

*ANCIENT GREEK GRAMMAR FOR THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.*  
BY HEINRICH VON SIEBENTHAL. OXFORD, UK: PETER LANG, 2019,  
XV + 738PP.; ISBN 978-1-7899-7586-4; 45.00 GBP \*

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One of the greatest Greek grammarians, A. T. Robertson, pointed out that “[t]hree types of New Testament grammars are needed: a beginner’s grammar for men who have had no Greek training, an advanced and complete grammar for scholars and more critical seminary work, an intermediate handy working grammar for men familiar with the elements of Greek both in school and in the pastorate.”<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Greek Grammar for the Study of the New Testament (AGG)* is an advanced NT Greek Grammar, written by an experienced and knowledgeable professor – Heinrich von Siebenthal. Professor Siebenthal has taught Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and other classes on Linguistics related subjects at Giessen School of Theology (Germany) as well as at Staatsunabhängige Theologische Hochschule Basel (Switzerland). AGG is an updated and contextualized translation of the author’s German edition of *Griechische Grammatik zum Neuen Testament*.<sup>2</sup> Although this is an advanced reference grammar, a beginning student will find it “as a useful supplement to their textbook” (xvi).

Despite its main focus on the interpretation of the New Testament, the present grammar “is not limited to a description of the grammatical phenomena of Koine Greek attested in the Greek New Testament” (xv). Classical, extra-biblical Koine and non-Koine Greek sources were considered as well.

The grammar contains four main parts: (1) Writing System and Phonology; (2) Structure of Words – Morphology; (3) Syntax; and (4) Textgrammar (which is the same as Discourse Analysis). These main parts are preceded by the Introduction and supplemented in the end by two appendixes (covering the differences between Classical and NT Greek – appendix 1 and word-formation – appendix 2). Selected bibliography and Indexes are also provided. In total the grammar contains 371 paragraphs.

It would be very difficult to comment on all the important topics in this grammar. Therefore, I would like to draw our attention to something which is unique to this work – the textgrammar (or Discourse Analysis). Other standard grammars either do not mention or chooses not to deal with this topic. For example, Dan Wallace provides four

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<sup>1</sup> A. T. Robertson, *A Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament, for Students Familiar with the Elements of Greek* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), x.

<sup>2</sup> von Siebenthal, Heinrich. *Griechische Grammatik Zum Neuen Testament*. Gießen; Basel: Brunnen Verlag; Immanuel-Verlag, 2011.

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valid reasons for not including a discussion on discourse analysis in his Greek grammar.<sup>3</sup> Additionally we would look at a few other important distinctives of this grammar.

I would like to point out a few observations in relation to the whole section of Textgrammar. First, this discussion on the textgrammar is guided by traditional hermeneutics, which focuses on the authorial intend of the text (for example, §§ 310b, 312f, 314g). Second, it might be difficult for a beginning student. I found Runge's book more accessible and suitable as an introduction to discourse analysis.<sup>4</sup> Third, nevertheless this section has many examples from the Greek text and charts which helps to illustrate the textgrammar concepts.

Another interesting distinctive of this grammar is the discussion on the Verbal Aspect. When dealing with the topic of Greek Aspect, most of the modern grammars employ the following terminology: Perfective, Imperfective and Stative aspects. On the contrary, Siebenthal utilizes a different terminology, namely, Aorist, Durative and Resultative Aspects (see pp. 304-345), because the former categories might cause a confusion with the other grammatical categories. Whether or not these grammatical terms are perfect, their usage, nevertheless, raises an important issue of appropriate terminology.

Let me also make a side comment regarding the bibliography (pp. 675-687). This list provides a helpful starting point for the further research in the Greek language and linguistics. Many recent works are mentioned; however, I was surprised that Muraoka's recent grammar on the Septuagint was not included on the list.<sup>5</sup>

AGG is probably the most up to date reference grammar for studying the New Testament Greek. It covers all the main areas of Greek Grammar from alphabet to discourse analysis, which ensures a more comprehensive understanding of the Greek language in general and the New Testament text in particular. Therefore, we can conclude that this grammar is a must for a serious Bible scholar.

Finally, I would like to thank Peter Lang Publishing for providing a free review copy of the book.

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), xv.

<sup>4</sup> Runge, Steven E. *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Muraoka, T. *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek*. Peeters Publishers, 2016.