**Changes in the Understanding of the Greek Aorist Indicative Tense-form**

**from the late 1980’s to Present Day: Semantics and Pragmatics**

Abstract: This paper will assess the various changes to the understanding of the Greek Aorist indicative tense-form brought about by the increasing interest in verbal aspect. This paper will also indicate several theories regarding the meaning and use of Greek Aorist tense-forms that incorporate these changes. This paper will begin with the shift from temporal understandings of the Greek Aorist tense-form to aspectual understandings of the Greek Aorist tense-form, and later bring out several models or theories that attempt to blend the two understandings of the way the Greek Aorist works.

**Introduction:**

The Aorist indicative tense-form[[1]](#footnote-1) has been associated with the past tense in general, or a particular kind of action occurring in the past, until the twentieth Century.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Eph. 5:2a, “And walk in love, just as Christ also loved us, and gave himself…”[[3]](#footnote-3)

The force of the verb “loved” in Eph. 5:2 was understood to be that in the past Christ loved us, and gave himself for us in a punctiliar manner.[[4]](#footnote-4) Because the verbal aspect was confused initially with *aktionsart*, it was not until the twentieth century that verbal aspect began to have a separate distinction as a grammatical category.[[5]](#footnote-5) Verbal aspect was categorized as the inherent meaning of the verb form, while *aktionsart* was understood as a contextual meaning.[[6]](#footnote-6) Not long after general linguistics scholars became aware of this distinction, biblical scholars began to apply this distinction to the Greek verbal system.[[7]](#footnote-7) In the late 1980’s and throughout the 1990’s, several works emerged that applied this distinction to the tenses.[[8]](#footnote-8) Scholars came to a variety of conclusions, some of which were controversial.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Beginnings: Incorporating Verbal Aspect into English Study of the Greek Language**

Bernard Comrie informs that the Aorist does not indicate the internal happenings of the action, but simply states the action.[[10]](#footnote-10) He also clarifies that the Aorist does not denote completed action, but due to its perfective aspect, it is the complete action.[[11]](#footnote-11) Comrie emphasizes both verbal aspect and lexical aspect as contributing to the overall aspect of the verb.[[12]](#footnote-12) Not all the biblical scholars who weigh in on the recent discussion of the Greek verb give equal attention to both verbal aspect and lexical aspect.[[13]](#footnote-13) Comrie balances aspect with tense in the tense forms, asserting that each tense form has both a temporal reference and an aspect.[[14]](#footnote-14) Comrie allows that deixis may determine the time of the verb, but only when the verb is being used out of its *normal* temporal reference.[[15]](#footnote-15) Comrie illustrates that the Greek verb system has been in a transition between an aspect driven system and a tense driven system.[[16]](#footnote-16) This explains why New Testament Greek appears to have both aspect and tense interwoven in the existing tense-forms.[[17]](#footnote-17) Consider Eph. 5:2 again.

Eph. 5:2a, “And walk in love, just as Christ also loved us, and gave himself…”[[18]](#footnote-18)

The force of the verb “loved” in Eph. 5:2 is still seen as a past action, but no longer is bound by the restrictions of the term, “punctiliar.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

**Round One: Does Tense-form Tell Time?**

Stanley Porter promotes the idea that the Greek verb’s tense-form primarily grammaticalizes the author’s portrayal of the action rather than a temporal reference for the verb’s action.[[20]](#footnote-20) Mirroring Comrie, Porter visualizes the Aorist tense as describing the whole scope of the action derived from its perfective aspect.[[21]](#footnote-21) This understanding often causes commentators who exegete the New Testament to say as little as possible about the kind-of-action the Aorist tense-form is describing, since in this view, the Aorist is used to minimize the particulars of the action. Porter differs from Comrie, by insisting upon the idea that the Aorist can be used for time references other than the past.[[22]](#footnote-22) Going against the majority of scholars, he states that Greek verb tenses “do not refer primarily to time.”[[23]](#footnote-23) Consider Eph. 5:2 again.

