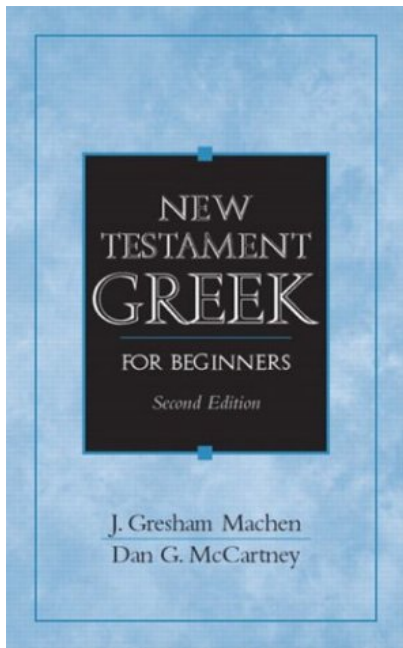


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**Machen, J. Gresham**  
**Revised by Dan G. McCartney**

*New Testament Greek for Beginners*

Second edition

Foreword by Moisés Silva; frequency list by Bruce M. Metzger

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J. Gresham Machen's *New Testament Greek for Beginners* has been the tool used to teach the rudiments of Greek for several generations of Greek teachers. Until the advent of the grammars of William Mounce and David Alan Black, it was probably the most widely used grammar of New Testament Greek. This is even more remarkable considering the fact that Machen died in 1937 and never revised his original work.

An "unofficial" revision of Machen's grammar was undertaken in 1982 by Paul Kaufman of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary. In his preface to *An Introductory Grammar of New Testament Greek*, he tacitly states that Machen's grammar has been followed "in the order of the presentation of the material." Kaufman's book is in fact very much like Machen's grammar, the major differences being the exercises and the adoption of the eight-case system. Remnants of Machen can be seen in other modern grammars as well.

The reviser of this "official" revision of Machen's grammar, Dan G. McCartney, holds the same academic position at Westminster Theological Seminary that Machen once held. He insists in his new preface that, although criticism of Machen "has not been lacking," the alternative to retiring Machen's work to "an honored place in a museum" is "to revise

Machen's grammar in light of our present situation, and thus make the effectiveness of this classic available to a new generation." Moisés Silva maintains in the foreword that McCartney's revisions "are consistently on target and will ensure its continued use well into the twenty-first century."

The main thing to be noted about this new edition of Machen's grammar is that it is not much different from the original edition. The author correctly describes his revision as "fairly conservative." The book is bound in the same handy size. The original preface and introduction are included. The format of the book is very similar. There are no major changes in the substance of each chapter. There is very little new material introduced, and only on a few occasions is a topic moved from one chapter to another. There are two additional chapters. However, one of them is merely the result of splitting the original chapter on present participles (18) into two chapters (18A and 18B), and the other one, the new final chapter (34), is primarily made up of material that appeared in what was originally the last three chapters (31–33). The vocabulary words introduced in each lesson are essentially the same as in the original edition. Ten words have been moved to different chapters, and twenty-seven new words have been added. With just four exceptions, these additional words appear only in the new chapters on present participles and the additional chapter at the end of the book. The addition of new vocabulary words and the moving of a few others have not had much effect on the exercises at the close of each chapter. In the first half of the book (chs. 1–17), since there are no new or relocated vocabulary words, there are essentially no changes in the exercises other than the addition of a total of four new sentences. The Greek-to-English exercises in the second half of the book (chs. 18A–34) are somewhat modified, but mainly by the addition of new sentences to accommodate the new vocabulary words. The English-to-Greek exercises throughout the book have hardly been changed at all.

The major change in this new edition of Machen's grammar is McCartney's treatment of participles. As previously mentioned, the original chapter on present participles has been split into two chapters. Lesson 18A introduces the student to participles and covers the use of the adverbial participle. McCartney terms this the *predicate* or *circumstantial* participle, but he does so only when referring back to it in Lesson 18B, on the attributive and substantive use of the participle. Because he considers the term *present* participle to be "confusing," he opts for the moniker *progressive* participle, but his note about "most modern grammars" preferring "the term 'progressive' to refer to this tense system" is simply incorrect. McCartney's explanation of the present participle is an improvement over Machen's, as is his treatment of the aorist participle denoting coordinate action. However, the lessons on the aorist active and aorist passive participles, the genitive absolute participle, and the perfect participle are basically unchanged.

For teachers who have been using Machen's original grammar, not a great deal of effort will be necessary to adapt the new edition to one's previous curriculum, especially in the early chapters. Besides the content being similar, several features of the new edition help to facilitate the transition: the foreword by Moisés Silva, the reviser's preface to the revised edition, and the retention of Machen's original section numbers alongside of McCartney's new ones, with a table of section-number correlations in the back of the book. Although these features will help make the transition, I disagree with the reviser's claim that "it should be possible for a student to use an old edition of Machen in a class where this new edition is the text."

