ASPECT AND BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

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ABSTRACT

For a long period of time aspect of the Greek language was directly associated with the tense of the verb, and specifically the verb stem. This state of affairs is part of the 'old approach' to grammar which tends to explain items in isolation. The present paper underscores a functional view of language whereby distinctions are mainly made in terms of usages in context. Aspect and tense are separated from each other in the sense that there is no one-to-one relationship between the two items. Seven domains of aspect are indicated, and tested by means of examples from Luke-Acts.

I INTRODUCTION

The different approaches to aspect in current linguistic studies have a number of exegetical repercussions. Some results of traditional Biblical commentaries are deemed inaccurate and even wrong today, due to an incorrect view of aspect.

It has become necessary to distinguish between the 'traditional' as opposed to the 'functional' approach to language (Louw 1987:49,50). The former focuses on a language item as such, and tries to determine what that item (in itself) is capable of doing. The latter evaluates language phenomena in terms of functions in particular contexts. An attempt is made to identify these functions by means of markers (cf 1987:50). In particular the functional approach is concerned with dividing language items into categories, namely the semantic domains of communication processes (1987:50). These insights are partly dependent on the word of Harald Weinrich (1971). Weinrich realised that the choice of verb tense is determined by speech perspectives ('functional categories') which he called besprochene Welt and erzähle Welt.

Aspect can be studied best in terms of a functional approach. The function of aspectual lexical items is determined in context. Nida and de Waard (1986) explain that functionality pertains to the communicative process of translation. In this context it to be noted that aspect is intimately involved in 'speaker' perspective. Nida and de Waard's description of the communicative functions which are applicable to the process of language translation, must be noted (1986:25). They are: expressive, interpersonal, informative, imperative, performative, emotive, and aesthetic. We will not discuss all of these functions, but the point to be stressed is that segments of language, including aspect, are to be investigated in contextual situations. Something is true, Louw states, only within a certain frame of reference (1986:48).

Aspect itself has been a relatively neglected area of linguistics and a considerable measure of confusion exists in the current discussion.
Holisky (1981:127-30) names three factors contributing to this state of affairs.

The first factor is terminology. The term 'aspect' has many definitions. Holisky (1981:128) follows the rather general, though useful, definition of Friedrich (1974): 'Aspect signifies the relative duration or punctuality along a line that may inhere in words or constructions.' Holisky proceeds to describe the dynamics of aspect as a single, broad opposition: punctual versus linear. Punctual aspect entails the perfective, completive, inceptive, semelfactive, nondurative and nonprogressive. Linear action aspect can then be described as nonperfective, noncomple­
tive, noninceptive, iterative, durative and progressive.

The second confusing factor is that linguists tend to confound real world facts about time with grammatical ones about aspect. For instance, an aspectually punctual verb is not defined as one that refers to a punct­
tual event in the real world. We will return to the matters of aspect, tense and time.

The third confusing factor is the combination of lexical with morpholo­gical information. One example of this combination is where oppositions such as perfective-imperfective are restricted to a certain subset of verbs, for example nonstatives.

The study of aspect is far from concluded. Therefore the present contribution can only represent a partial introduction to some of the major problems experienced in the area. Biblical exegesis in particular has to take cognisance of the problems involved, because aspect has to do with some of the most recent findings in the process of determining meaning.

2 TENSE, TEMPORALITY AND ASPECT

First of all, it must be realised that the utilisation of tense may vary considerably in different languages. Certain general remarks can neverthe­less be made.

Direct linkage of tense, time and aspect seems to be denied by lin­guists. Total separation of these elements of language cannot be proved either. Bache (1985:15) describes the history of thought on the subjects of tense and time as follows:

Traditionally tense was regarded as a formal category, while time was a notional category. Since in many of the languages analysed by tradi­tional grammarians certain time distinctions were more regularly con­veyed by verb forms than by other forms, tense was regarded as a verbal category.

Bache points out that tense (in the traditional sense) is not a universal category since not all languages known today possess verb forms expressing time distinctions (1985:15).

There are two competing tense theories which specify the nature of the time distinctions conveyed by verb forms. Lyons (1977) is an exponent of the first theory where it is argued that tense is a deictic category:

A tensed proposition, therefore, will be, not merely timebound, or even temporally restricted: it will contain a reference to some point or pe-
period of time which cannot be identified except in terms of the zero-point of utterance. (1977:682)

By 'deixis' is meant the location and identification of persons, objects, events, processes and activities being talked about, or referred to, in relation to the spatiotemporal context created and sustained by the act of utterance and the participation in it, typically, of a single speaker and at least one addressee (Lyons 1977:637).

