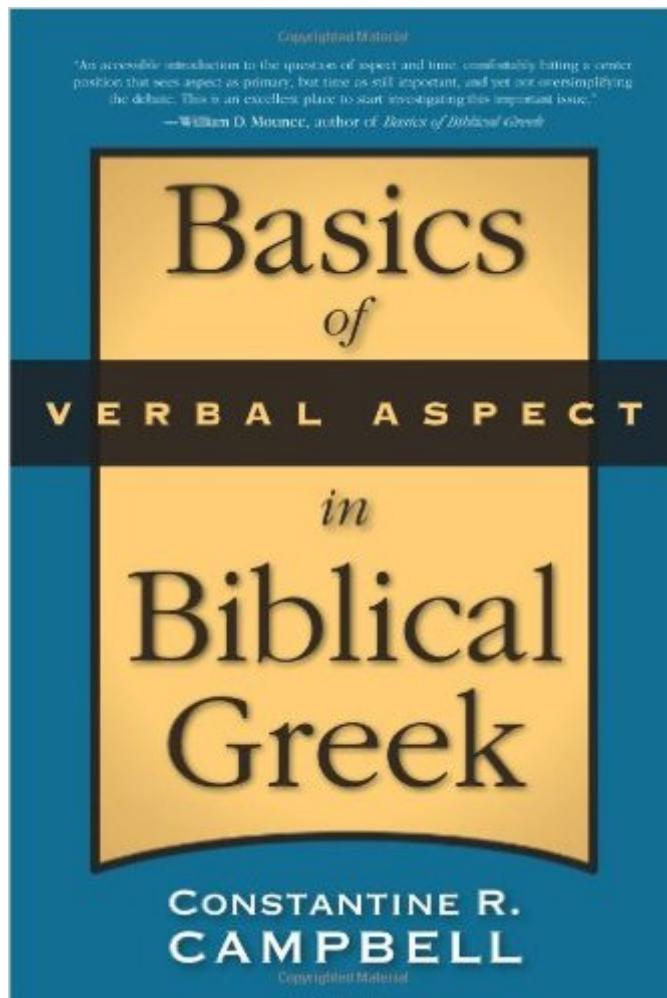


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# Basics Of Verbal Aspect In Biblical Greek



## **Synopsis**

Verbal aspect in the Greek language has been a topic of significant debate in recent scholarship. The majority of scholars now believe that an understanding of verbal aspect is even more important than verb tense (past, present, etc.). Until now, however, there have been no accessible textbooks, both in terms of level and price (most titles on the topic retail for more than \$100). In this book, Constantine Campbell investigates the function of verbal aspect within the New Testament Greek narrative. He has done a marvelous job in this book of simplifying the concept without getting caught up using terms of linguistics that no one except those schooled in that field can understand. The book includes exercises, an answer key, glossary of key concepts, an appendix covering space and time, and an index to Scripture cited. Professors and students, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, will use this as a supplemental text in both beginning and advanced Greek courses. Pastors that study the Greek text will also appreciate this resource as a supplement to their preaching and teaching.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

As soon as I received this book, I was flooded with memories of the time I was first introduced to it during my college days as a classics major. I remember how elusive the concept was back then, and it does not surprise me how quickly it still returns to its elusive state. The lecture was delivered by Dr. Erwin Cook at University of Texas, who admitted that aspects was just not part of the English language as much as it is in Russian. He bemoaned the fact that his Russian did not fully grasp verbal aspect as it one should to appreciate Dostoevsky's works. Despite its elusiveness, the Greek

verbal aspect is making its way into the scene of biblical studies, where a command of the biblical languages is simply a must to engage in proper exegesis. As many others have already observed, Campbell's work has made verbal aspects accessible, both in the publisher's pricing and the readability. H.W. Smyth's Greek Grammar devotes a whole sentence to aspects: "Greek also makes extensive use of aspect distinctions to qualify the type (rather than the time) of an action." The extensive work of Smyth ironically does not lend itself to an extensive treatment of aspects. In line with Zondervan's widely-used series of Greek textbooks, Campbell's work makes the complicated subject more engaging and accessible for even the beginners of biblical Greek to become quickly acquainted with the theory, the need, as well as the issues in verbal aspect. The book is divided into two main parts. The first part explains the basic features of the verbal aspect, tracing its history and getting the reader up-to-snuff with the main voices in the field. In biblical studies, two names traditionally come up when speaking of verbal aspects: Porter and Fanning.

This book is an excellent, readable introduction to the mysteries and complexities of verbal aspect in Biblical [Koine] Greek. I am a mere amateur in this area being at the beginner/intermediate level, and my review is primarily aimed at people in the same category. To make sense of this book, you need to be at least at that level -- having completed first-year greek (Mounce / Basics or an equivalent), and be conversant with the next stage (per Wallace Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics or equivalent). Campbell does provide translations of greek passages quoted. The book is divided into two parts: firstly, general aspect theory and its history and development (chapters one to five); secondly, the focus on the greek of the New Testament (chapters six to 10.) Campbell is excellent in explaining his terms as he uses them, and also provides a glossary, scripture index, and general index at the end of the book. (I note from another reviewer that there was no scripture index. There is definitely in mine). He also provides some basic exercises in part 2 and there is an answer key for the exercises at the end. Campbell starts off by giving us the background to the problem, describing aspect theory versus aktionsart. He crucially answers the "so what?" question, illustrating the shortcomings of aktionsart and its doctrinal implications and showing how aspect theory alleviates those problems. He provides a clear definition of semantics and pragmatics and the characteristics and attributes of each of those disciplines. He goes on to give an historical outline to aspect theory, mentioning Porter, Fanning etc. and the various strands of thought within aspect theory (how many aspects are there? etc.).

In the field of Verbal aspect, there is no end of debate or discussion. With his new book Basics of

Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek (BVA), Constantine Campbell has opened the door for those who have long stood outside trying to get a glimpse and a hearing of what this discussion is all about. Granted, there are areas where one person or another will find that they are in disagreement with Dr. Campbell, but that is to be expected in a field like this. Dr. Campbell has taken the time and recognized that there was a need for a primer like the one he has produced, one in which has long been overdue for the student of Koine who is just getting his feet wet in Greek. While I will not take the time to offer an in-depth review (other have done this, and they have done it quite well), I will discuss the areas of strengths and weaknesses of BVA for the intermediate Greek student and why I think that it is a fine addition for a pastor as well as a seminary student. This reviewer has been a student of Koine for 4.5 years (3 in undergraduate, and 1.5 in seminary). While learning Greek I was aware of verbal aspect, but it was briefly discussed and then moved away from. As I progressed in my studies, the focus was always on usage of nouns, verbs, participles, etc. and their relationship within a clause and discourse. Many times I was left to wonder why the author of a particular book used the present tense where an aorist would have sufficed. This questioned festered in me and continued to grow. In frustration, I picked up Stan Porters book on aspect and was left lost in his analysis of linguistics and their importance for understanding aspect. Needing a Ph.D. to understand what he was getting at, I put the book down.

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