

Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek, by Matthew S. DeMoss (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001). 138 pages. Paperback, \$7.99. Reviewed by Dr. John H. Niemelä, Professor of Greek and Hebrew at Chafer Theological Seminary.

Memorization of vocabulary lists, paradigms, and grammatical rules often intimidates those just starting Greek. The pace of memorization accelerates during the second year. The genitive case is a good example. First year students only learn to recognize a number of genitive forms (singulars and plurals; masculines, feminines, and neuters; first, second, and third declensions).¹ They mechanically use *of* in translating each genitive. Intermediate grammar multiplies categories by differentiating over twenty types of genitive classifications. In addition some of these classifications have a series of alternate names.² The explosion of terms can be daunting. It consumes study time, hindering progress in other areas of grammar. Why did terms multiply?

For centuries, Latin was the universal scholarly tongue. Professors used it for lectures and for academic writings. This was true for all disciplines, not just those associated with the Roman Catholic Church. Why did Latin survive for so long in

¹ Heretofore, Frank X. Braun, *English Grammar for Language Students: Basic Grammatical Terminology Defined and Alphabetically Arranged* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ulrich, 1947), essentially lacked rivals. Now that DeMoss has written, how do they compare? Braun is *always* transparent, while DeMoss is *usually* clear. This strength has kept Braun in print for over half a century (available through the publisher). However, DeMoss offers some clear advantages over Braun. He:

1. defines more than 1700 terms, compared to Braun's 135;
2. focuses on English in relation to Greek, while Braun discusses English (as generic preparation for *any* foreign language);
3. raises other New Testament topics, which Braun does not;
4. draws upon modern linguistic theory, whereas Braun is dated.

Chafer Theological Seminary policy is for students to own both.

² Exegetes should know alternate names because the various lexicons, grammars, commentaries, and other tools diverge in assigning terms.

scholarship? It helped the financial bottom-line of academia. A publisher could market a book written in Latin throughout the world, but could not sell as many copies of the same work translated into English, German, or French. A school with lectures in a local language could not attract foreign students, but Latin allowed a larger and more diverse student body.

More recently, however, everything changed. The world's population has exploded. In addition, a much higher proportion of the populace of industrialized nations attends colleges that use the local language. Today, scholarly publishers find a larger market in a local language (like English) than in Latin. Likewise, local languages predominate for university lectures.

How does this snapshot history relate to this *Pocket Dictionary*? The answer is two-fold: First, the ancestors of today's Greek grammars, lexicons, New Testament introductions, and commentaries arose in the Latin era. Many of those old terms remain current in New Testament studies today. Second, the move away from Latin caused German scholars to introduce German terms, French speakers to add French ones, and so forth. English-speaking scholars borrow from this monumental assortment of foreign terms.

Modern students of Greek (often lacking Latin, French, and German) read monographs or tools that presuppose such knowledge. The frustration of fellow seminarians led the present author to create "A Guide to the Bibliography of Liddell-Scott-Jones *Lexicon*"³ to assist intermediate Greek students. Matthew DeMoss (Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary), has similar concerns, but addresses a larger field at a more basic level.

³ The writer of this review wrote his master's project, "A Guide to the Bibliography of Liddell-Scott-Jones *Lexicon*" (Th.M. project, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1986), to assist students in deciphering bibliographic references in Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, comps., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., rev. and augmented by H. S. Jones and R. MacKenzie, with a "Supplement," by E. A. Barber, P. Maas, M. Scheller, M. L. West (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968).

The first section (118 pages) defines words occurring in Greek studies. The second (eight pages) explains abbreviations, expressions, and sigla (symbols). Many are foreign derivations.

A book of this kind must strike a delicate balance. It should offer: (1) accurate definitions,⁴ (2) encompassing a sizable percentage of pertinent terms, (3) geared for readers who know absolutely nothing about the term requiring definition.

DeMoss succeeds admirably on the first two points. His accuracy level is high⁵ and the book is sufficiently comprehensive. He also deserves high marks for putting definitions onto a lower shelf, where they become accessible to more people. If asked to grade the work, this first edition should receive a solid A– (A for accuracy, A for comprehensiveness, and B for explanations that (usually) meet the novice at an appropriate level).

Unfortunately, putting things on a lower shelf does not always mean putting them on the lowest shelf.⁶ Some students require a bit more guidance at times. The experience of answering questions about many of the topics covered in this book leads this reviewer to suggest that future editions add a few more examples and some clearer ones.

For instance, any discussion of Greek cases needs illustration, not just description or definition. If *case* baffles a student, the following is not sufficient to convert muddle into clarity.

⁴ The legal standard of truth (in a nutshell) is: *The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth*. A book that aims at brevity may not always give the *whole truth*. The following entry, from page 127, is less than the whole truth: “**verbal noun**. See infinitive.” *Idea* words (e.g., *belief, freedom, love, hatred, and warfare*) are verbal nouns, even though they are not infinitives. Although the reviewer has observed some entries that may leave out pertinent information, they are accurate and rarely misleading.