Eph. 5:2a, “And walk in love, just as Christ also loved us, and gave himself…”[[24]](#footnote-24)

The force of the verb “loved” in Eph. 5:2 may now refer to past, present, or future, but its aspect says nothing of the nature of the action itself.[[25]](#footnote-25) Since Porter focuses upon verbal aspect, he does not distinguish between the information provided by the lexical aspect and the information provided by the verbal aspect.[[26]](#footnote-26) Because his works concentrate on inherent meaning of the verb form, Porter also does not present much verbiage about what context says to the meaning of a Greek verb.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Buist Fanning, on the other hand, clearly regards the aorist indicative tense-form as normally referring to past time. His treatment of aspect focuses more on the objective nature of the action of the verb, rather than the subjective nature of the author’s portrayal of the action, which in turn drew some criticism from the Porter camp.[[28]](#footnote-28) His use of pragmatic categories to explain aspect also allowed further attacks from the Porter camp.[[29]](#footnote-29) He mirrors Comrie by presenting the Greek verb as having both temporal reference and perfective aspect.[[30]](#footnote-30) Considered by many to be a major strength of his work, Fanning provides the advanced Greek student a wide array of tools to assist in New Testament exegesis.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Robert Binnick assesses the Aorist as either simple action or as having neutral aspect. He decides that neutral aspect is primary to what aspect means, with simple action being more or less a pragmatic use of the neutral aspect.[[32]](#footnote-32) Consider this translation of Eph. 5:2.

Eph. 5:2a, “And walk in love, just as Christ also loved us, and gave himself…”[[33]](#footnote-33)

The force of the verb “loved” in Eph. 5:2 is that an action occurred in the past. The Reader cannot determine if the action is complete or not, nor if the whole action is in view or part.[[34]](#footnote-34) Joseph argues that the epsilon (e) augment is past referring and as such is the most stable part of the Greek language.[[35]](#footnote-35) Since the Aorist usually has the epsilon (e) augment, the Aorist indicates past tense. Östen Dahl categorizes the Aorist as Perfective.[[36]](#footnote-36)

The first round focuses on the debate over whether or not the Greek verb tense-forms express time. The basic view of the Aorist tense-form’s basic meaning appears to be the same across both sides of this debate: the Aorist presents a whole action or a complete action. It is less certain among the scholars whether this “whole action” is due to perfective aspect or due to neutral aspect.[[37]](#footnote-37)

**Round Two: Rephrasing, Reimagining, and Grammars**

Daniel Wallace wrote a major reference grammar where he surveyed the debate over tense and time.[[38]](#footnote-38) Wallace first lists the major arguments for tense without time, and then he systematically dismantles each of them. After dismantling the arguments, he points out that all of the ancient Greek writers mention that their language’s tenses contain time reference.[[39]](#footnote-39) He categorizes the Aorist as having past time relative to the time of speaking.[[40]](#footnote-40) He is clear in his separation of aspect from *aktionsart*, and cautions against saying too little about the Aorist.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Chrys Caragounis attacked all sides of the Porter-Fanning debate, but leveled his main comments at Porter.[[42]](#footnote-42) Agreeing with Wallace, he reminds the reader that Greek authors who write grammars for the Greek language have always connected both aspect and time to the Greek verb system, hence aspect is not a new idea.[[43]](#footnote-43) However, his version of aspect sounds more like *aktionsart* than like verbal aspect.[[44]](#footnote-44) He closes with a caution for biblical scholars to seek “factual truth rather than mere novelty.”[[45]](#footnote-45)

Rijksbaron classifies the Aorist as a “past” time tense, but an indicator of relative time and not an indicator of absolute time.[[46]](#footnote-46) He notes that time is an important element of the Greek tenses. Consider Eph. 5:2 again.

