

Andreas J. Köstenberger – Benjamin L. Merkle – Robert L. Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek. An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic 2016). Pp. 550. \$49.99. ISBN 978-1-4336-7908-7

### ANDRZEJ PIWOWAR

Institute of Biblical Studies, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland  
e-mail: andpiw@gazeta.pl  
ORCID: 0000-0001-9316-1791

All of the book's authors are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (A.J. Köstenberger is already retired). As they claim in the preface to the book, they aim to raise students' interest in the New Testament Greek and provide them with tools to deepen their understanding of the language (p. 1). *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek. An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* is a grammar textbook for those who already have rudimentary knowledge of Greek morphology. The authors emphasize that their book is meant to be read as a whole and not only consulted while working on a Greek text. The book has a didactic aspect, which is clear from its very beginning, and not only a theoretical one. The authors hope that their book on the biblical Greek syntax would be of use both to those who study and to those who teach the language (cf. pp. 1-2). "[...] our goal was to produce an intermediate Greek text that could be manageably digested when a student reads through the material [...] In *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek*, we have attempted to present the material in a way that is accessible, and even fun, knowing that most students will be reading the chapters sequentially" (pp. 1-2).

The textbook's didactic purpose is emphasized also by the fact that the material under discussion in the book has been divided into 15 chapters (which corresponds to the number of weeks per semester). The book starts with an overview of most important facts concerning the Greek language and textual criticism (chapter 1; pp. 17-48) with the view to equipping the readers with necessary knowledge regarding the evolution of the language they wish to master and justifying the need to explore the original text of the New Testament (cf. p. 2). The subsequent three chapters are devoted to the noun (chapters 2-4), one focuses on the article and the adjective (chapter 5), the next six chapters concentrate on the verb (chapters 6-11), followed by a chapter on pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs and particles (chapter 12). The textbook ends with three

chapters of a practical nature, devoted to discourse analysis, whose aim is to help the readers with their further exploration of Greek and to encourage them to continue their studies (chapters 13-15).

The structure of each chapter in itself testifies to the book's didactic character (cf. p. 2). Its aim is to raise students interest in Greek grammar ("Each chapter begins with an example of how knowing the contents of the chapter can guide the student to properly interpret Scripture"; cf. p. 3). At the beginning of each section of *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek* the authors introduce a problem present in the New Testament Greek in such a way as to make the readers interested in the language and motivate them to deepen their understanding of the language. Each didactic unit contains numerous quotations from the Greek text of the New Testament that illustrate the theoretical concept under analysis (there are from three to five examples pertaining to each grammatical category discussed). Moreover, at the end of each chapter there are ten sentences that are to aid the students in grasping the practical application of the material covered and a list of Greek words (40 after each chapter) that the students should memorize (the glossary contains 830 words; in Appendix I located at the end of the book there is additionally a list of 310 Greek words which appear more than 50 times each in the New Testament). What is more, each chapter includes a text from the New Testament for the students to translate. The texts correspond to the theoretical material presented in a given unit and are thoroughly discussed by the authors so that students are able to understand and translate the biblical text. The exercises are preceded by the synopsis of the material in the form of the tables, which help the readers systematize their knowledge. These sections constitute a valuable element of the textbook. Undoubtedly, this didactic element differentiates *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek* from other grammar textbooks on the intermediate level, as the majority of them do not have any exercises and, thus, cannot be considered to be genuine coursebooks. The book also contains numerous tools helpful for the teachers of Greek (cf. p. 5).

At the end of the book, next to Appendix I (pp. 503-510), the authors have included Appendix II, which contains tables offering an overview of 12 grammar books on the noun and article (pp. 511-523). This is followed by the index of authors (pp. 525-527), index of concepts (pp. 529-534) and the index of cited New Testament texts (pp. 535-550). Unfortunately, in *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek* there is no bibliography that would list the sources used and referred to by the authors.

As mentioned above, Chapter I is not devoted to Greek syntax. It contains a succinct overview of the history of the language (pp. 18-24) and basic information on textual criticism (pp. 24-35). Despite this, the chapter contains exercises analogous to those included in chapters devoted to specific aspects of Greek syntax

(namely, sentences from the New Testament, glossary and the text of Mark 1:1-13, which is discussed in detail, not only from the point of view of the Greek syntax [selected syntagmas and forms] but also from the point of view of textual criticism).

