an afterthought, and this material could well have been incorporated in earlier chapters. The various problems of Genesis 1-11 are then considered under the assumption that this is prehistory or protohistory, with a number of literary and other parallels in the ancient world.

He argues that the proper factual backdrop to the reading of the OT texts is that of the entire ANE geographical and historical setting. In terms of the divided monarchy and the exile and return (where the evidence is fullest), there is a high level of support for the reliability of the OT accounts. Indeed, even the earlier material seems to fit well in its putative date and setting. Wherever evidence is there, it is supportive rather than dismissive of the reliability of the OT documents. (500)

A reservation which I have about this valuable book is that sometimes the way in which he is dismissive of the views of others may cause readers to react, and not hear the legitimate criticisms he is putting forward. This is how he refers to some of the ideas he disagrees with (drawn largely from his conclusion): "Utter poppycock in practice." (p.471); "this tiny example of (anti)academic lunacy will suffice." (p.471); "Rubbish on both counts." (p.473); "a 'con-nonsense-us'" (p.372) "a dead duck and of no relevance" (p.476); "blatantly untrue, in fact the exact opposite of the truth." (p.481); "an entirely irresponsible misstatement of the real facts and still needs to be publicly withdrawn in print." (p.481); "a shabby way to treat important firsthand evidence" (p.482); "the Tel Dan stela most unkindly brushed this silly, asinine myth aside" (p.483); "unsubstantiated guesswork out of somebody's head." (p.492). There is some room to be a little more gracious, though no less firm in pursuing truth!

Kitchen is aware that not all readers will find his views to their taste. He notes, for example, that the title of the book would yield the acronym OROT, and comments "my critics are free to repunctuate this as O! ROT!—if they so please!" He is clearly a polemicist! I first met Ken Kitchen in the kitchen (how ironic) of Tyndale House, Cambridge, as we were both there for an Old Testament Study Group. He was erudite, a little idiosyncratic, but absolutely passionate about his subject and utterly convinced of his own views. The book is just like the person, and this makes it engaging, stimulating and a little quirky.

This is an important book, but who is it for? It is so detailed and, at times, technical that it becomes a reference book for scholars and students. It would be great if Ken could use his undoubted learning to produce a shorter and more popular volume.

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Gavin Betts, *Teach yourself new testament greek*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 2004, 278 pages, paperback A$44:95, ISBN 0340870842.

Reviewed by Alexander Hopkins

Gavin Betts was Associate Professor of Classical Studies at Monash University. He is author of the Latin volume of the Teach Yourself series, co-author with Alan Henry of the Ancient Greek volume, and has also translated modern Greek writings into English.

This volume starts with introductory material including advice on how to use the book and a glossary of grammatical terms; then come 21 teaching units, followed by appendices, a key to the Greek reading exercises, a list of principal parts of verbs, a vocabulary section, and index. The font face used, both for the English and Greek is clear and the size adequate. Throughout the book I detected only one typographic error, in either English or Greek, a missing full stop on page one.

This is a book which I will recommend as a clearly-written, concise, and accurate introduction to New Testament Greek. But I want to start with some cautions, which have less to do with the book's contents than the way the book may be used. Let me draw on my own experience as a student and teacher of NT Greek.

About thirty years ago I sat, perplexed, in a university tutorial room. Why was my Greek professor frowning quizzically at me? As gently as possible, he explained that my English to Greek translation of the practice sentences was barely comprehensible. I had studied the chapter on the 'accusative of respect' intensely and worked that construction into almost all of my sentences. But no! I had misunderstood the book's intention. What my professor unknowingly taught me that day was how necessary it is to have a teacher to correct our misunderstandings of the text book.

I note secondly that the book concerns itself specifically with *New Testament* Greek, rather than *koine* Greek. Its audience is likely to be drawn significantly from those wanting to understand the New Testament Scriptures because of a faith commitment. This was and remains my own motive for learning the language. It is frustrating to hear persons from public platforms bolstering arguments or interpretations with references to the Greek that are *nearly* accurate, based on as much understanding as they glean from commentaries. But what really induced annoyance was hearing Greek slaughtered by a speaker who smugly told his audience that he knew Greek – he was ... *self-taught*.

In endorsing this particular volume, then, I urge that its users show the Socratic wisdom of knowing more than others by knowing how little they know. But let's turn

from a potential mis-use of the book to its contents to see how it does give good service to its reader.

