

*Posted 11th October 2008*

This is part of the introduction of a fifty-page study to appear in the Spring of 2009 in *Filologia Neotestamentaria*, Cordoba, Spain. Prof Jan v.d. Watt gives an excellent presentation of scholarly work (grammars, commentaries, studies) on this verse, while Prof Chrys C. Caragounis discusses the verse from the holistic approach to NT Greek, which he has pioneered. To his amazement, Caragounis discovered a lot of problems with the traditional grammatical explanations and the resultant exegesis.

## **A Grammatical Analysis of John 1:1**

Jan van der Watt & Chrys Caragounis  
Universities of Pretoria and Lund

***Jan vd Watt:*** This article is a pilot study on the feasibility of investigating the grammar, both in terms of words and sentences, of the Gospel according to John in a systematic manner. The reason is that in general the commentaries and even specialized articles have different foci, *inter alia*, focusing on the historical nature or the theological and literary aspects that the Gospel is so well-known for. In surveys of commentaries on the Gospel it becomes apparent that real grammatical studies are far and few between, and that there is a tendency among commentators to copy grammatical material from one another. More often than not, grammatical issues are simply ignored and the unsuspecting and trusting reader will not even realize that there is a dangerous dungeon of grammatical problems lurking beneath the surface of the text. Apart from that, the significance of grammatical decisions are often underestimated in studies of John's Gospel.

This project has the aim of reconsidering the wide spectrum of grammatical solutions, or probable solutions, that were offered for particular grammatical problems. This is done in a comprehensive way, including the following steps:

As far as it is possible, the different solutions, or at least the most prominent, offered in the history of research will be reflected, so that the reader gets an overview of how any particular problem was approached and solved in the past. ...

Then the grammar of sentences (syntax) will receive attention. The aim of this phase is to illustrate the different possibilities of linking different phrases within a particular context. ...

Since our assumption is that exegetical decisions are combinations of grammatical arguments, syntactical considerations, contextual and theological influences (semantics as the relationship of structures of meaning), we have chosen to consider

the grammatical solutions offered on any particular problem in the light of the theological feasibility of that particular solution. ...

**Chrys C. Caragounis:** In my own contribution to this article each one of the various grammatical problems in John 1:1 will be considered from the point of view of the diachronic understanding of Greek. In this perspective no chronological limits are set aprioristically as to the dates or types of evidence to be used. In a judicious manner evidence from the entire history of the language can be brought to bear on the problem. It will not take the form of a detailed *Auseinandersetzung* with the overview of the solutions offered in scholarship, but will consider each clause anew in the light of a holistic Greek usage in order to bring insights arising from the state of development within the Greek language to bear on our text. In this way the grammatical understanding that has shaped Johannine exegesis to date, as well as a new approach to the matter at hand, will be considered in tandem. The latter approach has never been utilized before in this debate, namely, seeking meaning not in arbitrarily compartmentalized periods of the Greek language hermetically sealed from one another – a procedure that has led to considerable distortions in semantics – but in a living language that was undergoing developments and changes in morphology and syntax. Although much of what has been said before in scholarly discussion thus far is still valid, this discussion will draw attention to what needs to be understood differently. This means that no comments will be made on areas of agreement but only on areas of disagreement.

In case some may think that the diachronic approach runs the risk of using anachronistic evidence, it should be pointed out that (a) the unity of the Greek language from its known beginnings to the present day has been settled long ago and that no informed scholar doubts it<sup>1</sup>, (b) the language underwent a 900-year transition from Alexander (335 B.C.) to Justinian (A.D. 565), during which it changed from ancient to modern, and (c) since the New Testament was written in the middle of that period, it is obvious that the New Testament exhibits both elements that belong to the ancient phase of the language and elements that are at home in the modern phase of the language. That is why literature written during the entire history of the language up to Neohellenic times both in Katharevousa and Demotic is potentially relevant and must be investigated.

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<sup>1</sup> See the research of the great philologist, A. Koraës, in his *Ἄτακτα*, 5 Vols., Paris 1828-1835; D. Mavrofydes, *Δοκίμιον Ἱστορίας τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Γλώσσης*, Ἐν Σμύρνῃ 1871; G. N. Hatzidakis, *Einleitung in die Neugriechische Grammatik*, (Bibliothek Indogermanischer Grammatiken, Band 5), Leipzig 1892; *idem*, *Γλωσσολογικαὶ Ἔρευναι*, 2 Vols., Athens 1934; *idem*, *Μεσσαίωνικὰ καὶ Νέα Ἑλληνικά*, 2 Vols., Athens 1905-07; A. N. Jannaris, *An Historical Greek Grammar*, London: Macmillan 1897 and others. For the importance of these scholars as well as for their relevance for New Testament exegesis, see Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament. Morphology, Syntax, Phonology, and Textual Transmission* (WUNT 167), Tübingen: Mohr 2004 (pb Baker Academic 2007), 95-98.