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Emic Consulting: Its Significance for the Future of Bible Translation

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Abstract: “Emic consulting” is a term coined by the author to indicate translation consulting led by a language and cultural insider. This is defined further as someone who has been certified as a translation consultant and who has both a demonstrated proficiency in the receptor language (up to native speaker level, in some cases) and a deep cultural awareness, usually resulting from extended residency among the language community. Major language translations have utilized with great success emic consulting services, but this approach is of lesser frequency in minority languages. The author writes from the perspective of having served as a Bible translation consultant for three decades, as both an emic, insider consultant, and as an etic, external consultant. He is currently working as an emic consultant, assisting the Cheke Holo language group of Solomon Islands, south Pacific, in its full Bible completion, while also serving as an external consultant to four languages of west Asia. He makes comparisons between the two roles, weighing matters of proficiency, efficiency, and methodology employed for determining accuracy, clarity and naturalness. The author is of the opinion that emic consulting holds great promise for the future, both in terms of improving time of delivery of the translation and in quality control. Included among hurdles are “the dangers of familiarity” and an over-reliance on one primary consultant. Nonetheless, a challenge is given to consider the place of emic consulting in future BT work, with hopes for further implementation.

Keywords: Emic, Etic, Translation Consulting, Editing, Review of Translation

INTRODUCTION

In the recently-published A Guide to Bible Translation (Noss and Houser, 2019), the dozens of contributors document in an expansive historical survey how Bible translation (BT) work has been carried out in hundreds of languages by those who were both native and non-native speakers of the receptor language. Though the count is not currently quantifiable, it is safe to say that almost all BT work today is done by native speakers of the receptor language. While this has been the practice for translation into a majority of what are commonly called “major
languages,” this became a reality shift for lesser-spoken, or minority languages, during the latter third of the twentieth century. One major influence of that shift has been the training and capacity building among native speakers to lead in the task previously carried out by non-native speakers.

One of the undeniable results of this shift has been the recent explosion of BT publications in minority languages. As of January 2021, 3,425 of the world’s languages have at least some portion published of the Bible.¹ Thus, when BT was primarily restricted to outsiders leading in this task, progress was often encumbered by the rigors of an outsider undertaking language and culture acquisition, as well as a host of other factors, including the other-tongue translator’s longevity, efficiency, expertise, expatriate family matters, and funding.

One can use a framework of terms from anthropology and linguistics studies to describe the most basic contrast of native and non-native translators. Namely, the native speakers carried out their work from an emic perspective, and the outsiders who acquired the language did so from at least initially an etic perspective, and as their familiarization with the language and culture progressed, they moved towards an emic understanding, though their immersion was mixed between the two perspectives. The emic and etic terminology and distinctions were made popular in the writings and teachings of both Kenneth Pike and Eugene Nida.² A one-word descriptive contrast would be that emic is related to insider knowledge and relationship with a language and culture, and etic relates to an outsider relationship.

While this shift from etic to emic in translation drafting and text production is noted, the same can be said for translation consulting.

Briefly stated, translation consulting is a specialized and practical sub-discipline related to the editing and quality control process of Bible translation. It is practiced with a set of formal procedures and protocols with personnel outside the translation team for assistance in verification of accuracy, clarity and naturalness of a translation. The consultant brings a fresh perspective for questioning and discovery, not having been involved in the production.³

¹ From ProgressBible™. SNAPSHOT. December 2020. This number includes full Bibles (701), full New Testaments (1,563), Scripture selections (979), or stories (182). The number of each is based on the greatest amount of Scripture in that language.