The second theory of tense was developed by Weinrich (1971). He rejects the association of tense with time since he distinguishes between besprochene Welt and erzählte Welt (cf 1971:42ff). According to Weinrich, even past, present and future tenses cannot be associated with specific periods of time (1971:7). Instead, he considers the traditional tenses to be markers of textual functions (cf 1971:126). Weinrich sets up a basic dichotomy, reflected by the use of tenses: 'narrative' versus 'discursive' communication. The narrative tenses (the preterite, pluperfect and conditional) entail retrospection, while the discursive tenses (the present, perfect and future) entail prospection. The matter of 'foregrounding' and 'backgrounding' is also implied (cf Bache 1985:21-22). Criticisms are levelled against both tense theories. The matter is not yet resolved.

Comrie (1976:5) contends that both aspect and tense are not unconnected with time, but concerned with time in different ways. He regards tense as a deictic category, whereas aspect is not concerned with relating the time of the situation to any other timepoint, but rather with the internal temporal constituency of the one situation. Comrie sees the difference as one between 'situation-external time' (tense). In the end, Comrie observes, 'aspect and time impinge on one another' (1976:66). Some linguists would strongly agree with Comrie, for example Traugott & Pratt (1980:297), who ascribe 'extended deictic functions' to aspect (cf also Dorfmüller-Karpusa 1988:139). Others, again, regard aspect as a clearly non-deictic category (cf De Klerk 1978:83).

Tense and aspect are not identical and do not refer to time in the same way, but both have to do with elements of time. Especially since Debrunner (1930) and contemporaries, linguists have spoken of a combination of aspect and time stems (cf Chatterjee 1988:6). Lyons (1977:682) believes that a fairly clear distinction can be drawn between tense, mood and aspect. He warns, though, that there are differences in how languages grammaticalise these elements (cf also the reservations of Wallace 1982:207).

Bache (1985:101ff) offers a metalinguistic characterisation of the aspect category on the basis of the Russian ('the aspect language par excellence') verb system. Firstly, tense is characterised in terms of temporality: anteriority, simultaneity and posteriority. Secondly, in terms of actionality: complexity — simplicity; punctuality — duration; telicness — homogeneity; direction — self-containment. Thirdly, in terms of aspectuality: perfectivity — imperfectivity. Then Bache links temporality and aspectuality by means of actionality, for example +complexity -imperfectivity; +punctuality -perfectivity; +telicness -perfectivity; +direction -imperfectivity. Bache's refined theoretical approach is another way of trying to describe the possible relations between aspect and tense.

Dorfmüller-Karpusa (1988:135) takes the issue one step further by indicating how temporal and aspectual relations belong to the constitutive el-
ments of a text. She ascribes the task of ordering to three relations: before, after and simultaneously. In this she is influenced by Miller and Johnson-Laird (1976):

The core of the time concept is relatively simple, perhaps even universal, and grows more or less out of the experience of successive moments.

Closely related to the matter of order is the ontology of states of affairs, distinguished by Vendler (1967) as states, activities, accomplishments and achievements. These categories have already received considerable approval and use in the study of aspect proper. Dorfmüller-Karpusa concludes (1988:165):

Whereas the temporality of a described state of affairs is determined by the relation between the interval of event and the interval of speech, its aspect is determined by means of the relation between the interval of event and an interval of reference.

Also, as far as the producer is concerned, the use of temporality and aspect plays an important role in shaping the expression of messages.

Turning to Greek, it is rather difficult to determine how, if in any way, the verb has to do with aspect. In contrast to Slavic (Slavic has paired verbs in all tenses), Greek uses different tenses (impf and aor) of the same verb to denote aspect (cf Szemerényi 1987:3).

Rijksbaron (1984:1) names five tense stems of the Greek verbal system, with the semantic value of each: Present stem (signifies that the verbal action continues through a point in time given in context or situation and is, therefore, not-completed (imperfective value); aorist stem (signifies that the verbal action is completed at a point in time given in context or situation (confective value); perfect stem (signifies that at a point in time given in context or situation a state exists which is the result of the completion of the verbal action (stative-confective value); future stem (signifies that the verbal action takes place after a point in time given in context or situation, without indicating whether or not the verbal action is completed; and future perfect stem (signifies that after a point in time given in context or situation a state exists which is the result of the completion of the verbal action).

