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G. K. Beale is well-known for his work on the NT’s use of the OT in such works as Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (co-edited with D.A. Carson). He received his PhD from Cambridge and is the chair of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, PA. Daniel J. Brendsel has a PhD from Wheaton College, and William A. Ross is a PhD student at Cambridge.

Based on the idea that the statements in a writing are logically related to one another in a variety of different ways (such as cause-effect, means-end, etc.), the Interpretive Lexicon is meant to help exegetes understand a select group of words often used to signal the relationships between statements in the NT. In the authors’ words, “this Lexicon examines and categorizes . . . key words found in the Greek New Testament that indicate relationships between clauses and that are therefore integral to conveying and supporting a main idea (or main ideas) in communication” (6-7).

The work contains two major sections. The first part provides an introduction to the use of the Lexicon. The authors present the theory behind the book by noting that “communication is built on relationships (often logical) between the statements or propositions we make” (5). They then provide a brief overview of the most common relationships between statements, based in part on Beekman, Callow and Kopeseck’s The Semantic Structure of Written Communication (7-12).

The introduction continues with a discussion of the layout of the Lexicon and how to use it. Following the description of the Lexicon itself are a few pages on the linguistic methodology utilized in the Lexicon. The authors stress two important concepts: first, words do not “create or contain semantic relationships,” but rather simply signal them (17-18). They liken words to street signs that show where a given location exists, rather than causing a particular location to be there.

Second, “word meaning and clause relationships are tied to their context” (18). Because of these two principles, the authors do not claim that the Lexicon is giving the meanings of the words (since they only represent potential meaning apart from usage in context). Rather they believe it describes “the relationships ordinarily represented by the words based on their occurrences in various contexts” (20). The first section closes with a key for the various abbreviations and symbols found in each entry.

Following the introduction is the second section, consisting of the entries themselves. While the authors make no claim to be exhaustive in their treatment, they address all of the major prepositions and conjunctions, as well as a number of less frequently used words. They also have separate entries for some phrases built off of prepositions (for example, separate entries for δι, διτό + inf., and διτό τοῦτο).

Each entry consists of the following data: the word; listings of page numbers for both the 2nd and 3rd eds. of BDAG; syntactical functions (indicated by capitalized headings), under which are included numbered sub-categories consisting of several glosses. (The sub-categories are generally following those of BDAG.) Added to each sub-category are one or more abbreviations which designate the logical relationships that may be indicated by the sub-category. A reference to the section in the 3rd ed. BDAG (and 2nd ed. where it differs) follows where the reader will find the corresponding discussion on this division on sub-categories. Finally, if words appear in Daniel B. Wallace’s Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics or Murray J. Harris’s Prepositions and Theology in the Greek
The Lexicon accomplishes two goals very well: First, it provides a handy reference to several standard works. By locating a word in the Lexicon, one has an easy way to track down the pertinent discussions in BDAG, Wallace, and Harris. The entries are short enough that they seem manageable, and yet they give enough information that the exegete can discern the main contours of the word’s usage, and know exactly where to find the relevant discussions in the other works.

Second, the Lexicon focuses on how the words under consideration identify relationships between statements. With its basic summary of the various logical relationships and its integration of that system into the entries, possibly the best feature of this lexicon is the way that it helps the exegete to begin thinking of the various words in terms of the relationships they indicate, rather than simply translational equivalents. In this the Lexicon moves the practice of word study in a positive direction.

However, the book has one main weakness, namely that the organizing principle behind the sub-sections of the entries is not always clear. The Lexicon generally follows BDAG, which organizes the entries around definitions or usages, which are followed by glosses. The Lexicon keeps the glosses, but omits the definitions. It then supplements the glosses with a list of relationships that each sub-section may signify. The problem is that the glosses and relationships may overlap from sub-section to sub-section, leaving the reader wondering exactly what constitutes the distinction between the various sub-sections.

Despite this weakness, this resource can help the exegete to simplify the research process for this small group of words and to think not merely in terms of translational equivalents, but to study terms in terms of relationships that a given word may indicate. It has the potential to be a useful resource as long as one is aware of its limitations.