The book is built around its 21 teaching units. The preceding introductory material gives the reader sound advice as to how to attack the task. Betts includes a recommendation that the learner "read through the Greek aloud" and the suggestion that some Greek be learnt by heart. These deserve to be highlighted as both are important complements to the basic learning style encouraged by the book's approach.

After learning the alphabet in unit 01, the real work begins in unit 02 with nouns of the second declension, presented first because it is the most straight-forward, and with the present and future active of the major class of Greek verbs. Betts' explanation of the way in which Greek nouns differ from those of English in exhibiting case endings is uncomplicated and clear. It may have been helpful in the immediate context of the description of basic uses of the cases to give Greek examples; the reader finds these in the Greek reading section, of which there is one for each unit.

Unit 03 presents first declension nouns, and some adjectives, adverbs and prepositions. The self-teaching reader is by now aware of the need for memorisation of lists of endings in order to learn Greek, and of the approach taken by our author. While traditional, however, it is not the only one. There is an increasing number of teachers who believe that NT Greek should be taught as a modern language, using as much as possible only the target language, unfolding the grammar through examples, and speaking and listening. Obviously, a book designed for self-teaching cannot work in this way. It would be possible, however, to incorporate some aspects of this methodology, such as substitution drills. For example, a model sentence is taught, say, 'He saw the man'. Then, the student is required to make substitutions: 'He saw the men/friend/father', or 'He <substitute verb> the man'. None of the exercises in the present book require translation into Greek, which is a task that students generally dislike but which assists the acquisition of fluency! Nevertheless, there are benefits in using paradigms (lists of noun and verb endings), particularly in that the adult language learner can use analytical skills to put into a place the elements he is learning, and from them generate new sentences.

Within the learning framework that Betts uses, then, his progressive unfolding of the language is logical, coherent, and comprehensive. An impressive feature of the book is the author's combining accuracy with concision. This is all the more remarkable in that a difficulty for any teacher of Greek is that it cannot be assumed that the learner will know even English grammar. Many students, it seems, 'know' of participles only that they end in '-ing', and have no concept of there being a passive participle. In introducing his explanation, Betts clears up these misunderstandings in less than three lines. Time and again Betts' grammatical explanations exhibit both brevity and effectiveness. This is not always so with Greek grammars!

Some units are supplemented by an excursus on a matter of general interest such as the nature of Greek and its history, books in antiquity, and the text of the New Testament. Again the reader benefits from Betts' erudition being easily and simply communicated. Each reader might wish for a little more. The significance of papyrological research for our developing understanding of the New Testament is an aspect I would have liked to have seen. And there are occasionally statements or opinions with which one might argue. Betts says of *koine* Greek that "its most important feature was that it was the language of the street, akin to the form of English spoken today by the relatively uneducated." (p7) The impression that this might give rise to needs to be weighed against the fact that what we have in the New Testament are written documents, when in itself the ability to write was confined to the educated (we cannot assume present day rates of literacy), that these are written and not oral texts, and that within the *koine* itself there is a broad range of levels of linguistic register. Betts, it seems, prefers the less modern translations; some might have a response to his comment, "Many recent translations show a tendency to paraphrase, which at times distorts the meaning of the original." (p164) But nowhere does Betts get on a soapbox. There is a small number of writers of NT grammars who have pressed pet interpretations of certain NT verses. Betts' text is scholarly and subjects the reader to no such excesses.

By the time I reached about unit 10, I felt that if the self-taught learner has taken Betts' advice, mastering the material of each unit before moving on, he or she will have a nascent sense of the structure and coherence of the language. Betts' mastery of detail and his comprehensiveness is exemplified in his including information on the formation of certain verbs which exhibit the influence of a 'yod' suffix; his style is exemplified in the lightness of touch with which he speaks of this matter which, though helpful, is touched upon by no other introductory NT grammar that I can recall.