Rijksbaron also calls these stems ‘aspect stems’. Some of his further observations should be studied carefully. Firstly, the tense stems do not express time in the sense of present, past and future. However, they often - the future stem always - express temporal relationships: simultaneity (present and perfect stem); anteriority (aorist stem); posteriority (future stem). Secondly, Rijksbaron regards as untenable the following statement: Greek had no proper means of expressing relative time and therefore the stems are really aspect stems, aspect being defined as ‘the speaker’s view of the action.’

Thirdly, Rijksbaron notes that ‘not-completed’ and ‘completed’ should in principle be understood as ‘not-completed’ and ‘completed’ with regard to a certain point of orientation. Fourthly, the choice between tense stems is to a large extent determined by the context (cf Louw 1987:46ff).
Thus we see different attempts to describe the relationship or similarities between aspect, tense and time. According to Louw (1987:54), there is a strong possibility that the tenses as such have nothing directly to do with aspect; aspect would thus be marked lexically and the tenses would mark time and speech perspectives. He adds that methodologically time should also be viewed in terms of functions, since there are also other means than tenses of expressing time. Regarded from the viewpoint of a functional approach to language, aspect is not marked by tense forms, since they indicate speech perspectives. The Greek tenses divide into two speech perspectives, namely action and state (Louw 1987:56).

3 AKTIONSART AND ASPECT

Both Aktionsart and aspect have a history of considerable terminological and conceptual uncertainty. One question is whether a distinction between the two terms is still desirable. Louw (1989:11) refers to Curtius, the Greek scholar of the mid-nineteenth century, who coined the terms Zeitstufe for time and Zeitart for complete/incomplete action, which soon developed further into an elaborate set of distinctions. Zeitart became Aktion, and later Aktionsart (cf also Bache 1985:9).

In 1908 the Swedish Slavist, Sigurd Agrell, wrote a monograph entitled Aspektänderung und Aktionsartbildung. He declared: 'die beiden Hauptkategorien des slavischen Zeitwortes, die unvollendete und die vollendete Handlungsform (das Imperfektivum und das Perfektivum) — diese nenne ich Aspekte. Mit dem Ausdruck Aktionsart bezeichne ich...Bedeutungsfunktionen..., die genauer ausdrücken, wie die Handlung vollbracht wird, die Art und Weise ihrer Ausführung markieren.' According to Agrell, some twenty different Aktionsarten can be distinguished, including momentan, durativ, kursiv, inchoativ, präterativ and terminativ (cf Szemerényi 1987:8; Lloyd 1979:6).

It is the conviction of Szemerényi (1987:9,10) that Aktionsarten do not belong with aspect. He agrees with one part of the scholarly world that aspect in Greek is a binary system of perfective versus imperfective.

Bache (1985:13) associates an arrangement of interrelated oppositions with the value of Aktionsart. The oppositions of Aktionsart which have received most attention in literature on the subject are punctual versus durative; dynamic versus stative; telic versus atelic; ingressive versus terminative; semelfactive versus iterative; habitual versus non-habitual.

As recently as 1984, W Saurer went about compiling a formal semantics of tense, aspect and Aktionsarten. In this study sentences are classified according to ways in which they interact with temporal adverbials, tenses and aspects. The resulting subclasses of sentences are called Aktionsarten, meaning 'types of action' (cf 1984:9). The concepts stative-ness, activity, accomplishment and achievement are regarded as Aktionsarten by Saurer.

There is a whole group of linguists who seem satisfied with a definite distinction between aspect and Aktionsart. In the Prague Circle (cf Chatterjee 1988:12) it was attempted to distinguish aspect from Aktionsart. 'Objective peculiarities' of action were summarised under the title 'manner of action' ('Aktionsart in the narrower sense'). 'Subjective perception and representation' of verbal action was regarded as aspect ('in the narrow sense').
Another view with regard to aspect and Aktionsart is that of Chatterjee (1988:21,22). He presents a modern (Slavic), cross-linguistic approach. Aspect becomes 'a conceptual semantic category allowing the speaker to express or emphasise a phase or view of verbal action' Aktionsart 'can be distinguished as any adverbial alteration of the meaning of a verbal form that adds a nuance while also affecting the punctual versus linear aspectualities inherent in the unaltered form.'