There are also additional features that enhance the usefulness of the new edition. There is a table of abbreviations, a glossary, more paradigms, new explanatory footnotes, a Greek-word frequency list (by Bruce Metzger), expanded vocabularies and index, the change to lesson-number chapter headings (although the page numbers have been moved to the bottom of the page), and charts on verb formation, verb endings, vowel contractions, consonant classification, prepositions, and numerals.

I would like to say that McCartney has corrected all (or even many) of Machen's errors and shortcomings, but he has not. His revision repeats most of the same errors and suffers from the same inadequacies as the original edition.

As one who has used Machen's grammar to teach Greek for many years, I am well acquainted with its deficiencies in the vocabularies and the exercises, as well as the erroneous information, and many times lack of information, in the text.

The greatest problem with Machen's grammar, and one that has consequences for the entire book, is the vocabularies at the beginning of each lesson. The number of words included in each lesson varies considerably. Lesson 18 has two words, and lesson 8 has five words, but lessons 26, 30, and 32 each has twenty-two words. The type of words selected is also irregular. Lesson 5 has just first-declension feminine nouns, but lesson 32 has a combination of regular verbs,  $\mu\iota$  verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, second-declension masculine nouns, second-declension neuter nouns, third-declension neuter nouns, and extensive notes about some of the words. While most words are given one definition in the vocabularies (a good idea for a beginning grammar), some words are given two or more. Three meanings are given for the words  $\beta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omega$  (lesson 7) and  $\iota\kappaαν\acute{o}\varsigma$  (lesson 30). Four meanings are given for the words  $\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omega\tau\acute{\alpha}\omega$  (lesson 27) and  $\acute{\alpha}\phi\acute{\iota}\eta\mu\iota$  (lesson 32).

Not only are the vocabularies very irregular in length, difficulty, and number of word definitions, but the words are sometimes out of alphabetical order, introduced in the wrong lesson, or of low frequency in the New Testament. The words  $\acute{\epsilon}\chi\omega$  (lesson 3),

ἀλλά (lesson 10), and εὕρισκω (lesson 32) are out of alphabetical order. The words ἕτερον, ἐπί, and σωτηρία are used in sentences (in lessons 16, 22, and 21) before they are introduced as vocabulary words (in lessons 33, 24, and 22). And, to give but three examples of frequency, Machen uses the second-declension neuter nouns δῶρον and μυστήριον, which occur in the New Testament, respectively, only nineteen and twenty-eight times, but not θηρίον or πρόβατον, which occur forty-six and thirty-nine times. He uses the first-declension feminine nouns κώμη and χώρα, which occur in the New Testament twenty-seven and twenty-eight times, but not χρεία or γενεά, which occur forty-nine and forty-three times. Finally, he uses the adjectives καθαρὸς and ἱκανός, which occur in the New Testament twenty-seven and thirty-nine times, but not ἕκαστος or δεξίος, which occur ninety-eight and fifty-four times.

The vocabulary words are more often than not introduced in the lessons in a haphazard way. Consider the first lesson on nouns and the first on adjectives. Lesson 4 introduces second-declension nouns: nine masculine and two neuter. In lesson 7 we are given six additional second-declension masculine nouns: ἄγγελος, θεός, κόσμος, λίθος, οὐρανός, and τόπος. But we also get κύριος in lesson 6, διδάσκαλος in lesson 9, ἁμαρτωλός in lesson 10, ἄρτος in lesson 11, τυφλός in lesson 13, λαός and ὄχλος in lesson 21, Ἰουδαῖος and χριστός in lesson 22, καρπός in lesson 27, ἄγρός and ὀφθαλμός in lesson 28, and καίρος and χρόνος in lesson 32—and this is just looking at the masculine nouns, not the neuters. Lesson 6 introduces adjectives of the first and second declensions. But then Machen adds one verb, one second-declension masculine noun, and two second-declension feminine nouns. But later we also get πονηρός in lesson 9, ἅγιος in lesson 17, λοιπός and μακάριος in lesson 21, καθαρὸς and ὀλίγος in lesson 26, ἱκανός in lesson 30, αἰώνιος and μόνος in lesson 31, and ἕτερος, ὅλος, and ὅμοιος in lesson 33.