Eph. 5:2a, “And walk in love, just as Christ also loved us, and gave himself…”[[47]](#footnote-47)

The force of the verb “loved,” in Eph. 5:2, is that Christ loved us before we then walk in love.[[48]](#footnote-48) Although at first Rijksbaron uses language that sounds like *aktionsart*, he later uses language that more closely resembles verbal aspect.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Constantine Campbell helpfully reintroduces lexical aspect into the debate and emphasizes it nearly to the same level as did Comrie.[[50]](#footnote-50) Campbell explains that whenever the author indicates that he or she is outside of the action, then the Aorist is used. Campbell incorporates discourse and narrative functions into his understanding of the aspect of the verb.[[51]](#footnote-51) A major strength of Campbell’s work is that it connects inherent meaning to contextual meaning.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Porter has co-authored a recent grammar and defines perfective aspect as viewing “the action of the verb as a complete whole.”[[53]](#footnote-53) He consistently labels the Aorist as having a perfective aspect. His use of terms such as “foregrounding” and “frontgrounding” appear to be more similar to contextual meaning categories than to inherent meaning of the verb form.[[54]](#footnote-54) As in his earlier works, Porter still does not show how to combine lexical aspect with verbal aspect, nor does Porter illustrate how to combine the inherent meaning of the form with contextual meaning.[[55]](#footnote-55)

The second round raises skepticism concerning everything that was said in the first round. Scholarship appears to be no closer to a consensus over what part of meaning is encoded by verb form, and what part of meaning is encoded by context.[[56]](#footnote-56) Some scholars question whether or not the e augment refers to the past, while others question whether Greek tenses express absolute or relative time. Grammars developed following these discussions contain bits and pieces of the debate, while some of the grammars provide a lengthy analysis. Narrative and discourse functions have now been introduced to rephrase the discussion on aspect. The Aorist is seen as whole action, summary action, or perhaps undefined action.

**Conclusion: Where Does the Interpreter of the New Testament Go from Here?**

As the biblical scholar analyzes the Greek text today, it is more imperative than ever before to study the context thoroughly. With several key grammarians presenting opposing views, it seems best to substantiate one’s view of any particular Greek verb in the biblical text with data from the verb’s context.[[57]](#footnote-57) Most commentators today are saying less about what the Aorist form itself implies than earlier commentators.[[58]](#footnote-58)

Scholars on all sides of the discussion agree that the basic meaning is the whole or complete action. One can rely upon some kind of “past tense” interpretations of the Aorist.[[59]](#footnote-59) One can expect to see further analysis of all the pieces described above, and these pieces being recombined into new verb systems for testing. Several texts with time-honored interpretations will then be utilized to test these newly recombined systems for coherency. Once a new model passes this test it will likely be tested using a broad corpus of Greek literature.

