

The Practical Use of the Greek New Testament

By Kenneth S. Wuest (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1946, 1982), 157 pp., \$14.00

Wuest was a professor of New Testament Greek at the Moody Bible Institute and published over a dozen books on the New Testament and is credited as one of the translators of the original New American Standard Bible (NASB).¹

Anyone who is interested in the Greek text of the New Testament will find this book an enjoyable read, not only because of Wuest's exegetical and practical insights, but because of his wit and infectious zeal concerning the Greek text.

Wuest makes sure the reader understands that the English translation of the NT, as good as it is, cannot fully convey the subtle riches found in the underlying Greek text. Many examples could be given:

What surface exposition is done on the basis of the English translation, good and correct in itself, is abysmally inadequate in many instances. Given two men of equal abilities, filled with the Spirit, the one who uses his Greek text is always the more accurate and able expositor of the Word. The Holy Spirit does the best he can with what the preacher gives Him. When the preacher brings to his study the tools of scholarship, the Holy Spirit is able to lead him into more, deeper, and clearer truth than He can the one who confines himself to the translations (p. 88).

The pastor should not be at all hesitant about using his Greek in the pulpit. When his people know that he is a diligent student of the Word, and spends his time in intensive study in his preparation for his messages instead of sipping pink tea with the ladies, when they know that he brings the tools of Greek scholarship to the study of the Word, they will think all the more of him for it. There is no premium put upon ignorance. An educated ministry that is spiritual, is one of the most beautiful things in all the world (p. 141).

I especially like that final sentence: *An educated ministry that is spiritual, is one of the most beautiful things in all the world.* How rare that is! So often students of God's word fall into the trap of failing to become educated or, just as damaging, of being extremely well educated but lacking in spiritual wisdom and illumination. The knife edge which combines the two should be the goal of all who are called to teach God's word—and Wuest gives evidence of this on nearly every page.

Wuest's goal is to help the student of the Greek text understand how to make *practical* use of insights which are obtainable from the original-language text. His treatment includes use of the article, gender, number case, tense, voice, mode, prepositions, synonyms, and word studies. He also gets down to the nuts and bolts of how to study the text and which basic tools are to be recommended in the endeavor.

Throughout the text, Wuest provides captivating examples where he gleans insights from

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_Wuest, accessed 20081219.

the text while showing the reader how to approach the text.

Perhaps my favorite chapter concerned the use of synonyms—where different shades of meaning are conveyed, especially the distinction between *metamorphoō* (an outward manifestation reflecting the true inner nature) and *metaschēmatisō* (an outer manifestation differing from the true inner nature). Wuest explores these related terms and their significance in describing the transformation of Jesus during the Transfiguration in comparison with how Satan transforms himself into an angel of light.

There is much here for anyone who enjoys spending time in the Greek. One aspect I especially enjoyed was how Wuest's energy and zeal for the text (and teaching) drip from every page. He makes working with the Greek anything but dry. (It is readily apparent that he must have been an amazing instructor to sit under and experience in the classroom.)

An example of the freshness of Wuest's treatment in relation to other scholars can be seen in the difference between how he and Carson² interpret the significance of the different words for “love” (*agapaō* and *phileō*) in John 21:15-17. This is a good illustration of how two capable scholars arrive at completely different conclusions regarding a fairly straightforward text. To my mind, Carson is representative of so many in academia who seem to succumb to the pitfall of looking so closely at the tree that they fail to notice landscape of the surrounding forest. Carson overlooks the larger context evident in the significance of the conversation between Jesus and John. Wuest avoids this myopia and benefits as a result—a refreshing aspect found throughout the book.

Wuest portrays the attitude of a kid in a candy shop –much like the freshness and wonder of a new believer. Recommended!

Reviewed by Tony Garland of www.SpiritAndTruth.org.

² D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*