⁵ A typographical error appears (page 102) within the definition of *progressive imperfect*, described as “A present tense verb. . . .” It should say, “An imperfect tense verb. . . .”

⁶ The abundance of clear English examples makes Braun, *Grammar*, a model worthy of emulation.

case. *n.* A feature of language that indicates the syntactical function of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and participles. In Greek and other *inflected languages, this is achieved by means of declensional *endings. See also five-case and eight-case system.⁷

Why not add an illustration from the English case system (which survives in personal pronouns)? A sentence can present the core issue of grammatical case without presupposing prior acquaintance with case terminology. The following italicized words do not interchange with any other form in the chart, because they represent three distinct English cases.

She is his wife and *he is her* husband, because *she* married *him*.

	Singular:	Plural:
Subjective case:	<i>I, you, <u>he</u>, <u>she</u>, it</i>	<i>we, you, they</i>
Possessive case:	<i>my, your, <u>his</u>, <u>her</u>, its</i>	<i>our, your, their</i>
Objective case:	<i>me, you, <u>him</u>, <u>her</u>, it</i>	<i>us, you, them</i>

Many people do not know the names of English grammatical rules, but intuitively apply them correctly. Greek instructors ought to build upon students' familiarity with English. This also applies when defining grammatical terms.

Likewise, illustration would strengthen the discussions of *agent* and *agentless*.

agent. *n.* The doer or instigator of the verbal action. In Greek there are three levels of agency: primary (also called ultimate or personal), secondary (or intermediate) and *instrumental/impersonal.

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agentless. *adj.* Lacking an explicitly named *agent, as in the sentence, "Lori was given the key to the city."⁸

⁷ Matthew S. DeMoss, *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 28. Asterisks are original, signaling words that appear as entries elsewhere in the book.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 16. Asterisks signify words appearing elsewhere.

Novices would benefit from mentioning that English often uses *by* to express primary or instrumental agency and *through* for intermediate agency. Offering contrasting examples would clarify *agentless*: “Lori was given the key to the city” is agentless, while “Lori was given the key to the city *by Jim*” has an express agent.

The discussion of *second aorist* is accurate, but may not help someone struggling with the concept.

Second aorist. *n.* A verb that in the aorist tense behaves according to an observable pattern in its *inflections; it uses a different form of the verbal stem than the present (for this reason it is called *irregular), and it does not have an “infix” sigma (as *first aorists do). Whether a verb is a first aorist or a second aorist has no bearing whatsoever on its meaning; rather, aorist verbs happen to decline according to two clearly identifiable patterns, and they are classified this way to aid the student.⁹

Why not add that English has an analogous feature? The first way that verbs in English form the past tense adds the suffix *-ed* to the present tense form (e.g., *I preach* becomes *I preached*). The second way that verbs form the past tense involves stem changes (e.g., *I teach* becomes *I taught*). *Teach* uses the first pattern (e.g., *I taught*, not *I teached*) and *preach* uses the second (e.g., *I preached*, not *I praught*). Likewise, most Greek verbs always follow the *first aorist* pattern or always have the *second aorist* pattern. This is strictly a matter of pronunciation, not meaning.

The discussion of apposition accurately differentiates simple apposition from the genitive of apposition. It does not achieve transparent clarity, though.

Apposition. *n.* The juxtaposition of two elements (words or phrases) with the second renaming or defining the first. Paul begins his letters with words in apposition: “Paul, apostle.” Both are usually in the same *case because they have the same syntactical relation to the other parts of the sentence. Sometimes,

⁹ *Ibid.*, 110–11. Asterisks signify words appearing elsewhere.

however, the second element is in the *genitive case, as in “city of Jerusalem.”¹⁰

The simplest way to compare and contrast *simple apposition* and *genitive of apposition* is to give parallel examples.

1. He does not live on a farm, but in the *city*, *Jerusalem*,
2. He does not live on a farm, but in the *city of Jerusalem*.

Both times, *city* is equivalent to *Jerusalem*. However, the first example sets off *Jerusalem* with commas, while the other says *of Jerusalem*, instead. Greek has similar constructions. The first is *simple apposition* (in which both words appear in the same case). The other, the *genitive of apposition*, requires the second element (*of Jerusalem*) to be in the genitive case. Thus, English rules for *simple apposition* and the *genitive of apposition* are quite similar.

The reviewer offers these suggestions in the hope that future editions of the *Pocket Dictionary* will enjoy a long publishing history. This book deserves a strong A– grade. Chafer Theological Seminary expects its beginning and intermediate language students to purchase this tool and the one by Braun. Lessening of frustration encourages students to hone their skills for a lifetime of exegetical study. This tiny book can play a small, but important, role in the continuing legacy that 2 Timothy 2:2 encourages. In every era, expositors are responsible before the Lord to train the next generation to teach others from the original text.

—End—

¹⁰ Ibid., 21–22. Asterisks signify words appearing elsewhere.

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