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1. A “tense-form” is understood as the form that grammaticalizes tense, voice, mood, person, and number. This term is preferred over “tense,” since “tense” implies time only. A verb form is said to grammaticalize a portion of grammar when a defined portion of the verb always yields this piece of grammar. Examples of grammaticalization include mood, tense, or aspect. Only Aorist indicative verbs are the focus of this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Sigurd Agrell is credited with first making this distinction in 1908 after analyzing the Slavic languages. Östen Dahl, “Aspect: Basic Principals.” *Concise Encyclopedia of Grammatical Categories*. ed. Keith Brown and Jim Miller (Elsevier, Oxford, 1999), 30. At this point in history, verbal aspect is understood as being subjective, a portrayal of the action coming from the author, while *aktionsart* is objective, being true of the event the author is describing no matter how the action is portrayed. The verbal aspect indicates subjective portrayal, while *aktionsart* indicates an objective reality. The term “punctiliar” had often been used to describe the Aorist’s aspect, prior to this distinction. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The full verse with Aorist Indicative verbs underlined is, “καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὀσμὴν εὐωδίας.” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The term, “punctiliar” was used to refer to actions that were seen as a mere “dot,” which did not have a duration. This idea might work for the second verb, but is not likely for the first verb. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Several works emerged in Europe concerning verbal aspect in the Slavonic languages prior to and during WWII.The Prague School of Linguistics is the main force, influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure, with Roman Jakobson’s work leading the way. Roman Jakobson, *Remarques sur l'evolution phonologique du russe comparée à celle des autres langues slaves* (Prague, 1929). The onset of WWII forced this group to scatter. Joseph Vachek translated many of the group’s earlier works into English in the 1960’s. Joseph Vachek, *The Linguistic School of Prague: An Introduction to its Theory and Practice* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), and Joseph Vachek, *Dutch Linguists and the Prague Linguistic School* (Leiden: Universitaire Pers Leiden, 1968). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “Semantic” refers to whatever is encoded by the verb form itself, while “pragmatic” refers to what meaning a verb “picks up” once it is in a particular context. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Comrie and McKay laid the foundation within biblical scholarship for the introduction of “aspect” as a distinct category. See Bernard Comrie, *Aspect:* *An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Kenneth McKay, *Greek Grammar for Students: A Concise Grammar of Classical Attic with Special Reference to Aspect in the Verb* (Canberra: Dept. of Classics, Australian National University, 1974). “Aspect” refers to the author’s viewpoint on the action and not the internal make-up of the action. *Aktionsart* is a German word that refers to the kind of action portrayed, such as durative, instantaneous, iterative, continuous, etc. This conflation between aspect and *aktionsart* is evident even in A. T. Robertson’s major reference grammar. For example, Robertson categorizes “perfective” as an *aktionsart*, while categorizing “punctiliar” as an aspect. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 830-832. Pages 823-832 contain many examples. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood*, vol.1 of Studies in Biblical Greek, ed. D. A. Carson (New York: Peter Lang, 1989, 1993, 2003), Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, Oxford Theological Monographs, ed. J. Barton, et. al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), and Kenneth L. McKay, *A New Syntax of the Verb in New Testament Greek: An Aspectual Approach* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The scholars that have been most extremely contrasted are Buist Fanning and Stanley Porter. Stanley Porter’s position that Greek tenses did not point primarily to the time of the action is held in suspicion by most biblical scholars. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Bernard Comrie, *Aspect:* *An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems*, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Comrie, 18. The perfective aspect is variously defined as whole, complete, or summary action. Whenever an author uses the Aorist, the entire action is in view, and not how it happens, not how often it happens, nor how long it takes for the action to happen. Comrie also calls it “the whole action,” 19. Comrie counters those who call the perfective aspect “completed action.” [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. “Lexical aspect” refers to what the root word, lexeme, or lexical form denotes apart from whatever makes the verb Aorist, while “verbal aspect” refers to whatever only the Aorist form denotes. Comrie also relegates the term “punctiliar” to lexical aspect rather than verbal aspect. Comrie points out the tie between “punctiliar” and lexical aspect on 43-44. In other words, the root word of the verb might be punctiliar because of its definition, but not because it is in Aorist form. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Scholars who ignore lexical aspect, often “pin” lexical aspect ideas onto their idea of verbal aspect. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Neither aspect nor tense is primary. Comrie, 79 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Comrie, 83. A “deixis” is a word that points out the time of the clause, such as “now” or “later.” Comrie’s idea is different from that of several later scholars, who require deixis to determine the time of the verb in general. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Comrie, 82-83. Most scholars who mention this transition place the beginnings of the shift well before Homer and the end of the shift well into the Medieval Period. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Comrie is clear in his understanding that the Aorist marks past tense, and is perfective in aspect. Comrie, 127, 131. Perfective aspect is indicated as “whole action.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The full verse with Aorist Indicative verbs underlined is, “καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὀσμὴν εὐωδίας.” [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. It is the Present Imperative verb, “walk,” that carries the idea of duration, thus it is the main thought of the author. The Aorist Indicative verbs signify the whole act of Christ loving us and the whole act of Christ giving himself for us. