate New Testament Greek from its broader Hellenistic milieu. As a result, their conclusions rest on a less stable foundation than they otherwise could.

The authors also perpetuate certain category confusions common among Greek grammars. This flaw stands out because the authors seek to provide an up-to-date grammar that corrects previous errors. For instance, the authors maintain a category of “aoristic perfect” (135), although such a category combines two tenses into one. Instead, the authors could have stated that the Greek perfect and aorist began to collapse on to each other, possibly influenced by the Latin perfect. ¹ This statement would explain why the Greek perfect can sometimes convey the same sense as the aorist, and it would avoid a needless category confusion. In another case, the authors posit an “imperatival infinitive” (202). Such a category needlessly combines two “moods” into one. Not only this, but an imperative has person and number,

while an infinitive does not. Therefore, such a category confusion cannot be maintained even on the most basic grammatical grounds. The authors could instead say that 1) infinitives may stand for full sentences in indirect discourse, thus requiring an imperative translation, or 2) some infinitives are simply frozen forms due to the omission of the remainder of the sentence (e.g. “Guten Tag” in German, which is an accusative although it is the only part of a sentence which is uttered). In both of these instances, the authors default to the requirements of English translation to explain these categories, rather than maintaining a Greek perspective as they do through most of the rest of the grammar (e.g. 260ff).

In the present author’s view, the influence of Stanley Porter’s work hinders the discussions of verbal tense and aspect in this grammar. Porter’s a-temporal notion of tense and aspect dominates the discussion of the verb (113). The shortcomings of Porter’s view become clear when Mathewson and Emig discuss the future. They are forced to say that the future does encode time, but that it functions differently than the rest of the verbal system (137). This seems to be a case of special pleading. If the verbal system does not encode time by the tense system, then we have no explanation for a temporal notion suddenly appearing in such a common tense. Since the theory does not have full explanatory power, it should be modified or rejected. Recently, a collection of essays was published that interacts at length with Porter’s theory, and the essays therein address these problems in more detail.2

Finally, the authors state conflicting interpretive methodologies in the course of their work. They argue for exegetical minimalism, which has already been described in the course of this review. However, they also follow the linguistic principle that choice implies meaning. One must ask if these approaches are compatible. In other words, if choice implies meaning, does a minimalist approach work? While the authors are to be commended for not putting too much weight on non-formal category distinctions (e.g. the genitive), it does seem that the minimalist approach cannot be pressed too far. If the author can use either a genitive or dative to show possession, the author’s choice must signify a different intent. On the one hand, the authors cannot be blamed too severely for this conflict: they subscribe to a thoroughly linguistic approach to grammar, and both methods (minimalism

and “choice implies meaning”) are present in this approach. On the other hand, the authors should have done more to synthesize these approaches. This oversight stands out because of the careful pedagogical approach that characterizes so much of the rest of the grammar.

Despite its flaws, this grammar would be a helpful supplement to an intermediate Greek course at the graduate level. Its up-to-date discussions provide its readers with a helpful starting point for research projects and some of the grammatical discussions truly illuminate points of Greek grammar. The exercises in each section provide helpful entry points for students moving from beginning Greek to reading and exegesis. However, this grammar’s flaws keep the present author from recommending it as the primary text for a course.

Matthew Miller


The amount of literature published in the last ten years on the topic of Biblical studies is unparalleled throughout history. Between 2011–2014 over $54 million dollars in revenue were created through the sale of religious books (www.statista.com/statistics/251467/religious-books-sales-revenue-in-the-us/ accessed on 9/30/16). This statistic alone is indicative of the need for guidance through such a large amount of literature. John F. Evans provides this needed guidance in a book entitled, _A Guide To Biblical Commentaries and Reference Works._

Evans earned two graduate degrees in Biblical studies. Further, he has a Doctorate of Theology from the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa as well as two years of post-doctoral studies at the University of Cambridge. Moreover, Evans has served as both a pastor in the United States as well as a professor of Theology in various parts of Africa. Thus, the uniqueness of Evans’s experience as well as the extent of his education particularly qualifies him to write such a book.