In the end, Chatterjee observes, the distinction between aspect and Aktionsart (in Slavic) is only a procedural convenience, since there at least exists a close ‘functional reciprocity’ between the two and there is no generally accepted demonstration of a borderline between aspect and Aktionsart (1988:25).

With Lyons (1977), and despite some criticism of his views on aspect (e.g Bache) we have, in general, arrived at the prevailing idea on the issue. Lyons also writes about the confusion, especially regarding the use of the term 'Aktionsart' (1977:706). In order to 'denote that part of a verb's meaning whereby it (normally) denotes one kind of situation rather than another' (1977:706), he implements the term 'aspect'. Furthermore, Lyons regards stativity and progressivity as not the only semantic notions that concern the study of aspect. He chooses seven, rather than two, possibilities (1977:708): stative versus non-stative; dynamic versus non-dynamic; stative versus dynamic; durative versus non-durative; punctual versus non-punctual; durative versus punctual; and progressive versus non-progressive.

It is impossible to give a decisive verdict on the whole issue of the relationship between the notions of aspect and Aktionsart in studies of the Greek language. It may be more important to keep them apart in a language such as Russian (cf Hopper 1982:5). As a working strategy for the present paper, it is advisable to utilise the terms interchangeably.

4 ASPECT: OLD AND NEW

Louw (1989) provides an overview of how aspect is treated in traditional Greek grammars of the New Testament, with special reference to E de Witt Burton, Eduard Schwyzer, Blass-Debrunner-Rehkopf, J H Moulton, A T Robertson and K Brugmann. A short synthesis of Louw's findings with regard to the Greek verb and aspect is given here. He summarises the general contention of traditional grammars towards 'verbal aspect' as follows (1-4):

4.1 The present indicative
a) Action in progress: durative or descriptive: Luke 15:29: τουσείνα ἐτη δουλείω σοι 'for so many years I am serving you.'

b) A customary (iterative) action: Luke 18:12: νηστείω δὶς τοῦ συμβατο 'I fast twice a week.'

c) Action attempted, but not accomplished (conative): John 10:32: διὰ ποιὸν αὐτῶν ἔργον ἐμὲ λιθάζετε 'for which work do you want to stone me?'

d) General truths (gnomical): Matthew 7:17: πάν δένδρον δύσθον καρποὺς κυλοὺς ποιεῖ 'every good tree bears good fruit.'
e) Event of the past described as vividly taking place before one's eyes (historical present): Mark 11:27: καὶ ἔρχονται πάλιν εἰς Ἰηροσόλυμα 'and they came again to Jerusalem.'

f) Event of the future described as vividly taking place before one's eyes (futuristic): Matthew 27:63: μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἐγείρομαι 'three days later I will rise again.'

g) Action coincident with the time of speaking and conceived of as a simple event: Mark 2:5: ἀφίενται σοι αἱ ἁμαρτίαι 'your sins are forgiven.'

h) Action of the past still in progress: Luke 13:7: τρία ξητὰ ἀφ' οὗ ἔρχομαι 'for three years I am coming.'

i) Action just beginning (inchoative present): Mark 11:23: ἄλλα πιστεύῃ ὅτι ὁ λαλεῖ γίνεται 'but believes that what he says will begin to happen/will then happen.'

Though the usage described under a) above deals with durative or linear action, Louw observes that it is remarkable that most grammar books will also use it as a heading to the total section on the present (1989:5). As such the example in a) is supposed to represent the 'basic' meaning of the present, while b) – h) are variations of a).

4.2 The imperfect indicative


b) Action attempted, but not yet accomplished (conative): Matthew 3:14: ὁ δὲ...διεκάλυεν αὐτὸν 'but he tried to hinder him.'

c) Action repeated or customarily done (iterative): Acts 3:2: ὅπως ἔφαγον καθ' ἡμέραν πρὸς τὴν θύραν 'whom they used to lay daily at the door.'

d) Action mentioned without stressing duration (aoristic): Matthew 9:21: ἔδεη γιὰ ἐν ἐκατοτῇ; 'for she said to herself.'

e) Action seen as moving panorama, 'dividing the crown with the aorist': 1 Corinthians 10:3,4: πάντες...ἐφαγον καὶ πάντες ἐπιον...ἐπιον γιὰ 'they all...ate and...drank, for they drank.'

f) Potential action: Acts 25:22: ἐδουλώμην 'I would have wished/I was just on the point of wishing.'