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. “Verbal aspect” refers to the author’s viewpoint on the action that is actually built into the verb stem, while “temporal reference” refers to whether an action takes place in the past, in the present, or in the future. The Aorist grammaticalizes an author’s portrayal of the action as summary and complete. Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of The Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. vol. 2 of Biblical Languages: Greek (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992, 1994, 1999), 20-21. Porter provides clear definitions for verbal aspect. Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament: with Reference to Tense and Mood*. vol. 1 of Studies in Biblical Languages, ed. D. A. Carson (New York: Peter Lang, 1989, 1993, 2003), 75-110. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Porter connects the perfective verbal aspect to the Aorist tense-form. Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 182-187. In this view, the reader cannot determine the internal make-up of the action. In other words, when the author chooses to use the Aorist, he has then made a choice to mark the particulars of the action of the verb as irrelevant, thus noticing only the existence of that action. This wording might be too extreme, since the verbal noun already has this function. If this is all the Aorist does, and it does not tell time, then the verbal noun has no distinction from the Aorist. Why have both? For Porter mirroring Comrie, see Comrie, 3-5, 16-19. In his understanding of the Greek verbal system, the Aorist is the only tense-form with this aspect. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Porter sees the Aorist including actions that occurred in the past, are occurring in the present, or will occur in the future. Porter does not envision the action of the Aorist as tied to the past. This is consistent with how Porter treats other verbs as well. In Porter’s view, the Greek verb requires context in order to have temporal reference. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Stanley E. Porter, Jeffrey T. Reed, and Matthew Brook O'Donnell, *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 39. Brian Joseph differs with Porter over this decision. Brian D. Joseph, “Greek,” *The World’s Major Languages*. 2nd ed., ed. Bernard Comrie (London: Routlege, 2011), 349. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The full verse with Aorist Indicative verbs underlined is, “καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὀσμὴν εὐωδίας.” [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. A possible translation is, “And walk in love, just as also Christ loves us and gave himself for us,” [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. It is lexical aspect that informs readers concerning many kinds-of-action that verbs have. Some Aorist verbs having a “punctiliar” function are punctiliar because of their lexical aspect. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. “Semantics” refers to what meaning is encoded by the verb, while “pragmatics” refers to what meaning context adds to the verb. Many who have reviewed Porter’s larger works have noted that not giving as much space to pragmatics as semantics constitutes a major deficiency. This criticism is collectively from Professors and students using his works. Another serious weakness is that Porter does not distinguish between verbal aspect and lexical aspect. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Fanning uses clear definitions in the beginning. Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, Oxford Theological Monographs, eds. J. Barton, et. al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 31, 84-85. This makes his version of verbal aspect sound like *aktionsart* in places. Wallace cautions against using the term “objective,” in favor of something like “more objective.” It seems impossible to pin true objectivity onto any part of grammar. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: an Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 499. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Fanning uses terms such as “constantive” which sound more like *aktionsart* categories to describe verbal aspect. Fanning, 94-95. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Fanning normally attaches each verb in the Greek verb system to a temporal reference. Binnick and Joseph both agree with Fanning and Comrie on this point. Robert I. Binnick, *Time and the Verb: A Guide to Tense and Aspect*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 23. Joseph, 362. Exceptions to the Aorist referring to the past are allowed, such as the gnomic Aorist. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. This compliment comes from both professors and students alike. This feature makes his work of more practical value than Porter’s. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. This is where Binnick divides semantics and pragmatics. Neutral aspect, or null aspect is seen as the semantic value of the Aorist, while simple past is a pragmatic function of the Aorist, and thus context dependent. Neutral aspect is different from perfective aspect, as it points the absence of perfective aspect or imperfective aspect. Binnick, 23. Binnick depends upon an article by Pinborg, who analyzes what the ancient Stoics had to say about the Greek verb system. J. Pinborg, “Classical Antiquity: Greece,” *Current Trends in Linguistics: 13* *Historiography of Linguistics*, ed. T. Sebeok (Moulton, 1975), 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. The full verse with Aorist Indicative verbs underlined is, “καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὀσμὴν εὐωδίας.” [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. This is the expression of neutral aspect. Little is known about the action itself beyond its mere occurrence. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Brian D. Joseph, “Greek” 347-372. *The World’s Major Languages*. 2nd ed., ed. Bernard Comrie (London, Routlege, 2011). 349. Zuntz agrees with Joseph. Gunther Züntz, *Greek: a Course in Classical and post-Classical Greek Grammar from Original Texts*. vol. 2. of Biblical Languages: Greek. ed. Stanley E. Porter. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 82-83. Wallace had previously noted his disagreement with the idea that the epsilon (e) augment pointed to past time. