

An Introduction to Biblical Greek: A Grammar with Exercises, by John D. Schwandt. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020. xii + 497 pp. \$34.99.

John D. Schwandt is currently the president of Redemption Seminary after having taught New Testament at New Saint Andrews College for seventeen years. He based *An Introduction to Biblical Greek* on H. P. V. Nunn's 1913 grammar, *The Elements of New Testament Greek*. Much of the explanation in the more recent text is new, but Schwandt acknowledges that the "structure of the text, vocabulary, and exercises remain essentially the same as Nunn's original text" (xi–xii). To reverse what he sees as a minimalist approach in recent grammars, Schwandt returns to an older method that emphasized Greek composition, frequent translation exercises, and more vocabulary memorization.

The content is presented in an attractive format that prioritizes the reduction of clutter. Following Nunn's outline, Schwandt divides the text into thirty-seven concise lessons. The present active indicative verb is introduced in the third lesson so that students can quickly begin translating complete sentences. Each lesson often covers only three or four pages with plenty of white space for taking marginal notes. Rather than requiring the student to purchase an accompanying workbook, one or two pages containing exercises follow each lesson. Instead of being in the main text, each lesson's accompanying vocabulary lists are in the first appendix. The vocabulary lists to be learned contain a total of 603 lexical forms (almost twice what other first-year grammars require!). The lists have suggested English glosses (rather than definitions), and, for verbs, their principal parts (with forms occurring outside the NT helpfully identified with blue font). It is striking that the first two vocabulary lists contain only verbs. The rest of the appendices (which total 175 pages, about a third of the book) include (1) an answer key for the exercises, (2) a discussion of accentuation (another of Schwandt's emphases), (3) a more in-depth treatment of prepositions (remember the lessons themselves are very concise), (4) morphology references tables, and (5) an English-Greek glossary. Throughout the book, Schwandt develops a single chart that helpfully illustrates how all words function either adjectivally (substantival or attributive) or adverbially and how to identify the two functions.

What about debated issues in NT Greek? Regarding aspect, Schwandt holds that the present tense form has an incomplete aspect with the "thematic stem (the variable vowel ε/ο)" reflecting "the unfolding nature of the present" (71). In the imperfect tense form, this present stem "often denotes an unfolding action in past time, such as a continuous or repeated past action" (71). The future and aorist tense forms convey a simple or completed aspect with "an array of meanings that diametrically correspond to incomplete aspect meanings" (136). In other words, the text presents aspect as closely associated with various types of action (e.g., continuous vs. instantaneous, iterative vs. completed once, conative vs. result, etc.). The chapter on the perfect and pluperfect tense forms does not contain a discussion of aspect. As far as middle-only

verbs, Schwandt retains the category of deponent which have “the same meaning as if they were active” (119). When discussing pronunciation, the text introduces Erasmian and historically reconstructed Koine pronunciation. However, the text favors the latter over the former. For example, students are encouraged not to pronounce the rough breathing mark and are introduced to the “micro o” and “mega o.”

Schwandt’s exercises set his text apart from other recent first-year grammars. Not only are students early and often translating sentences taken from Scripture, but they also translate English words, phrases, and (eventually) whole sentences into Greek, demonstrating the importance placed on learning Greek spelling and accentuation. For example, a randomly chosen lesson (chap. 34) contains fifteen Greek sentences to be translated into English, twenty English sentences to be translated into Greek, and three Greek NT verses to be translated into English. However, earlier lessons also contain an assortment of exercises designed to push the student to tackle Greek words in different ways. For example, one activity requires the student to identify whether a noun is singular or plural and then change it to the inverse form. Another exercise asks the students to write the corresponding lexical form from a list of various imperfect verb forms. In other words, rather than merely parsing words in the same way in every lesson, Schwandt’s text finds creative ways for students to tackle the same question from various angles. Undoubtedly, a student would benefit significantly from diligently completing all the included exercises. However, a professor faced with the ever-increasing pressure to streamline the study of biblical languages will have to be committed to the value of devoting time to teaching students to master Greek composition and spelling.

At times the text is very detailed. For example, a digraph is contrasted with a diphthong, a careful distinction is made between a root and a stem, and a student learns about proclitics and unvoiced fricatives. However, at other times the concise text seems to be missing common elements. For example, the word *articular* appears suddenly without a definition. Also, the paradigm for the present active indicative verb appears in lesson three. Still, there is no accompanying explanation of what “active” or “indicative” means (the descriptions of voice and mood come ten lessons later), and no explanation of the meaning of the person and number represented in the paradigm. These omissions perhaps reflect an older approach to teaching languages which assumed that students had a better grasp of their own language’s grammar. Sometimes important definitions or concepts are buried in paragraphs, and a future edition would benefit from placing these in bold font or by placing a corresponding marginal note.

Reading this work was a little like helping my children with their math homework. It is both illuminating and enjoyable (and sometimes jarring) to see familiar information taught in a new way. Former Greek students who want to brush up on their Greek and advance in their spelling and composition will benefit greatly from this work. Schwandt

has also provided a valuable resource for the experienced teacher who is able to supplement the helpful outline provided in this work.

Ryan Meyer
Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Allen Park, MI

The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship. Revised and Expanded edition, by Robert Letham. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2019. xl + 650 pp. \$22.50.

In this expanded second edition of his magisterial work, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, Robert Letham highlights once again the foundational importance of the historic, orthodox doctrine of the Trinity by way of masterful biblical exegesis, thorough historical analysis, and ample application for the church's ministry and worship. However, this time, Letham includes new sections that incorporate the latest research in Augustine and Barth studies. He moreover addresses current evangelical discussions regarding the Trinity, especially as they relate to subordinationism. The underlying thesis of this work is the necessity of listening intently to those who have contributed substantially to the development of the church's understanding of the Triune God. Divided into four main sections, the book covers the biblical basis for the doctrine, its historical developments, modern-day discussions, and critical issues ranging from the relationship between the Trinity and the Incarnation to the place of the Trinity in worship and missions.

In the first section, Letham traces the biblical background for the Trinity throughout the Old and New Testaments. In a rather extensive footnote, Letham justifies the older Christian practice of starting with the Old Testament in discerning a biblical doctrine of the Trinity rather than starting with the New Testament and reading it back into the Old as Fred Sanders and other scholars suggest. Also with respect to the Old Testament, Letham, again over and against the objection of Sanders, tentatively allows for the identification of various appearances of God as either theophanies or Christophanies, arguing that doing so would not necessarily undermine the Incarnation. With respect to the New Testament, the author engages in detailed exegesis of various Johannine and Pauline passages to argue for the Son's equality with the Father as well as his pre-existence as the Son. This matter of the Son's pre-existence is of particular significance in that Letham on exegetical grounds challenges the scholarly consensus that it was a later development in New Testament Christology. In this regard, the author argues that earlier New Testament writings, like those of Paul affirm the Son's pre-existence. Elsewhere in this first section, Letham makes a very convincing case that passages regarded as largely "binitarian" strongly imply Trinitarian relations.