Chapter 2 is devoted to the analysis of the syntactic functions of three cases: the nominative, the vocative and the accusative. *Nominativus* is presented in a detailed and meticulous way (cf. pp. 52-61). A.J. Köstenberger does not point out, though, that the nominative can be used instead of the vocative. The vocative has been analysed in a less comprehensive way. The discussion of the vocative is limited to its basic function, namely addressing someone directly. Even though it is mentioned that the vocative may be preceded by the exclamation ὦ, the difference between the vocative and the vocative preceded by the exclamation is not explained. The chapter's author fails to mention the fact that *vocativus* may stand in apposition to the nominative. The accusative's syntactic functions have been presented according to the case's deployment in a nominal (cf. pp. 63-68) and adverbial manner (cf. pp. 68-70). However, A.J. Köstenberger does not enumerate *accusativus absolutus*, *pendens*, *loci* and *temporis*. Obviously, these are not the most important functions of the case, but the omission of the fact that the accusative may be used to express the above mentioned syntactical relations is a serious drawback, especially since *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek* is supposed to be a grammar textbook on the intermediate level.

Chapter 3 in turn presents the syntactic functions of the genitive (*genetivus*; cf. pp. 85-105). A.J. Köstenberger divides those into three categories: adjectival usage (pp. 89-96), verbal usage (pp. 96-98) and adverbial usage (cf. pp. 98-103). Alongside the three major deployments of the genitive in Greek, its other functions are also mentioned (pp. 103-105). Such a division and qualification of various types of the genitive may be interesting and innovative, but in my opinion it complicates the presentation of the syntactic functions of the case. The author of the chapter has presented the major syntactic functions of the genitive but has overlooked *genetivus causae*, *quantitatis* and the genitive of purpose. As in the case of the accusative, these are not the primary usages of the genitive, but an intermediate-level grammar textbook should not omit them.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the presentation of another case in the Greek language, namely the dative (pp. 119-137). As was the case with the genitive, the syntactic functions of the dative have been divided into four categories: the dative itself (pp. 122-127), the dative as the locative (pp. 127-130), instrumental dative (pp. 130-134) and other functions of the case (pp. 134-137). In this way, A.J. Köstenberger has discussed all the primary functions of the dative but has overlooked *dativus materiae*, *measure* and *termini*. Since these categories may be linked to other categories mentioned above, their omission cannot be treated as a mistake but rather as a kind of inaccuracy.

To sum up the first part of the book devoted to the noun, it needs to be pointed out that its author (A.J. Köstenberger) focuses exclusively on the syntactic functions of given cases. These are analysed rather comprehensively, though some functions are omitted, as has already been noted. Such important aspects of the noun as gender and number are not mentioned at all, and these frequently have a bearing on the proper understanding of a New Testament text.

Chapter V takes as its subject matter the article and the adjective (pp. 151-186). Discussing the deployment of the article in Greek (pp. 153-162), A.J. Köstenberger rightly emphasizes its significance for the proper understanding of text (articles frequently carry an important theological meaning) and presents the most important syntactic functions, very synthetically but at the same time comprehensively. The author stresses the fact that the absence of the article does not necessarily denote the indefinite character of the noun or other nominalized parts of speech; rather, these should always be interpreted in the context of a given pericope. To put it differently, it is not exclusively the presence of the article but primarily the context of the noun that makes the noun definite. It is an important observation for the proper understanding of Greek text. The adjective in all its primary functions has been discussed in a very detailed and comprehensive way (pp. 162-175). The author discusses the use of the adjective in the New Testament Greek after that of the article, as the latter plays an important role for the determination of the role of adjective (especially as regards its attributive and predicative functions). Discussing the gradation of the adjective, A.J. Köstenberger fails to mention the possible occurrence of the prepositions *παρά* and *ὑπέρ* in comparisons (cf. p. 171).