The placement of verbs in the vocabularies is just as haphazard. Contract verbs are introduced in lesson 23. It is understandable that αἰτέω, ἐπερωτάω, and ἐρωτάω are given in lesson 27, since that lesson introduces interrogative pronouns, but why then do we have μετανοέω and φοβέομαι given in lesson 24, ἐλεέω in lesson 28, γεινάω, μαρτυρέω, and πληρόω in lesson 29, ζάω and ὀράω in lesson 31, and φανερόω in lesson 33? New ω verbs are still being introduced in the lessons on μι verbs: πειράζω in lesson 31, εὕρισκω, ὑπάγω, and χαίρω in lesson 32, and δοκέω, παραγίνομαι, and φανερόω in lesson 33. Other than simple distinctions such as liquid, contract, and μι verbs, no further attempt is made to categorize verbs. Highly irregular verbs such as γινώσκω and ἔχω are introduced in the first chapter on verbs along with simple verbs such as λύω and γράφω. The liquid verbs αἶρω, ἀποκτείνω, ἀποστέλλω, ἐγείρω, κρίνω, and μένω are introduced long before the chapter on liquid verbs, which means that they are never used in the future or aorist tenses until lesson 24, even though they have all been introduced by lesson 9. There is, in fact, only one new liquid verb listed in the vocabulary for lesson 24: σπείρω. Machen

also offers far too many aorist forms of verbs as vocabulary words instead of just making the student learn the verb forms that are irregular. Thus, introducing εἶδον and εἶπον (lesson 15) as vocabulary words is beneficial, but making the student learn ἐπορεύθη and ἠκούσθη is unnecessary.

The choice of words for the vocabularies has a direct effect on the quality of the sentences in the exercises. Machen's poor choice of words accounts for some of the problems with his exercises, but certainly not all. Some vocabulary words are not even used in the exercises of the lesson in which they are introduced. Others show up in a few sentences and never appear again. For example, the relative adverbs ὅπου and ὅτε, which are introduced in lesson 27, do not appear in any sentences in the exercises for that lesson. Even worse than that, ὅπου appears only once, in lesson 30, and ὅτε is never used.

The same problem occurs with certain grammatical constructions. Indirect questions, deliberative questions, and the regular use of the relative pronoun, all introduced in lesson 27, rarely show up in the exercises. The perfect participle is introduced in lesson 29, but, with only three exceptions, the only perfect participles that ever appear in the exercises are articular perfect passives.

Between the vocabularies and the exercises we have Machen's text, which McCartney praises for its "clarity of organization," its "pedagogical simplicity," and its "conciseness of presentation and description." I wish I could agree, but there is just too much that is poorly explained or just plain wrong. Machen's treatment of demonstratives (lesson 9) and numerals (lesson 26) is incomplete. His explanation of participles is both incomplete and confusing (lesson 18), so much so that McCartney revised the initial lesson on participles more than he revised any other place in the book. Machen's discussion of the infinitive with the article and preposition is inadequate (lesson 22). His treatment of comparative adjectives is way too brief (lesson 30).

There are a number of errors in the text as well. The word ἐγγύς is wrongly listed as an adverb (lesson 28). The words ἔρημος and ἐχθρός are listed as nouns when they are properly adjectives. The verb ἤνεγκα is said to be a first aorist with -κα instead of -σα endings when it is actually a verb with first aorist endings on a second aorist stem. The information given about ὅστις (lesson 28) and ἕως (lesson 32) is wrong. And even in the first lesson on the alphabet, Machen strangely says to pronounce the letter *omicron* as the *o* in *obey*.

Another major problem is that there is too much that Machen simply does not say. He does not mention that δοκέω is not a contract verb (lesson 33), nor does he say anything

about the Attic reduplication of the perfect forms of ἀκούω, ἐγείρω, ἔρχομαι, and φέρω (lesson 29). He does not explain the use of the being verb participle (lesson 18). He never mentions in the text things he has in the exercises, such as elliptical constructions and complementary participles. Examples are given of the accusative and infinitive used after ὥστε (lesson 32), but no mention is made of the accusative and infinitive without ὥστε.

The inconsistencies, shortcomings, misinformation, and errors of Machen's original grammar are perpetuated by McCartney in his revision. With the exception of some very minor corrections, mainly in the vocabulary lists, McCartney's revision retains all that is wrong with Machen's original work and even introduces some new problems.

In lesson 11 he uses the word ἀρχή in a sentence even though it does not appear as a vocabulary word until lesson 32. In lesson 13 he uses the word χριστόν in a sentence, but it does not appear until lesson 22. In lesson 19 he adds a new sentence to the English-to-Greek exercises and uses the phrase *having eaten*. However, the irregular aorist form of ἐσθίω that the student needs to write the phrase in Greek, ἔφαγον, is not introduced until lesson 27. Although McCartney has ἐγγύς in his list of improper prepositions in chart 7, he still retains Machen's listing of the word as an adverb (lesson 28).

McCartney's noble attempt at revision is too little and too late. Because of the major problems with the vocabularies, any attempt at revision that does not completely overhaul them is doomed to fail. Machen's grammar should be given "an honored place in a museum," where it may be forgotten. Students who use Machen's grammar are getting shortchanged, the degree of which depends on how closely their instructor follows the text. For Greek teachers who have used Machen's grammar for so long that they hate to part with it, this new revision is an improvement that might help them increase their students' grasp of New Testament Greek, especially if they closely follow the text. Other than that, this revision is not recommended for serious students and teachers of New Testament Greek.