The structure of the book is well suited for the pastor who desires to quickly scan through various commentaries on every book of the bible. Evans provides keen insight regarding the particular value of each
commentary. For instance, in his section on Deuteronomy he makes the following comment concerning Daniel Block’s commentary, “My advice to preachers is to make Block their first-choice, though I don’t follow him in viewing Moses’s chief role as “pastor” to the nation and not seeing in 18:15, ultimately at least, an anticipation of Christ (c.f. Acts 3:22) (97). Furthermore, Evans’s work is also helpful for the theological student and to a limited capacity even for theological professors. In addition to his discussions on commentaries, Evans gives a thorough introduction in which he provides, a methodology for his evaluation of the literature, a list of other bibliographies, as well as suggestions for background and foreign language works. In addition to this, before each section of scripture (e.g. Pentateuch, The Writings, Prophets, Gospels, Paul, etc.) he lists and interacts with key secondary sources on that particular area of biblical studies. Finally, Evans’s work is noteworthy because it provides more thorough interaction with both commentaries on the Bible and secondary literature about particular issues within biblical studies.

Evans provides a great resource for pastors, students, and professors alike. His attention to detail, careful analysis, theological insight, and pastoral application make this book an invaluable resource. I highly recommend it to all who desire to read and study the Bible.

Michael T. Graham Jr.


In Advances in The Study of Greek Constantine Campbell masterfully covers a plethora of the most relevant issues related to Greek studies. Campbell is the author of multiple books and articles and he has distinguished himself as one of the leading Greek scholars in the world today. Some of the works he has published include the following: Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament; Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs; Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek; Keep Your Greek: Strategies for Busy People; Reading Biblical Greek: A Grammar for Students. Campbell earned his Ph.D. at Macquarie University in Australia under the
guidance of T.V. Evans. His dissertation, entitled *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament*, examined the function of the indicative mood within narrative in light of current aspect studies. He now serves as associate professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deer Field, Illinois. In the book *Advances in the Study of Greek*, Campbell seeks to accomplish two things: (1) provide an accessible introduction to the current issues of interest in Greek studies and (2) clearly communicate why these issues matter (22). In this review, I will briefly summarize each chapter and then more thoroughly interact with select chapters within the monograph.

In chapter one Campbell provides a brief history of Greek studies from the beginning of the 19th century to present, giving general attention to the study of Ancient Greek, and particular attention to Biblical or Koine Greek and the rise linguistics (39–50). His primary objective of this chapter is to provide the context and background for the rest of the book (29). In chapter two Campbell discusses linguistic theories, providing a brief overview of modern linguistics, and giving special attention to generative and functional linguistics, two important linguistic schools within Greek studies (51–71). Campbell addresses lexical semantics and lexicography in the third chapter. Specifically, he seeks to highlight problems within the current system of lexicography, and to show how these tools can properly be used. Furthermore, he argues in this chapter that a better understanding of the theory of lexemes can prevent many exegetical mistakes and fallacies (72–90). The fourth chapter of Campbell’s book concerns the issue of deponency and the middle voice (91–104). His goal for this chapter is to provide the reader with a history of research so that the issue may be evaluated and the ideas assessed (91). In chapter five Campbell discusses the topic of verbal aspect and Aktionsart (105-133). His purpose for the chapter is to provide a brief overview of these topics and to highlight particular areas of development since the publication of his book, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (105-106).

Chapter six of *Advances in The Study of Greek* examines the topic of idiolect, genre and register (134–147). In this chapter Campbell argues that the way Greek differs according to genre and text type is important for exegesis (134). Moreover, he seeks to explore how idiolect, genre, and register can impact exegesis by helping scholars better understand verb usage throughout
the New Testament, particularly in reference to aspect (145–146). Chapters seven and eight survey the two most significant linguistic schools for the study of Greek in the New Testament (148–191). In chapter seven Campbell begins by briefly mentioning the four major schools of linguistics and then he focuses on the Hallidayan Approaches (150–152). Similarly, in chapter eight he briefly mentions SIL and then focuses on the two most influential proponents of this school, Steven Levinsohn and Steven Runge. Finally, chapters nine and ten addresses non-grammatical topics. In chapter nine Campbell interacts with the question of how Koine Greek was pronounced, and in chapter ten he interacts with questions related to teaching and learning Greek (192–223). He argues in chapter nine that Koine Greek was pronounced very similarly to modern Greek pronunciation (208), and in chapter ten he makes the case that immersion is the best way for students to learn and retain Greek, but if this is not possible teachers should instill in students, habits that will enable long-term retention (222).