The subsequent six chapters of the book are devoted to the verb: to its personal and impersonal forms. Chapter 6 (pp. 189-226) concentrates on the person (pp. 190-193), voice (pp. 193-199) and mood (pp. 199-213). The discussion of the person and number encompasses the basic elements of this aspect of Greek grammar, though they could have been presented in a more detailed way. By the same token, the analysis of the verb's voice focuses on the most significant information only. The author of the chapter, B.L. Merkle, overlooks, for example, the dynamic mediopassive voice, the reflexive voice and the pleonastic voice. Merkle's presentation of the passive voice overlooks the fact that its forms may also be used as intransitive and that they may have objects in the accusative. What is more, it has to be pointed out that Merkle gives only one or two examples that would illustrate the practical usage of the verb's voice. The grammatical moods of the verb have been presented in an accurate and comprehensive way (cf. pp. 199-212). Analysing *coniunctivus*, the author of the chapter presents its use not only in the main clause but also in the most important types of subordinate clauses in which it may appear (cf. pp. 202-204). Also in this part of the

chapter the types of grammatical mood have been illustrated with few examples (typically, two or three). One shortcoming of the discussion of the mood is the omission in chapter 6 of the distinction between perfective and imperfective aspects in individual tenses. It seems that it would be better to present tenses before moods, and not the other way round, as the authors of the book have done.

In chapter 7 (pp. 227-252) the verb's aspect and tenses are under analysis. First, A.J. Köstenberger and B.L. Merkle focus on the aspect as the most important feature of verbal forms. They differentiate between three aspects (imperfective, perfective and static). They argue that the verb's aspect should be differentiated from the type of action (cf. pp. 230-231). Then, in the section titled "Morphologizing Aspect" (pp. 232-234) the authors attempt to discuss aspect in relation to the verb's morphological forms. In my opinion, this is a failed attempt, generating more confusion than clarification (on p. 234 A.J. Köstenberger and B.L. Merkle attribute aspect to each tense in a much more lucid and proper way). The authors maintain that the verb's aspect has not only a grammatical function but also a literary function within a given discourse (cf. pp. 234-235). Having discussed aspect, the authors devote literally three sentences to the time of action (p. 236). More attention is paid to the type of action (pp. 236-241), with attention drawn to lexical, grammatical and contextual factors. The authors of the chapter pay too little attention to the aspect of the verb in verbal forms other than declarative. This important issue is touched upon briefly in the section "Contextual Factors", but the focus is exclusively on the imperative. This is done in a very complicated manner, maybe due to the grammatical complexity of the English language. Their explanations are quite confusing for a Polish reader as they are based primarily on the lexical factor.

The subsequent two chapters of the textbook (8 and 9) focus on the declarative of individual tenses (first *praesens*, *imperfectum* and *futurum* [pp. 253-275] and then aorist, *perfectum* and *plusquamperfectum* [pp. 287-307]). Earlier, in chapter 6, the syntactic functions of other moods have been presented. This leads to a question if the order of the presentation of verbal forms is logical. Should not the analysis begin with the aspect and then proceed to the discussion of tenses and moods? Such a sequence would be more natural and would make it easier for the students to understand the syntactic functions of Greek verbal forms. The syntactic categories of tenses expressing various types of activities have been discussed in a detailed and comprehensive way. The only tenses overlooked by B.L. Merkle are the proleptic *perfectum* and the iterative *plusquamperfectum*.

Chapters 10 and 11 continue the discussion of the verb, presenting its impersonal forms: first *participium* (chapter 10; pp. 321-346) and then *infinitivus* (chapter 11; pp. 359-376). Discussing the participle on p. 321, B.L. Merkle refers to Eph 1:3-14. Having enumerated all the participles of the aorist in this text,

he concludes: “All of these actions are portrayed as simply having occurred. The context indicates that these actions took place in the past, but past time is indicated not by the aorist tense-form (note that there is no augment affixed to participle) but by the discourse context” (*ibid*). The statement is puzzling as all the participles are expressed in the aorist; thus, it is not the context that makes them refer to the past but their morphological form in itself (the participle of the past tense expresses an action preceding the one expressed in the personal form). The next paragraph is devoted to the participle’s time of action (pp. 322-323); it explains the quote given above but does not justify the statement as acceptable. The author presents various syntactic functions of the participle in two parts: the first centres on the adjectival usage of *participium*, while the second – on its verbal usage. The first part overlooks the use of the participle as a predicative adjective, while the second – the participle that enhances the main action and the graphic *participium*. Despite these minor shortcomings, it can be concluded that all the major syntactic functions of the participle in Greek have been discussed in a profound and accurate way.

Chapter 11 is devoted to the discussion of the syntactic functions of the infinitive (pp. 357-376). The author of the chapter, B.L. Merkle, divides the uses of the infinitive into three categories: the adverbial use (pp. 361-369), the nominalization of the infinitive (pp. 369-373) and the independent use of the infinitive (p. 374). *Infinitivus* has been presented in a satisfactory way, that is all of its function have been discussed. The author could have emphasized the ACI structure more and the fact that when the predicate is expressed with the infinitive, the subject typically is used in the accusative (most often) or in the nominative (cf. pp. 359).

