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The Elements of New Testament Greek

Since 1914 Cambridge University Press has published *The Elements of New Testament Greek*, a best-selling textbook for scholars and students of the Bible. The original book by H.P.V. Nunn was replaced and succeeded in 1965 by J.W. Wenham's book of the same title; now Jeremy Duff has produced a new book to continue this long-established tradition into the twenty-first century.

Learning Greek is a journey of many steps. In this book every one of these steps is explained clearly and reviewed using practice questions and exercises. The lessons are ordered so that the most important aspects of Greek are learnt first and the vocabulary consists of the most commonly occurring words in the New Testament. The hundreds of examples cover every book of the New Testament and there is a New Testament passage to translate in almost every chapter.

Software containing drills for vocabulary and grammar, additional practice sentences and a Tutor's pack of PowerPoint™ slides is available to complement this book and may be found on-line at <http://www.cambridge.org/0521755514>. An audio CD set containing the vocabulary, paradigms and New Testament passages from the book is also available as a study aid (ISBN 0 521 61473 2).

JEREMY DUFF is Director of Lifelong Learning in the Liverpool Diocese and Canon of Liverpool Cathedral. Previously he taught Greek and New Testament at Oxford University.

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The Elements of New Testament Greek by H.P.V. Nunn was originally published by Cambridge University Press in 1914, with many reprints.

It was succeeded and replaced by *The Elements of New Testament Greek* by J.W. Wenham, first published in 1965, with many reprints up to 1991, when a revised and corrected reprint was issued, followed by further reprints to 2004.

The Elements of New Testament Greek, third edition by Jeremy Duff succeeds and replaces the above works.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

FOR MY STUDENTS

Contents

<i>Foreword by David Wenham</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Introduction</i>	
The aim of this book	1
How to use this book	3
The history of the Greek language	9
1 The alphabet	11
2 Basic sentences	21
3 Cases and gender	31
4 Prepositions	43
5 Adjectives	55
6 The tenses	66
7 Moods	79
8 Other patterns of nouns and verbs	91
9 Pronouns and conjunctions	100
10 Complex sentences	111
11 Special verbs	123
12 The third declension – Part 1	134
13 The third declension – Part 2	145
14 Participles	154
15 The Passive and Voices	166
16 The Perfect	178
17 The Subjunctive	189
18 Using verbs	200
19 Extra verbs	214
20 Final pieces	225
<i>Going further</i>	237
<i>Comparative English grammar</i>	240
<i>Parsing guide</i>	250
<i>Principal parts</i>	253
<i>Grammar reference tables</i>	255
<i>Answers to practice questions and Section A exercises</i>	275
<i>Greek – English dictionary</i>	302
<i>English – Greek dictionary</i>	313
<i>Index of sources from which the sentences are derived</i>	330
<i>Subject index</i>	333
<i>Index of citations from the New Testament.</i>	339

Foreword

When I was approached by Cambridge University Press and asked if I would be interested in writing a revision of my late father's *The Elements of New Testament Greek*, I was grateful for the invitation, but I declined. I am someone who uses Greek in my work, but I have not taught beginners' Greek very much at all. My father's book came out of practical classroom teaching, and any effective revision would have to be done by a teacher.

Dr Jeremy Duff is such a teacher, and a very effective one. When he began teaching Greek at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford, what is often an unpopular subject suddenly started to go down very well. Students actually enjoyed Greek! So it occurred to me that Jeremy would be a worthy reviser of the *Elements*. I was very glad that Cambridge University Press, having been put in touch with Jeremy, agreed that he should be given the task of revising the book.

In fact what has come out is much more than a revision. It is in almost all respects a brand new book, though arising out of Wenham. There is an excellent precedent for such a revision, because my father's work was a similarly radical revision of H.P.V. Nunn's earlier book.

My pleasure in writing this foreword is twofold. First, Jeremy is a friend and a colleague of mine at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford; he is someone who has brought energy and interest to the college, and not just to the teaching of Greek. Secondly, of course, I am glad to write this foreword because of my father. He was amazed at how long and well his version of the *Elements* lasted. It is a tribute to how good his book was that it went on and on while other books came and went. But he firmly expected it to be superseded before too long, and I am sure he would be glad to see it superseded by someone like Jeremy! And maybe it is good anyway to be superseded as the author of a Greek textbook: my father sometimes said that he was probably the best-hated name in the theological college world. That was in the days when most theological students had to study Greek, even if they weren't any good at it and even if they didn't wish to. Maybe the hatred is diminished now, but if Jeremy is willingly taking over the role of best-hated name, then we may be grateful on my father's part!

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Jeremy Duff

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x Foreword

The other side to that, of course, is that significant numbers of people in many countries are grateful for my father's book. Learning Greek may be a slog, especially for some; but, just as with learning a musical instrument, the rewards for hard work can be very great.

Admittedly, that point is not appreciated by many in the modern world. Studying ancient languages seems completely pointless to them. It isn't, of course. Historical study, including the study of ancient languages, can be most instructive for understanding culture and for understanding human beings and human nature. But for most of those who study New Testament Greek it is not just any old historical language: it is a door into the Christian Scriptures, which makes it significant for anyone who is interested in Christianity. For Christians it makes it very significant indeed, since the Bible is their foundational text, which they believe to have been given by God's inspiration and to contain God's word for the world.

This was my father's interest in it. He wrote numerous books on the Bible, starting with *Christ and the Bible*, in which he showed that Christian reverence for the Bible has its roots in Jesus' own teaching. His interest in Greek was because he believed that the Bible should be studied with great care: the words matter, and so does the original meaning of those words. Translations are often very good, but not always, and going back to the original is very worthwhile, as well as exciting for those who get some facility in the language.

