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## Review of Verbal Aspect in Synoptic Parallels: On the Method and Meaning of Divergent Tense-Form Usage in the Synoptic Passion Narratives

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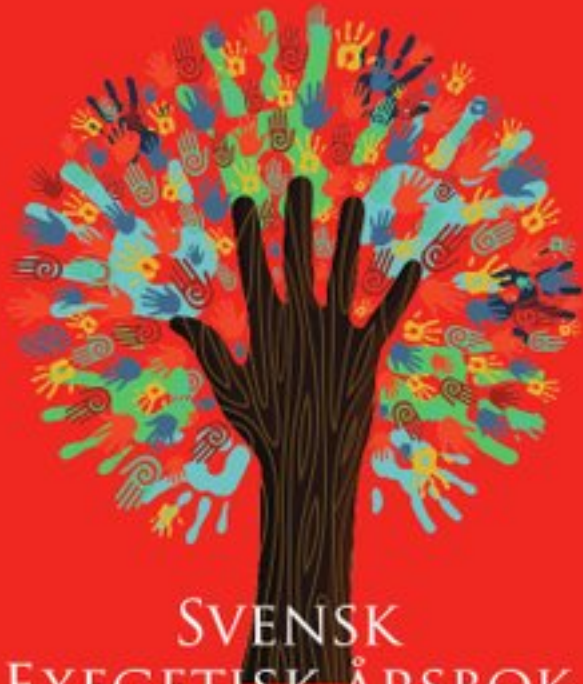
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ETNICITET I BIBELN OCH I  
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WALLY V. CIRAFESI, *Verbal Aspect in Synoptic Parallels: On the Method and Meaning of Divergent Tense-Form Usage in the Synoptic Passion Narratives*. Linguistic Biblical Studies 7. Leiden: Brill, 2013. Hardcover. XII + 191 pages. ISBN: 9789004246454. €101.00.

In *Verbal Aspect in Synoptic Parallels: On the Method and Meaning of Divergent Tense-Form Usage in the Synoptic Passion Narratives*, Wally Cirafesi seeks to account for authorial differences in synoptic parallels in the passion narratives and to provide criteria for assessing prominence in these discourses, and argues for the exegetical value of a stringent understanding of Greek verbal aspect. The volume consists of seven chapters, a bibliography and two indices: *Modern Authors Index* and *Ancient Sources Index*.

In his introduction (ch. 1), Cirafesi places his analysis in the broader context of historical Jesus studies, accounts for the linguistic approaches to gospels studies of E. J. Pryke, Stanley Porter, Paul Danove and Catherine Smith. He then provides a short overview of research on verbal aspect, ranging from the seminal work of Karl Brugmann who introduced the concept of *Aktionsart*, to the theoretical works of Porter, Fanning, McKay, Campbell and Olsen, and finally the applied works of Decker (Mark) and Mathewson (Revelation), who both, like Cirafesi himself, primarily use Porter's framework.

In chapter two, Cirafesi accounts for his linguistic theory and methodology, focussing on the research that has been done on tense/aspect. He describes the transition from an essentially time-based understanding of the aspect to the procedural categories of *Aktionsart*, which model though – as noted by Stanley Porter – fails to address the fact that one and the same tense form occurs in various procedural and temporal contexts, and contrariwise, that all the tenses can be found in identical (temporal) contexts. The *Aktionsart* theory fails because (i) *Aktionsart* values are judged from a completely subjective viewpoint, (ii) its schemes are not able to identify the stable uncancellable sense in each tense, and (iii) it does not properly distinguish between the semantics of the morphology and the lexicality respectively of the Greek verbs. After accounting for various definitions of verbal aspect and the proposed aspect-systems that range from two to four aspects, Cirafesi discusses how Present, Imperfect, Aorist, Perfect and Future tense has been understood by various theorists, and he notes the relative agreement with regard to Present and Aorist, the somewhat more problematic Imperfect and Future and the much more debated Perfect. Cirafesi opts for Porter's three-pronged system: the perfective (Aorist), the imperfective (Present & Imperfect) and the stative (Perfect & Pluperfect).

In chapter three, also on linguistic theory and methodology, Cirafesi places aspect in the broader context of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), addressing how SFL aids the establishment of meaningful oppositions for the Greek verbal system in a network; the notions of markedness and prominence; and verbal aspect as a discourse marker. The two tenets of SFL are, first, that language works as a large network of semantic relations and, second, the functional quality of language, i.e., individuals or groups use language to do things. Discussing implicational, material, distributional and semantic markedness, Cirafesi finds the perfective to be the least marked aspect, whereas the imperfective is more

marked. The stative is the most marked aspect of the three. The aspects are equipollent relative to each other and operate in a system of binary oppositions that range from less to more delicate choices. Markedness and prominence are quantifiable values on the basis of formal features, where ‘prominence is markedness that is motivated’. Applied to the aspects, the perfective (Aorist) has a function as background, the imperfective (Present/Imperfect) is foreground and the stative (Perfect/Pluperfect) is foreground. However, for formal markedness to be understood as prominence there must be corroborating co-textual marked items.

In chapters four, five and six, Cirafesi takes a look at cases of the use of divergent tense-forms in synoptic parallels in the Passion narratives: Jesus enters Jerusalem (Matt 21:1–22; Mark 11:1–25; Luke 19:28–48), Peter’s denial of Jesus (Matt 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:54–62) and the crucifixion of Jesus (Matt 27:1–61; Mark 15:1–47; Luke 22:66–23:56). Each chapter starts with an introduction followed by a section demonstrating the cohesiveness of each episode and another section about its content. The section in focus in each chapter is the aspectual analysis where Cirafesi applies his – or rather, Porter’s – aspectual theory to parallel accounts, analysing the verbal usage of each synoptic.