The subsequent chapter (chapter 12; pp. 389-425) encompasses pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs and particles (“The purpose of this chapter is to introduce students to other parts of speech not covered previously in the text”; p. 390). The inclusion in one chapter of various parts of speech stems from the necessity of covering the whole material in *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek* in fifteen didactic units (cf. my comments above). The criterion, then, is not of a content-related nature but of a practical nature. Pronouns have been discussed in a very general and unsatisfactory matter (cf. pp. 390-397). Many significant facts relating to pronouns have been overlooked, such as, for instance, *attractio relativi*. Furthermore, in each category of pronouns only one example has been given, the one that appears most often in the Greek text of the New Testament. Because of that, the discussion of pronouns is on the elementary and not on the intermediate level. Prepositions (pp. 399-410) have been discussed in a satisfactory but not comprehensive way: the competition of prepositions has not been addressed at all. Conjunctions have been discussed

quite thoroughly: the most important ones have been presented, albeit somewhat perfunctorily and too synthetically (pp. 411-415). The same can be stated about the discussion of adverbs (pp. 415-419) and particles (pp. 420-421). As far as the latter are concerned, one could wonder if all the examples given are indeed particles, e.g. the negation (μή and οὐ), ἕάν, τε and μέν...δέ.

Chapter 13 is devoted to Greek sentences, presented in the form of graphs, and to discourse analysis (pp. 435-463). “The purpose of this chapter is to equip students to think more carefully about the structure of the Greek language as recorder in the NT” (pp. 436). Clauses have been divided into independent, dependent and conditional ones, and then into simple, compound, complex and copulative sentences. Subsequently, sentences have been divided in accord with their functions: declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory. Then sentence structure, that is the order of individual elements in a sentence, has been analysed. It seems that the author of the chapter, R.L. Plummer, should have started his presentation of Greek sentences from sentence structure and not from the division into sentence types. Evaluating the first part of chapter 13, it needs to be concluded that the information it provides is rather banal and succinct. It is more typical of the elementary than of intermediate level. In the second part of the chapter R.L. Plummer discusses three graphic models of sentence diagramming (pp. 451-461): line diagramming, tracing an argument (arcing and bracketing) and phrase diagrams.

Chapter 14 (pp. 475-490) takes as its subject matter aspects of word study in Greek (“The purpose of this chapter is to introduce students to the basic concepts, tools, methods, and potential dangers of word study”; p. 476). It deals with text translation and – indirectly – exegesis and not with Greek syntax, thereby addressing hermeneutical rather than syntactical issues. For instance, in the section with the telling title “Don’t make any word mean more than the author intends” (p. 478) R.L. Plummer points out that only one meaning – and not all possible meanings – should be attributed to a Greek word used in a particular context in accord with the context. He proposes the synchronic rather than the diachronic method as more suitable for word study. He warns his readers not to conflate the study of a given word with a theological concept it expresses. Nor should the readers trust all the tools that are at the disposal of a student of biblical text. He mentions the tools that in his opinion are of particular value (cf. pp. 481-483) and proposes a method useful for word study (pp. 484-489). Similarly, the last chapter of the book (XV; pp. 491-501) titled “Continuing with Greek” is not devoted to Greek grammar. R.L. Plummer explains its aim in the following way: “The purpose of this chapter is to help students think deliberately about how to become people who spend their entire lives reading, studying, and teaching from the GNT” (p. 491).

To sum up, it is the didactic aspect of *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek* that is particularly worthy of note. The authors do more than convey theoretical knowledge; they have meticulously selected sentences and texts from the New Testament that aid the readers in understanding the practical application of theoretical principles. An especially valuable element of the book are summaries of each chapter in the form of tables, for they offer a synthetic and lucid synopsis of the theoretical component of a given unit; hence, they are very useful for the revision of the material covered earlier. Putting these sections together would result in a very succinct overview of biblical Greek syntax. As far as the book's content is concerned, it can be considered an accurate and satisfactory presentation of Greek syntax. It encompasses the major principles of biblical Greek syntax, though it needs to be added that not all of the book's parts have been prepared with equal meticulousness and are not on the same level. Without a doubt, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek. An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* deserves of note and recommendation to those who wish to learn more of biblical Greek syntax.