



Danker, Frederick, ed.

***A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* Third Edition**

Based on Walter Bauer's *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, sixth edition, ed. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, with Viktor Reichmann and on previous English editions by W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000. Pp. lxxx + 1,108. \$85.00. ISBN 0226039331.

Introduction by John T. Fitzgerald
University of Miami
Coral Gables, FL 33124

Greek lexicography was a flourishing discipline long before the birth of Jesus and the rise of early Christianity.¹ Already during the Hellenistic period the city of Alexandria attained prominence as a center for lexical studies, with scholars such as Aristophanes of Byzantium active in that city. Lexical works continued to be produced during subsequent periods, including the first century C.E., when Pamphilus of Alexandria compiled a comprehensive Greek lexicon that filled 95 books for just the letters Ε through Ω. The Atticistic revival turned lexicography into a virtual cottage industry, with numerous Greek lexicons produced. These lexical works aided ancient readers by defining rare and obsolete words, explaining odd forms and expressions, and offering other kinds of assistance. Bilingual glossaries (Greek-Latin, Greek-Coptic, etc.) were also common, designed primarily as word lists to facilitate rapid reading of ancient texts and authors such as Homer.

The NT was thus produced in a world that was concerned with lexicography, and attempts to explain various terms and practices appear already in the NT itself (e.g. John 1:38; Mark 7:3-4). As early Christians endeavored to understand the Bible and proclaim its message, it was natural that they should offer lexical observations in their sermons, letters, commentaries, and various treatises. They eventually began to produce not only

¹ For a brief treatment of ancient and medieval Greek lexicography and a short history of NT lexicons and related lexical aids, plus bibliography, see J. T. Fitzgerald, "Lexicons, New Testament," in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (ed. J. H. Hayes; 2 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 2:62-66.

bilingual biblical manuscripts (such as Codex Claromontanus) but also bilingual glossaries to biblical texts (such as that preserved in Chester Beatty Codex Ac. 1499).²

With the invention of printing, NT lexicography entered a new phase, especially through the work of Georg Pasor, whose *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum* first appeared in 1619.³ Numerous lexicons of the NT were produced in various languages during the subsequent two centuries. The best Greek-Latin lexicon of the nineteenth century was that of C. L. W. Grimm (1851), who based his work on the second edition of C. G. Wilke's lexicon (1841). The Wilke-Grimm lexicon was translated into English by Joseph Henry Taylor, who also adapted and improved it in significant ways. First published in 1886 (corrected ed., 1889) and frequently reprinted, "Thayer" reigned as the standard Greek-English lexicon until 1957, when the fourth edition of Walter Bauer's Greek-German lexicon was translated into English, with adaptations and additions, by W. Arndt and F. Gingrich. This lexicon, now commonly referred to as BAG (Bauer – Arndt – Gingrich), was replaced in 1979, when Gingrich and F. Danker translated the fifth edition of Bauer's Greek-German lexicon into English, simultaneously enhancing it in various ways (BAGD = Bauer – Arndt – Gingrich – Danker).

With the publication of the third edition of Bauer's lexicon in English, a milestone in Danker's career as a NT lexicographer has been reached. Although the new edition is, of course, based on the previous English editions and makes judicious use of the sixth edition of Bauer's Greek-German lexicon (which was edited by K. Aland and B. Aland in collaboration with V. Reichmann and published in 1989 [= BAAR]),⁴ the third Greek-English edition bears Danker's lexical stamp and is appropriately referred to on the title page as BDAG, with Danker's name next to Bauer's (Bauer – Danker – Arndt – Gingrich).

It goes without saying that all scholars and students of early Christianity will profit from BDAG and will want to own a copy of this fine new edition. But should BDAG take the place of BAGD (and/or BAAR) or should it rather be placed on the shelf alongside of the earlier work(s)? Again, while BDAG certainly makes a number of wonderful innovations, does it also mark a regress in certain respects and utterly fail to improve on its predecessors in others? Does it introduce mistakes not present in BAGD? These are some of the issues that the following four reviews of BDAG seek to address.