In chapter four, ‘Jesus comes to Jerusalem’, Cirafesi shortly discusses the understanding of the Present, rejecting the traditional notion of the narrative Present as an expression of vividness, the zero tense concept, Campbell’s notion of ‘aspectual spill’ and Runge’s ‘semantic-mismatch’ category. Instead, Cirafesi anchors his model in the formal features of the language. Cirafesi argues that Mark in particular uses the Present for foregrounding. Cirafesi brings out a verse from the temple cleansing incident as the most striking example of divergent tense-form use; here ποιέω occurs in the Present, Perfect and Aorist in the three Synoptics respectively, where Luke’s account indicates his relative indifference for the temple cleansing, whereas Matthew’s and particularly Mark’s aspectual choices together with additional formal characteristics in the co-text underline the importance of the cleansing of the temple.

In chapter five, ‘Peter’s Denial of Jesus’, Cirafesi sets out to demonstrate his aspectual model as the most potent tool to explain divergent tense-form use, and that tense-form choices often reflect the narrative development and so provide formal criteria to assess the gradual intensification of the drama in the denial episode. In analyses 1, 2 and 3, Cirafesi notes the difficulty of the temporal and *Aktionsart* approaches to explain divergent tense usage in parallel accounts. As for the final round of Peter’s denial/s (analysis 3), the heavily marked Perfect, supported by other formal markers pointing in the same direction, is used in Mark’s accounts, whereas in Luke we find the marked Imperfect in connection with the third denial (as opposed to the Aorist in the first two ones).

In chapter six, ‘The Crucifixion of Jesus,’ the handing over of Jesus in Mark 15:10 is foregrounded by the Pluperfect that to Cirafesi is even more heavily marked than the Perfect. The Pluperfect here is contrasted by the Pluperfect in 15:7 describing Barabbas’ committing of murder. Interestingly, in the parallel verse of Mark 15:10 in Matthew (27:18), the handing over of Jesus is unmarked, whereas Pilate’s ‘knowing’ that the Jews handed Jesus over because of envy is described by the heavily marked Pluperfect. Cirafesi supports his case by refer-

ence to the warning given by Pilate's wife. In his third analysis, where Cirafesi deals with how the grave of Jesus was hewn, he accounts for the semantics of periphrasis to be able to compare Mark's Perfect periphrasis to Matthew's Aorist and Luke's use of an adjective.

In the summary of his results (ch. 7), Cirafesi argues that he by comparing synoptic parallels has shown 'conscious and flexible aspectual choices being made'. He also points to the exegetical value that the verbal aspect theory provides the interpreter. Even though admitting that his conclusions are not exhaustive, Cirafesi feels confident to conclude that contemporary Greek grammarians are in need of updating their linguistic models.

Issues not sufficiently addressed in Cirafesi's volume are the nature of the Perfect and the Future. Furthermore, the relation between markedness in discourse and genre of literature deserves more attention. Another issue essential for the assessment of aspectual choices that Cirafesi does not deal with – but mentions as a question to be addressed – is idiolect. With respect to Cirafesi's adoption of Halliday's definition of prominence as 'markedness that is motivated', it is somewhat worrying that he does not mention any cases where markedness is not motivated. Is this because he does not find any or is it because he avoids mentioning them? However, within the scope of fairly short volume, Cirafesi has done a good job presenting the issues and applying his model to text.

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JOHN J. COLLINS OCH DANIEL C. HARLOW (RED.), *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. Inbunden. XXXVII + 1360 sidor. ISBN: 9780802825490. \$95.00.

Med John Collins och Daniel Harlow som huvudredaktörer har Eerdmans gett ut en mycket omfattande uppslagsbok över den tidiga judendomen, ungefär perioden mellan den hebreiska Bibeln och Mishna. Förutom uppslagsartiklar innehåller volymen även tretton längre artiklar som ger en introduktion till övergripande ämnen inom forskningen av den tidiga judendomen, såsom "Early Jewish Biblical Interpretation" (James Kugel), "Dead Sea Scrolls" (Eibert Tigchelaar) och "Archaeology, Papyri, and Inscriptions" (Jürgen Zangenberg). Denna del omfattar 290 sidor och har givits ut som en enskild volym (*Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*, Eerdmans 2012). En lista över alla uppslagsartiklarna i bokstavsordning och en annan över artiklarna utifrån ämnen ("Topical List of Entries"), t.ex. "Pseudepigrapha" och "Religious Beliefs and Influences", gör uppslagsverket mycket enkelt att använda. Detta är en mycket välkommen uppslagsbok, den första över den tidiga judendomen. I volymen är olika texter från denna period ordentligt presenterade var för sig. Så finns t.ex. enskilda artiklar över "the Community Rule" och "the War Scroll", istället för att de presenteras tillsammans under rubriken "Dead Sea Scrolls", såsom brukligt. På samma sätt återfinns enskilda artiklar över "Testaments of the Patriarchs" och "Joseph and Asenath". Detta gör volymen till en guldgruva med information om den rika judiska litteraturen som aldrig kom med i någon kanon. Även kanoniska texter behandlas emellertid. Böckerna i den hebreiska bibeln ingår, men presenteras gruppvis i vissa