It should be noted that the imperfect tense presents more problems than the other tenses to the new way of studying aspect.

4.3 The aorist indicative

a) Action undefined/indefinite, simply as an event (constative, punctiliar, complexive, perfective, momentary, historical): John 1:11: εἰς τὰ ἴδα ἴλῃ 'he came to his own people'. Acts 28:30: ἐνεμαίνεν...ἐπετίαν ἔλην...
'he remained there two whole years' (complexive).

b) Beginning point of an event or state (ingressive, inceptive): Acts 15:12: ἐσίγησαν...πᾶν τὸ πλῆθος 'the whole crowd became silent'. Luke 9:36: αὐτοὶ ἐσίγησαν 'they kept silent.'

c) End point of an event or state (effective, resultative, indicating success of effort): Acts 27:43: ἐκώλυσεν αὐτούς 'he prevented them.'

d) General truths (gnomic): John 15:6: ἐὰν μὴ τις μένῃ ἐν ἐμοί, ἐβληθῇ ἐξω καὶ ἐξηράνθη 'if anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown out and withers.'

e) Event as viewed from particular reference point (epistolary): Ephesians 6:22: δὲ ἐπέμψα 'whom I send.'

f) Vividness in relating an event that has just occurred (dramatic aorist): Luke 16:4: ἔγνων τί ποιήσω 'I know now what I shall do.'

4.4 The perfect indicative

a) Action completed while affirming its existing result (extensive, resultative): Acts 5:28: πεπληρώκατε τὴν Ἰηρουσαλήμ τῆς διδάξης ὑμῶν 'you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching.'


c) Emphatic present (intensive perfect): John 6:69: πεπιστεύκαμεν καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν 'we believe and know for sure.'

d) Simple past fact (aoristic perfect): 2 Corinthians 2:13: οὐκ ἔσχηκα ἁνέσσω 'I had no relief.' 1 John 4:10: οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἡγαπήκαμεν τὸν Θεόν, ἀλλὰ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἡγάπησέν ἡμᾶς 'it is not that we loved God, but that he loved us.'

4.5 The pluperfect

The pluperfect is usually explained as being merely a past tense of the perfect.

4.6 The future

The future is said to be either durative or punctiliar, though more often merely future tense.

a) Momentary/indefinite: 1 Corinthians 15:52: ἀλλαγησόμεθα...ἐν ἅτόμῳ 'we shall be changed in a moment.'

b) Progressive: Philippians 1:18: καὶ χαρῆσομαι 'and I will (continue to) rejoice.'

c) Imperative: James 2:8: ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν 'you must love your neighbour as yourself.'
d) Gnomic: Romans 5:7: μόλις... ὑπὲρ δικαιοῦ... ἀποθανεῖται 'scarcely will one die for a righteous person.'

4.7 Further remarks

In the imperative, subjunctive and optative where only the present tense and aorists are found, the difference as to Aktionsart was explained as being linear versus punctiliar. The infinitive and participle were mostly treated as indicative.

Louw expounds these traditional categories and the meanings assigned to verb forms in order to explain the method of grammars and commentaries with regard to aspect. He concludes that the interpretations of the tense forms mainly constitute usages of words, rather than inherent lexical attributes. These distinctions are therefore primarily contextual (cf 1989:4), that is usages in context. What is understood from the context, is transferred back to the tense form, eventually claiming that the tense form has that meaning (1989:4).

Methodologically the old approach to grammar was an explanation of items in isolation. Discourse analysis exchanges items for functions. Louw concludes: 'No longer it was asked "what is the aspect of a particular tense" but "what aspects are there and how are they expressed"'(1989:4).

In effect, most of the old distinctions of tense and aspect are outdated and misleading, if not totally wrong (1989:4). Therefore grammatical and exegetical mistakes can be expected in this field.

An interesting phenomenon is exhibited by a number of verbs listed in the Greek grammar of Karl Brugmann (1913). They denote a specific kind of action in their meanings as such (cf Louw 1989:5). The list includes: τρέεω = make a single turn; στρωθάω = turn continually, keep on turning (repeat the action for some time); προβάω = pick up (action + end point); περιήγαω = travel about (durative and, distributive); κατέρχομαι = go down/come back (action + end point); ὁψεώ = wish to see (desiderative action); ύποβήσω = cough a little (diminutive); μαμασάω = sparkle, flash (intensive); ἐκχόλαιμα = warm thoroughly (intensive); προβοδάω = shout, cry out (intensive); ἑυστάκω = drag to and fro (iterative)/ drag violently (intensive); γνησίσκω = grow old (ingressive).