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: an Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 505. Joseph’s position is essentially the same as Robertson’s. See Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament,* 825. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Dahl, 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Binnick is a promoter for neutral aspect [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics,* 504-512. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics,* 510-511. Other scholars often cite these same ancient writers to support the idea that Greek verbs contain verbal aspect. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics,* 555. This is absolute time. Relative time would be when the Aorist tense is used for actions that take place before some other action. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics,* 556-557. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. This is found in the short section where Caragounis dealt with the aspect and time of the verb. Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament: Morphology, Syntax, Phonology, and Textual Transmission*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 316-317. He demonstrates that Porter constructed his case from a series of exceptions and mistranslations. He accuses Fanning of making his case from the non-indicative mood, Caragounis, 332. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Caragounis, 319-320. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Caragounis mentions “punctiliar” in his idea of the Aorist’s apect. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. This comment is in a footnote at the conclusion of his section on time and aspect. Caragounis, 336 [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. In other words, the Aorist points to prior time relative to the other actions in the text. Albert Rijksbaron, *The Syntax and Semantics of the Verb in Classical Greek: An Introduction*. 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, 1994, 2002), 2-3. Even though his work is for Classical Greek, what he says about verbal aspect is relevant to scholars of Biblical Greek as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. The full verse with Aorist Indicative verbs underlined is, “καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὀσμὴν εὐωδίας.” [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. The “past-ness” of the verb is past in reference to the other verb, not past in reference to the moment of speaking. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Rijksbaron describes the aspect of the Aorist as completed action, which sounds more like a kind-of-action, than an aspect. When describing the narrative function of the Aorist, he stated that it “sums up” the action, thus using an aspect term. Rijksbaron, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Campbell does this by introducing the idea that the meaning of the verb can be constructed by combining its verbal aspect, or portrayal of action by the author; lexical aspect, or its basic word definition; aktionsart, or its kind-of-action, and other contextual information. This helps remove elements of lexical aspect from the discussion on verbal aspect. This reopens the discussion for semantics, or inherent meaning vs. pragmatics, or contextual meaning within aspect. Campbell, *Verbal Aspect, The Indicative Mood and Narrative,* 22. For Eph. 5:2, Campbell might point out that “gave” is punctiliar not because it is Aorist, but because the basic idea behind giving is punctiliar in general. In other words, the lexeme, or lexical form of the verb, is punctiliar. The Aorist form simply expresses perfective aspect. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Campbell uses words that imply spatial distance or closeness to illustrate aspect, such as “remoteness” and “proximity.” Campbell equates the author’s portrayal of the action to some kind of “closeness” to or “distance” from the action. “Discourse function” refers to the role certain verbs appear to play during discourse, while “narrative function” refers to the role certain verbs appear to play during the “telling” of a narrative. How Campbell describes aspect here may in the views of other scholars be an *Aktionsart* “kind of thing,” or pragmatics in general. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Throughout his works, Campbell connects the various types of aspects to the elements arising from context to determine the meaning of a given verb in a given context. Campbell’s shorter *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* is quite helpful in that it shows step-by-step how a verb’s meaning is determined by all the semantic and pragmatic elements within and surrounding the verb in a context. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Porter, Reed, and O'Donnell, *Fundamentals*, 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Porter, Reed, and O’Donnell, *Fundamentals*, 39-40. This is where Porter seems to use narrative function to describe aspect. He, along with others, uses a pragmatic value to describe a semantic value. This use of terms is consistent with his earlier works. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. It is hoped that Porter’s forthcoming advanced grammar will accomplish these tasks. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. “Semantics” is related to the verb form, while “pragmatics” is related to the verb interacting with its particular context. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. This will prevent or at least inhibit someone from later overturning one’s interpretation of the text as each new concept emerges or as one view becomes predominant in the field, followed by another view. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. This is, in part, due to the combination of two factors, the author distancing himself from the action and possibility that the aspect of the Aorist is neutral. It is increasingly difficult to say anything substantive about what an Aorist means without offending some of the grammarians. The less desirable approach for commentators would be to say, “This verse means “A” because its verb is Aorist.” The safer approach would be to say, “This Aorist verb means “A,” because of its definition and these “X-Y-Z” features occurring within the clause, verse, or paragraph. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Porter’s theory is unproven and held by a minority of scholars. The burden of proof rests upon the Porter camp to prove that the Aorist does not refer to the past, since they would be the ones overturning a long-held position in biblical scholarship. This is in addition to the fact that the Greeks themselves have understood the Aorist as referring to the past for over two Millennia. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)