Having briefly surveyed each chapter, I will now focus on select chapters in order to provide some semblance of the breadth of this work. In chapter 1, Campbell’s stated goal is to provide a survey of key figures within the history of Greek studies which are instrumental for the discussions provided throughout the remainder of the book (30). Campbell identifies four key shifts in Greek studies: The pre-Winer period, the early Twentieth century, the rise of modern linguistics, and the Modern Era. The pre-Winer period is marked by weak methodology, a faulty understanding of the nature of language, and self-contradiction (30). Campbell shows that beginning with Winer and ending with Friedrich Blass and Ernest de Witt Burton Greek scholarship saw significant advancement in methodology, philology, verbal aspect theory, comparative grammar, and a proto awareness of the distinction between historical and synchronic analyses of language, and the importance of what would later be referred to as Aktionsart (30-32).

Another chapter that will be given special attention is the second chapter of Campbell’s book. In this chapter, he surveys the various linguistic theories, but as stated above, he focuses on generative and functional linguistics (51-71). Moreover, he gives special attention to Systemic Functional Linguistics since it has become very influential among modern Greek scholars (51). Campbell purports that it is essential that one know the linguistic presuppositions and methodologies of a grammarian before simply relying on his or
her conclusions, since, according to Campbell, many New Testament Greek grammarians are at best linguistically misinformed and at worst oblivious to linguistics (55).

He states that Generative linguistics is based upon the rule that there are universal grammatical and linguistic structures. Further, he maintains that the goal of the generative linguist is to understand how the unique surface level components of a language encode the shared “deep structure” features that are universal to all languages (58-59). Campbell points out that Functional linguistics is not based upon the principle that there are universal grammatical and linguistic structures; rather, it seeks to understand each language on its own terms (60). However, he states that it does not deny that there are some features that are common throughout languages (60). Moreover, he identifies this feature as functional typology, and says that it is heavily based upon the assumption that the common features between languages can be traced to the shared social elements of language (60-61). Finally, as stated above, Campbell interacts most extensively with Systemic Functional Linguistics. He provides two reasons for this extended interaction. First, he believes functional linguistics has the most to offer for the study of Biblical Greek (62). Second, systemic linguistics has had the most influence on the study of Biblical Greek out of all the functional linguistic schools (62). He explains that systemic linguistics seeks to determine the relationship between semantics (meaning) and grammar (wordings). Moreover, he says that systemic functional linguists hold that this relationship between semantics and grammar is “realization.” That is, systemic linguists purport that the wording “realizes,” namely, encodes the meaning (66).

The final chapter that I will highlight from Campbell’s monograph is the fifth chapter. This chapter focuses on the topic of verbal aspect and Aktionsart (105-133). In addition to Campbell’s helpful discussion on the meaning of aspect, the distinctions between tense, Aktionsart, and aspect, and an overview of recent works on the topic of verbal aspect, one noteworthy contribution of this chapter is Campbell’s comment that debate about whether the Greek indicative verbs semantically encode time is not the most important issue within verbal aspect studies (116). Rather, Campbell points to debates about the aspect of the Perfect verb form and questions concerning the function of aspect in the structure of narrative texts as areas of needed attention in verbal aspect studies (117–130).
In Constantine R. Campbell’s *Advances in the Study of Greek: New Insights for Reading The New Testament*, Campbell does what few scholars are able to do. Namely, he writes in such a way that students, pastors, and even scholars can benefit. That is, in this book Campbell copiously surveys a host of issues and questions that will inform both students and pastors. Further, his interaction with these issues and questions, in which he provided extensive references for further study, is a tremendous resource for scholars, particularly those who have not specialized in issues related linguistics and Greek grammar. For these reasons, I dare to say that Campbell’s *Advances in the Study of Greek* is a must read for anyone who desires to understand the questions and issues that impact how Biblical Greek is taught, studied, and interpreted for the next generation.

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