One last linguistic matter requires attention: verbal aspect. About 15 years ago two scholars independently produced books on verbal aspect in the GNT. Fanning's approach was the more traditional, Porter's the more provocative. Naturally, it is the latter that subsequent writers seem obliged to respond to! One difficulty faced by students is that different authors may use the same terminology – to mean quite different things. Prior to this, many grammarians had explained the choice of tense, especially the choice between the Greek aorist and imperfect, as being based on *Aktionsart* – the nature of the action. The imperfect, some argued, denoted actions of some duration, while the aorist denoted those that could be described as "punctiliar". Porter's usefulness is in demonstrating that the choice is a matter of the writer's decision about how to present the verbal action to his reader. "The queen **reigned** forty years," views the action of reigning *globally* (as an entirety), and uses the simple past, for which the Greek

aorist would be used. We could say, however, "While the queen **was reigning** for forty years her country enjoyed prosperity," using the imperfect in English as in Greek. It is not the nature of the action that differs, but the way in which the author wishes to present the action in a given context. Where Porter set a cat amongst the pigeons, however, was his contention that verbs in the indicative do not "grammaticalize tense", that is, do not indicate the time at which an action takes place. (The "present" tense does not necessarily convey information about an action taking place in the present, nor the aorist an action in the past, etc.) That view has found little support. Though the writer of our *Teach Yourself* volume does not specifically refer to Porter's view, it is clear that he finds it no more convincing than does this reviewer.

As a pragmatic test, this reviewer looked particularly at Betts' treatment of the imperfect. In his notes to help the student in the translation exercises, Betts often makes perceptive comments, as when he explains on page 127 how a difference between Greek and English idiom makes the translation "loved" suitable in an instance where the Greek imperfect ("was loving") is used. Similarly, the translations Betts supplies in his key to the Greek reading exercises at times bring out more clearly the fullness of meaning of the imperfect than English readers are used to seeing in our translations (eg nos. 11 and 16 of unit 05). Pragmatically, then, the work is helpful.

The precise formulation used in expressing certain distinctions with regard to verbal aspect is critical, however, and at times I find myself in some disagreement with Betts, as when he distinguishes between commands that use the present or aorist form. "The present is used for an action which is seen as going on, in the process of happening or being repeated, the aorist for an action which is seen simply as an event." (p154) This, however, focuses on the nature of the action and is close to an *Aktionsart* view; the important point, rather, is how the author *presents* the action, whether he wants the reader to view the *process* of the action, or the entirety. Betts exemplifies his formulation by speaking of the Greek verb 'to obey' and writes that the present imperative indicates 'keep obeying', whereas the aorist "would have reference to a single act and be simply translated by *obey*". But if we look at the Lord's prayer (given in the translation exercise), are we to imagine that the aorist imperatives indicate that his name is to be hallowed, his will be done, and our daily bread be given *only once*?

It may be helpful to provide some ideas supplementary to those given in the somewhat thin section 'Suggestions for further study', which refers to only five other resources. Surprisingly, given that it is modern enough to use no capitals in its title and refers to unit 01, 02, etc, the book points the reader to no Internet resources. The B-Greek list (http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/) is a moderated forum to which students could refer questions; the New Testament Gateway (http://www.ntgateway.com/) is a directory of Internet resources including many for NT Greek. ESword (http://www.e-sword.net/) provides Greek texts, Bible translations, and other aids. *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* by Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor gives running vocabulary and grammatical helps to the reader; while Zerwick's *Biblical Greek illustrated by Examples* would make an excellent follow-up to Betts' work, particularly in its treatment of verbal aspect. Daniel Wallace's *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* is a widely used grammar which will consolidate understandings, though it tends to fit grammar into too many unnecessary categories, a trap that Betts deliberately avoids. Ceslas Spicq's *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* and the series *New Documents illustrating Early Christianity*, esp. vol 5 by G.H.R. Horsley, hold much interest based on understandings gained from papyrus and other sources.

Teaching oneself a language from a book requires passion; no book can generate that degree of motivation, it must lie within the student. For the student who is passionate, dedicated to many hours of study and some of frustration, and of the integrity to acknowledge the limitations of their own self-teaching, this book represents a trustworthy guide. For the teacher, too, who looks to accurate grammar concisely expressed this is a valuable book. I commend it to readers.

Dr Alex Hopkins has taught Greek language or classics at Monash and La Trobe Universities, and served as research assistant to a project to revise Moulton and Milligan's The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament. He is currently I.T. Manager and teacher at a secondary school, while teaching NT Greek privately and for Tyndale College. He acknowledges that as a student some 30 years ago he "sat at the feet" of Prof. Betts to great profit.