



BOOK REVIEW

A Review of A Reader in Biblical Greek

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Wright, Richard A. 2022. *A Reader in Biblical Greek*. Eerdmans Language Resources. Eerdmans. 219 pp.

A Reader in Biblical Greek is a tool to help students who have completed a year of Koine Greek to continue their study of the language, and to grow in their ability to translate and interpret more complex Greek than they would normally have encountered in their first-year Greek studies. It consists, as the title implies, of a curated collection of readings, twenty-nine in all. Of these, fourteen are taken from the New Testament, nine from the Apostolic Fathers, and six from the Septuagint. The book is two hundred and nineteen pages long, and in addition to the paper version electronic editions are available for Amazon's Kindle and for the Logos platform. There is enough material for a full year of intermediate to advanced Greek.

The readings are presented in three groups, starting with easier passages and graduating to the more difficult. Richard A. Wright, who teaches New Testament at Abilene Christian University in Texas, provides an introduction and two indices, one listing references to ancient sources, and the other syntactical constructions discussed in the footnotes. Each passage is prefixed by brief introductory comments on the passage and the book it is taken from. Each passage is also provided with extensive footnotes which discuss unusual or irregular word forms, translation helps and possible meanings of difficult constructions, helpful comments on syntax where there might be uncertainty, and the Greek text of any other ancient sources alluded to or quoted in the reading. Parsing help is focused on infinitives and participles (p. xv). Extensive reference is made to some standard works, such as BDAG (Frederick W. Danker et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [University of Chicago Press, 2000], BDF (Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* [University of Chicago Press, 1961]), and Daniel Wallace's *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Eerdmans, 1996), plus the relatively recent *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Eerdmans, 2021), an intermediate grammar written by Rodney A. Whitacre. At the end of each reading is a vocabulary list, supplying glosses for each word found fewer than fifty times in the Greek New Testament. Greek texts are sourced from the Nestle Aland 28th edition

(Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), Rahlfs's Septuagint revised by Hanhart (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), and for the Apostolic Fathers, the edition of Holmes (Baker, 2007).

The selection of texts is fairly wide, with New Testament readings from Mark, Luke, Acts, three of Paul's letters, James, First Peter, and Revelation, so there is material from narratives, letters, and apocalyptic prophecy. Septuagint readings come from Genesis, Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Isaiah, and thus from the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. The Apostolic Fathers are represented by First Clement, the Didache, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Epistle of Barnabas. The author's aim is to "include readings we are confident at least some Christians in the fourth century of the Common Era were reading" (p. xi). This decision is somewhat curious and the author supports it with no specific explanation, but it does have the benefit of introducing students to some Greek Christian writings of the second century. Some readers might balk at the mention of "so-called canonical texts" (p. xii). I would like to have seen some use of Second Temple Jewish texts, such as selections from Philo, Josephus, and the Pseudepigrapha, which in my class on Hellenistic Greek Readings have been a useful and interesting challenge to students.

The readings used are intended to "provide content that would introduce [students] to some of the ideas that were important to the early church" (p. xii). This consideration meant that no attempt was made to include particular Greek constructions; the book deals with those arising from the texts themselves (p. xii). This may be the reason for some interesting absences, such as the lack of discussion of objective and subjective genitive forms, while the object complement is mentioned frequently. Little attention is paid to some issues that preoccupy the guild, such as verbal aspect, or the function of middle form verbs. Likewise, the functions of coordinating conjunctions are only occasionally a focus, though some subordinating conjunctions receive attention, as in conditional clauses or indirect discourse. Subjunctives, infinitives and participles receive the most attention, because, most likely, the author considers them to be treated only fleetingly in first-year Greek courses.

There are some fascinating biblical passages to explore, including portions from Genesis 17, Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 22 (Psalm 21 LXX), Isaiah 52–53, Matthew 5, Luke 2, Acts 9, Romans 4, First Corinthians 12, Philippians 2, James 2, and Revelation 4. The selections from the Didache discuss baptism, fasting, and the eucharist. Instructors will find plenty to interest and challenge students, and to provoke discussion. The footnotes are helpful, and the author notes where there are alternative readings of a Greek construction. *A Reader in Biblical Greek* is very well put together, and would be useful for second-year Greek courses, or for students of Greek who want to pursue further study on their own.

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