

The Origin of the Chapters and Verses in the Bible by Laurence M. Vance. Orlando: Vance Publications: 2021. 39 pp., paper, \$5.95.

Laurence M. Vance's short but scholarly booklet traces the origin of chapter and verse insertions into the biblical text. While some have maligned these divisions (p. 5), they have proven to be extremely beneficial to the readers of Scripture. As might be suspected, those who first thought of dividing the Bible in this manner can be traced to ancient times but modern chapter divisions are attributed to Stephen Langton in the early part of the thirteenth century. Verse divisions, as recognized today, result from Robert Stephanus who apparently created the verse indicators while traveling in the mid-1500s (pp. 26-27) and resting at inns, not while on horseback as legend would have it. His verse divisions received wide acceptance and were incorporated into various English Bibles, including the King James in 1611 (p. 31).

Vance included page images from various Bible translations revealing their suggested divisions, beginning with the Latin Vulgate and Wycliffe Bibles all the way through the Great Bible and Coverdale. Images of fifteenth and sixteenth century Bibles, which make use of more modern divisions, were also given. The Stephanus 1551 edition is the recognized standard; however, Vance notes thirty-nine places in which the King James Version differs. For those interested in this subject, Vance's small volume, which includes an extensive bibliography, would take some considerable effort to match or surpass.

— Gary E. Gilley
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Beginning with New Testament Greek: An Introductory Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament by Benjamin L. Merkle and Robert L. Plummer. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020. xiii + 401 pp., cloth, \$39.99.

Although the title of this new Greek grammar is unwieldy, the book is not. The physical size of the book will remind old timers of J. Gresham Machen's *New Testament Greek for Beginners*, which many initially used to learn New Testament Greek. *Beginning with New Testament Greek* is a little larger and a little longer, but is still in a handy size, and does not have a supplemental

workbook to further burden the student. Nevertheless, it would be remiss, however, not to mention that the book should have been larger. The inside margin is too small and the top margin is almost nonexistent.

Merkle and Plummer, who both hold a Ph.D. from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, are the authors of *Greek for Life: Strategies for Learning, Retaining, and Reviving New Testament Greek* (Baker Academic, 2017). With Andreas J. Köstenberger, they are the authors of *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (rev. ed., B&H Academic, 2016, 2020), and they are also the coauthors with Adam J. Howell of *Hebrew for Life: Strategies for Learning, Retaining, and Reviving Biblical Hebrew* (Baker Academic, 2020). Merkle is professor of New Testament and Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Plummer is professor of Biblical Studies at his alma mater.

Why another Greek grammar? The authors acknowledged, “more than 100 introductory Greek grammars have been published in the last century” (p. 1). They justified theirs by appealing to (1) advances in technology that “now enable the production of a textbook seamlessly integrated with other pedagogical resources”; (2) the need for beginning Greek students “to be informed accurately and engagingly of the growing consensus among Greek scholars on verbal aspect, discourse functions of tenses, and middle voice/deponency”; (3) the inclusion of brief introductory essays on “text criticism, commentaries, critical editions of the Greek New Testament, diagramming, Greek word studies, and digital resources”; (4) vocabulary lists at the end of each chapter that “provide working vocabulary for the following chapters”; and (5) a textbook that “streamlines and consolidates essential Greek grammar into 24 chapters” (pp. 1-2).

The authors also listed some features of the book that help “increase its pedagogical effectiveness” (p. 2). However, having taught Greek, this reviewer believes that two of these features can be problematic. All translation exercises “come directly from the Greek New Testament.” This can actually hinder students if they recognize the wording from their English Bibles, and especially since the authors provide the chapter and verse references. An “answer key to the exercises is provided in the back of the book.” The problem with this should be obvious. That being said, the practice exercises at the end of each chapter are varied (parsing, memorizing paradigms, matching, usage, and translation from Greek into English and English into Greek) and much more thorough than the typical beginning Greek grammar. Because of the variety and abundance of practice exercises, the book is more suitable for self-study than other

grammars if one can resist the temptation to “cheat” (i.e. rely on one’s knowledge of the English Bible when translating from Greek into English or find the answers in the back of the book).

Scripture quotations in the book are usually from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB), but for reasons only known to the authors, thirteen other English versions are referenced as well. As far as the layout of the book is concerned, one may question the early introduction of relative pronouns (ch. 8) along with personal pronouns, and contract verbs (ch. 7) prior to the future, aorist, and perfect/pluperfect tenses. Also puzzling is the late introduction of third declension nouns (ch. 14), and especially the late introduction of adjectives and adverbs (ch. 16) and demonstrative pronouns (ch. 20).

In addition to the key to the practice exercises, the back of the book contains many valuable helps: name, subject, and Scripture indexes; glossary of terms; vocabulary; paradigms; master verb chart; flowcharts for adjectives, indicative verbs, and participles; and, charts on masculine first declension nouns, neuter third declension nouns, consonantal morphology, and the nine verbs that use more than one root.

True to its introduction, *Beginning with New Testament Greek* contains accurate and up-to-date information on verbal aspect, the middle voice, and deponent verbs without getting too deep into all the issues and current debates surrounding these things. Is it substantially better than Machen’s? Absolutely. Is it the most up-to-date and feature-packed introductory Greek grammar currently available? Certainly, although that could change with the next edition of Mounce’s *Basics of Biblical Greek*, which is currently on its fourth edition (2019). The “perfect” introductory Greek grammar will never be published. *Beginning with New Testament Greek* is a good attempt to reach that high standard, and the authors are to be commended.

— Laurence M. Vance
Vance Publications (Orlando, FL)

They Knew They Were Pilgrims: Plymouth Colony and the Contest for American Liberty by John G. Turner. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020. 447 pp. + x, cloth, \$22.99.

Professor John Turner has written a comprehensive historical account of the early American settlers commonly called the Pilgrims. He began with