I am personally grateful to my father for the example and inspiration he was as a Christian scholar who cared about the Bible and its words, and who encouraged me and many others to study it with academic integrity and honesty. Those many others include thousands of those who have been helped to get into the Greek New Testament through his book.

One of my favourite stories in the New Testament is the account of the walk to Emmaus in Luke 24: Jesus' two companions comment on how their hearts 'burned within them' as Jesus opened the Scriptures to them. Studying Greek isn't always as exciting as that, but I hope that Jeremy's book, like my father's, will be used by many and prove a door into understanding the New Testament and the remarkable person it portrays.

David Wenham,
Dean and Tutor in New Testament at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.

Cambridge University Press

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Jeremy Duff

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

Students are the ones who matter. Students, and more generally all those wishing to learn, are the only reason for teachers and academic books to exist. For ninety years those wishing to learn to read the New Testament in Greek have been ably served by *The Elements of New Testament Greek* published by Cambridge University Press. First, in the book of that name by H.P.V. Nunn published in 1914, and then in its 1965 replacement by J.W. Wenham. So successful was John Wenham's book that for much of its forty-year history it has been the standard first-year Greek course not only in the UK but across large parts of the English-speaking world. For generations of students, 'Wenham' was synonymous with Greek.

Wenham's success was that he cared about students and did everything possible to make learning 'the elements' of New Testament Greek as simple and painless as possible. The most striking example of this was his handling of Greek accents. The scholarly tradition behind the use of accents went back many centuries, though not, as Wenham was keen to point out, back to the time of the New Testament itself. Nevertheless Wenham dispensed with accents. Or at least he dispensed with most of them – keeping only the few cases where they were useful to the student in distinguishing between otherwise identical words. Even today many scholars and teachers find this regrettable, if not even scandalous. I have never met a student, though, who shares that opinion. The student working hard to master the basic structure and vocabulary of New Testament Greek welcomes every help and simplification offered. Wenham wrote his book for them.

Time moves on, however, and by the mid-1990s Wenham's *The Elements of New Testament Greek* was beginning to look dated. Greek might not have changed much, but students had. It was time for Wenham to be replaced, just as Nunn had been forty years earlier. It was a great privilege to be asked to undertake this task.

Wenham explained his relationship to Nunn in these words: 'This started out as a radical revision, it ended as a new book.' The same is true of this book. Having taught Greek using Wenham, I was convinced of the soundness of his

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0521755506 - The Elements of New Testament Greek, Third Edition

Jeremy Duff

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii Preface

approach – step-by-step learning of grammar and vocabulary, clear explanations, lots of practice exercises, and the overriding principle of teaching only ‘the elements’ of New Testament Greek, not every ‘interesting’ peculiarity. However, it could be improved and updated. Its handling of participles was often criticised for being too late, and too dense. It did not contain enough New Testament in its examples and exercises. The drip-feed of forty-four chapters wore students down. It seemed to assume a knowledge of grammatical forms. Its opening English grammar was off-putting. Its lack of a proper Greek–English dictionary was infuriating. It seemed old-fashioned.

This book aims to stand in continuity with Wenham. Other approaches to learning Greek are possible and are represented in the multitudinous Greek grammars available. But the aim of this book has been to continue with the basic approach of Wenham, and Nunn before him, but to update, improve and revise as appropriate. As I have worked on this revision, I have been overwhelmed by the amount of good-will towards *The Elements of New Testament Greek* within the Greek-teaching ‘community’. Partly, of course, this is because many of them first encountered Greek under Wenham’s guidance. But more significantly, it is because they have struggled to find anything better. For one reason or another many have moved on from Wenham, experimenting with more recent books. And yet they remain unsatisfied – what is wanted is a ‘twenty-first-century Wenham’. I hope that in some measure this book fulfils that need.

A large number of different people have helped in the writing of this book. Particular mention must be made of Susan Blackburn Griffith, who did much of the labour in producing the vocabulary lists and exercises. Thanks also are due to Jon Connell, Travis Derico, Claerwyn Frost, Jon Hyde, Hannah Rudge, Rachel Thorne and Richard Trethewey. Without their work and support it is unclear if the book would ever have seen the light of day.

Initial drafts have been used across the world by various teachers and their students, whose feedback has contributed in countless ways to the final shape and content of this book. The teachers can be named: Atsuhiko Asano, Stephanie Black, Mark Butchers, Philip Church, Peter Groves, Nicholas King, Jonathan Pennington, Marian Raikes, Daniela Schubert, Margaret Sim, Matthew Sleeman, Henry Wansborough and Paul Woodbridge. Their students, who pointed out both the good and the bad in the early drafts, are unknown to me, but deserve thanks none the less. I have also felt greatly supported in this endeavour by the wide community of Greek teachers. Among these, special thanks are due to John Dobson, who despite being the author of a notable beginners’ Greek textbook himself which takes a rather different approach, provided invaluable comments on a draft version. Naturally the mistakes and infelicities that remain are mine; indeed, various of the those mentioned above will soon discover where I failed to take their advice.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

More personally, four people deserve credit in different ways for sparking off and nurturing my own interest in Greek: Douglas Cashin, Rodney Lavin, John Roberts and Brenda Wolfe. More than anyone though, thanks for this belong to Tim Duff, the real Greek expert in the Duff family. Many of the trials and tribulations of 'the Wenham project' have been borne by my wife Jill with characteristic love and wisdom. Final credit, though, belongs to my own students in Oxford who for almost ten years have inspired me to keep honing and developing the material, have been gracious to my mistakes and supportive of improvements, and most of all have convinced me of the value of teaching Greek. It is to them, and future students, that this book is dedicated.

Jeremy Duff

*Wycliffe Hall, Oxford**May 2004*