In what follows, one classicist and three NT exegetes offer assessments of BDAG. All four praise Danker's considerable achievement, yet they offer trenchant criticism of various aspects of the work. Terry Roberts, a classicist at the University of Sydney,

² On this glossary to part of four Pauline letters, see A. Wouters, *The Chester Beatty Codex Ac. 1499: A Graeco-Latin Lexicon on the Pauline Epistles and a Greek Grammar* (Leuven: Peeters, 1988), and K. Wachtel and K. Witte (eds.), *Die paulinischen Briefe, Teil 2: Gal, Eph, Phil, Kol, 1 u. 2 Thess, 1 u. 2 Tim, Tit, Phlm, Hebr* (vol. 2 of *Das Neue Testament auf Papyrus*; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), LXVII-XC.

³ See esp. G. Delling, "Das erste griechisch-lateinische Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament," *NovT* 18 (1976): 213-40, and "G. Pasor als Lexikograph," *NovT* 22 (1980): 184-92.

⁴ For sharp criticism of BAAR, see esp. R. Borger, "Zum Stande der neutestamentlichen Lexicographie," *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 241 (1989): 103-46, and G. Strecker, "W. Bauers Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament in neuer Auflage," *TLZ* 116 (1991): 81-92.

begins the assessment by examining BDAG from a strictly lexicographical perspective. He gives particular attention to one of the most distinguishing lexical features of BDAG, its use of both extended definitions (printed in bold roman) and formal equivalents (given in bold italics). In the process he also compares BDAG to both BAGD and BAAR as well as to other lexicons, especially the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* by Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Nida (1988). His extensive treatment is followed by three shorter ones that address various lexical, exegetical, and hermeneutical issues, as well as questions relating to BDAG's bibliographies and citation of various editions of ancient texts. Abraham J. Malherbe discusses *inter alia* how BDAG differs from BAGD in its treatment of terms having male and ethnic dimensions, and how the new lexicon treats an ecclesiastical term applied to women. Hans-Josef Klauck pays particular attention to BDAG's treatment of terms that occur in non-canonical early Christian literature. Finally, Harold W. Attridge compares BDAG to BAGD in regard to σημειον, τελειόω, and ἄντί, three key terms common to Hebrews and the Gospel of John.

No lexicon is perfect, and it is important to identify both the strengths and the weaknesses of any major work such as BDAG, so that users can appreciate the former and be wary of the latter. Furthermore, lexicographers who do their work subsequent to BDAG should seek to retain its merits, avoid its deficiencies and errors, and attend to matters that it neglects.

In that regard, one can hope that future lexicographers will make a greater use of Latin verbal equivalents than one finds in the new lexicon. BDAG occasionally points to a Latinism (see, for example, ἀγοράϊος 2, p. 15, on Acts 19:38), but such instances are fairly rare. That is a shame, for reference to Latin equivalents and illustrative Latin texts can be extraordinarily helpful in clarifying and illustrating various Greek words that seldom occur in the NT and other early Christian literature. Abraham J. Malherbe, for instance, makes quite effective use of Latin equivalents in his recent commentary on *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (AB 32B; New York: Doubleday, 2000). He uses *forensis* to illustrate the class consciousness implicit in ἀγοράϊος (p. 64), the term which Acts uses of the pagan rabble of the marketplace who attack their social superiors in Thessalonica. Similarly, Malherbe uses *quasso* and its cognates to clarify the meaning of σαίνεσθαι in 1 Thess 3:3 ("to be agitated": p. 192), and *praeceptum* to explicate Paul's use of παραγγελία in 1 Thess 4:2 ("precept": p. 221). As Malherbe's work demonstrates, Latin equivalents are a largely untapped source, and they will pay rich dividends to any future lexicographer who invests time and energy in exploring their relevance for Greek texts.