In looking at the examples above, however, Brugmann and others combined the features of root meaning and tense form in order to explain the type of action of the tense forms. At present it is acknowledged that the meaning of a word can indeed express Aktionsart, that is, the kind of action. The fact that aspectual distinctions are not merely a matter pertaining to verbs, leads to the conclusion that it is better to use the term 'aspect' than 'verbal aspect' (Louw 1987; 1989:5; cf Comrie 1981: 68-69).

In traditional Greek grammars the examples of tenses and of the 'meanings' of tenses are selective. In most instances one also finds other usages of the same tenses quoted.

5 MARKERS OF ASPECT IN GREEK

According to the functional approach to language, aspect can be defined as a function of language whereby the nature of an event is pictured (Louw 1989:6). How, then, does language depict the nature of an event? That is: how is aspect signified by a particular language? Louw (1989:6) names four
markers of aspect in Greek.

5.1 Semantic components of word meanings
These are related to the so-called 'root meanings' (such as the list of Brugmann above). The nature of the events involve in and of themselves the notions (or components) of durative/perfective.

5.2 Lexemes
Some verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, idioms, prepositions denote an aspect of an event, that is how that event takes place.

5.3 Morphological elements of lexemes
Prepositions as part of lexemes (περίαγω = travel about).

5.4 Contextual considerations
In most instances the nature of an action is suggested by the context. Most of the distinctions in the traditional explication of 'verbal aspects' in grammars are contextual considerations.

6 SUBDOMAINS OF ASPECT
The new Greek-English lexicon of Louw and Nida (1988), which is based on semantic domains, combines recent insights into the study of aspect under the heading 'Outline of subdomains' (1988:655; for a discussion of further aspect parameters, cf Timberlake 1982:317ff). In a footnote (1988:655) Louw and Nida make the following notable observation: 'Meanings involving aspect normally relate to events, but they may also be applicable to states of being....'

The subdomains are:

6.1 Begin, Start
6.2 Continue
6.3 Complete, Finish, Succeed
6.4 Cease, Stop
6.5 Try, Attempt
6.6 Do intensively or extensively
6.7 Rapidity, Suddenness

7 ASPECT IN LUKE-ACTS
Some of the subdomains named are exemplified by means of examples from the whole of Luke-Acts. The 'old' and 'new' way of approaching aspect are compared to each other. Previous Greek grammars consistently attached aspect to the form/tense of the verb.

The examples below indicate that aspect should rather be deducted from the immediate context of the discourse than from the tense of the verb per se (cf Louw & Nida 1988:655-664).

7.1 Begin, Start
Luke 3:23: αὐτὸς ἦν Ἰησοῦς ἀρχόμενος ὡσεὶ ἐτῶν τριάκοντα 'when Jesus began, he was about thirty years old.' The aspectual contents of the sentence is included in the meaning attached to ἀρχόμαι: begin.
Acts 13:50: επήγειραν διωγμὸν ἐπὶ τὸν Παύλον καὶ Βαρνάβαν 'they stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas.' The aspect of beginning is situated in the verb ἐπήγειραν itself.

7.2 Continue
Luke 1:22: αὐτοῖς ἦν διανεύων αὐτοῖς, καὶ διέμενεν καφός 'he made signs to them and remained unable to speak.' The aspect of continuation in the periphrastic imperfect construction ἦν διανεύων, as well as in the imperfect διέμενεν is expressed by the two verbs concerned, intensified by the preposition διὰ. Plummer (1977:16) ascribes the 'continued action' here to the periphrastic imperfect. In his commentary on Luke (1977:18) he declares that the 'tense emphasises the fact that it was no mere temporary seizure.'

Acts 14:22: παρακαλοῦντες ἐμμένειν τῇ πίστει 'encourage them to remain true to the faith.' The idea of continuation is embedded in the meaning-in-context ascribed to the verb μένειν.

7.3 Complete, Finish, Succeed
Luke 10:42: Μαρίας γὰρ τὴν ἁγαθὴν μερίδα ἐξελέξατο ἡτὶς οὐκ ἀφαίρεθησέται αὐτῆς 'Mary has chosen the right thing and it will not be taken away from her.' The aspect of a completed state of affairs after a decision is expressed by ἐκλέγομαι, I choose.

Acts 21:7: ἡμείς δὲ τὸν πλοῦν διαύσωσαντες ἀπὸ Τύρου κατενήσαμεν εἰς Πτολεμαΐδα 'but after completing the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais.' It is not the aorist of κατανυσάμεν that indicates the aspect of completion, but the verb itself in context.

7.4 Cease, Stop
Luke 5:4: ὡς δὲ ἐπαινάσατο λαλῶν, εἶπεν πρὸς τὸν Σίμωνα 'when he ceased speaking, he said to Simon.' The aspect of ceasing exists independently of the aorist tense of παύων employed.

Acts 1:25: τῆς διακονίας ταύτης καὶ ἀποστολῆς, ἢρ' ἣς παρέβη Ἰουδας 'this ministry and service as an apostle, which Judas ceased to perform.' Here διακονίας and ἀποστολῆς are the events to which παρέβη is related as aspect. The verb παραβαίνω indicates deviation/stopping apart from its second aorist tense.

7.5 Try, Attempt
Luke 5:18: ἀνδρες φέροντες ἐπὶ κλίνης ἀνθρωπον ὡς ἦν παραλειμμένος, καὶ ἐξῆτον αὐτὸν ἀποστείγοντες 'men were carrying a paralysed man on a bed and they attempted to take him into (the house).' The idea of attempting is not situated in the imperfect form itself (cf Turner 1976:26,27 for the traditional description of the imperfect). Marshall (1978:212,13) sees a conative sense in the imperfect.

Acts 9:26: παραγενόμενος δὲ εἰς Ἰησοῦσαλήμ ἐπείραζεν κολλάσαντα τοῖς μαθηταῖς; 'so he went to Jerusalem and tried to join the disciples.' Trying is expressed by the verb πείραζον itself in context.

7.6 Do intensively or extensively
Luke 13:24: ἄγωνιζεσθε εἰσελθεῖν διὰ τῆς στενῆς θύρας 'make every effort to enter through the narrow door.' The idea of continuous, intensive exer-
tion can be explained from the meaning of ἀγωνίζομαι in this context. De Witt Burton (1977:346) translates the present imperative as 'keep on striving'.

Acts 24:16: ἀσκώ ἀπρόσκοπον συνείδεσιν ἔχειν πρὸς τὸν θεόν καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους διὰ παντός 'I always do my best to have a clear conscience before God and people.' The verb ἀσκώ itself carries the aspect of intensive action. Interestingly Bruce (1970:425) does not consider the tense in his comment on the word: 'the only occurrence of the word, which has a note of moral strictness about it, without the later sense of ascetism.'

7.7 Rapidity, Suddenness
Luke 2:13: καὶ ἐξαίφνης ἐγένετο σὺν τῷ ἀγγέλῳ πλῆθος στρατιάς οὐρανίου 'And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.' Suddenness is directly linked to the adverb ἐξαίφνης preceding the verb.
Acts 20:16: ἔσπευδεν...γενέσθαι εἰς 'Ἰησοῦν λύμα 'he was in a hurry to arrive in Jerusalem.' The matter of rapidity or haste has little to do with the imperfect tense of ἔσπευδεν.

8 CONCLUSION
A certain measure of fluidity is still evident in the study of aspect in Greek, including the Greek of the New Testament. It is clear that new ground is being explored and the study of the matter in New Testament circles will conceivably remain under the strong influence of work done in Russian, French and English.

For a considerable period of time New Testament scholars have accepted the notion that words do not 'have' meaning, except in context. While the present study is in agreement with this trend, it also endeavours to tie in with a functional approach to language. The explanation of items in isolation has to give way to the study of usages in different contexts (cf Louw 1989:4) and tense form in itself is not a primary vehicle of aspect in Greek. Tense is not even directly associated with time in the Greek verb system (cf Weinrich 1971:289). Also, the aspects explicated above are to be regarded as aspects of action rather than as events or actions in themselves (cf Louw & Nida 1988:655).

New Testament scholarship should reconsider the way in which exegesis is done, since various findings of the past are outdated and could lead to wrong understandings of the text.

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