³ During the consultation process, translators routinely discover that their intended rendering of the text does not reflect its meaning. They no doubt shape terms or grammar or discourse considerations accordingly, but often that good intention does not hold up to scrutiny.
We do not have succinct records of its formal institution, or of who was recognized and noted to be the first translation consultant. Famous figures in translation history utilized informal consulting help, such as John Wycliffe in the 14th century, and Martin Luther in the early 16th century.\footnote{John Wycliffe (see Hudson 1985 and 1988), who is credited with heading the first team to translate the Bible into English, would consult with a trusted and learned aide, John Purvey, in various matters of source text and word choice matters. Regarding Luther, Henry Zecher (1992) noted his use of a translation committee, which I would equate to ‘consultants’ today: “Though well taught in both Greek and Hebrew, he would not attempt it alone. ‘Translators must never work by themselves,’ he [Luther] wrote. ‘When one is alone, the best and most suitable words do not always occur to him.’ Luther thus formed a translation committee, which he dubbed his ‘Sanhedrin.’ If the notion of a translation committee seems obvious today, it is because such scholars as Philipp Melanchthon, Justus Jonas, John Bugenhagen, and Caspar Cruciger joined Luther in setting the precedent.” Luther was known for going to local butchers for ‘consulting help’ to identify certain internal animal body parts and organs, which he in turn could use in rendering Old Testament sacrificial passages. Though these references to Luther and Wycliffe are not strictly equivalent modern concepts of the term consultant, they do reflect the practice of seeking outside, expert help for accuracy and verification of the translation, which is at the heart of consulting.}

In terms of formal translation consulting, it is instructive to consider the example of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS). Throughout its history, BFBS has required that for translations to be published by them, they needed assurance regarding its overall quality and fitness for publication. Up until the 1970s, the way for BFBS to ensure this manuscript fitness was for the “foreign” language translation to be translated back into English.\footnote{For reference to the history of BFBS work, see Bataiden, Cann, and Dean 2004. Also see the article on “Manuscript Examination” in Noss and Houser, 2019:569–570.} Then, a biblical scholar on staff, working from an office in England, would “check” each verse to see if the translated text was equivalent to the biblical text of the original languages. Changes, suggestions, and edits were made based on the consultant’s evaluation, and put in place by back-and-forth, lengthy exchanges through the postal system (and note that for a significant period of its early history, the post from BFBS was carried by sailing ships). Thus, BFBS could vouch (at least internally to their organization) for the quality of the translation and its subsequent publication, and that was based on the satisfaction and official approval of the consultant.

SIL International has been the world’s leading organization in working with minority language communities. While consulting has been valued in SIL from its earliest days as an organization, SIL translation consultants were, for the most part, outsiders to the actual language and culture of the receptor language. However, in contrast with the historic BFBS “consultants” noted above, the SIL consultants usually resided in the same country as the translation team, or at least with a fresh set of questions from someone not involved in the process, and thus necessary adjustments are made to the translation.
had related work experience in that region, and thus had shared affinities to the language and culture under inspection. Standard operating procedure was to work face-to-face with the translation team for extended periods of time. This allowed for instant feedback, informative discussion, and adjustments, if necessary (or perhaps notes for further work and testing). Many of these consultants worked in languages related to the others in which they were assisting, and thus had more affinity with being emic than etic. But in terms of being a true insider, those cases were fairly rare in practice.

For the purpose of this article, I have coined the term ‘emic consulting’ to refer to consulting that is carried out by someone who would be situated on a scale approximating an insider to the receptor language.

Deeply emic consulting is rare among minority language groups, though common among major language translations. For example, for the production of a new translation into English or Norwegian, one would probably expect the translation consultants working with the translation team to be English or Norwegian speakers. Consultants would also most likely be native speakers; one would not expect non-native language consultants who would need the English or Norwegian back-translated into their own language. This scenario seems far-fetched for a major language. But for minority languages, this has usually been the rule: the translation consultant is an outsider to the language group and will need a back translation into their own language for the purposes of working with the team on questions of discovery, verification, help, and quality improvement. The quality control process for BT is rigorous, tedious, and demanding, and rightly so. Within these demands, emic consulting potentially provides a better product for the language community.

What follows is a practical discussion of this important contemporary issue in Bible translation, based primarily on personal experience and thoughts about future direction.

What is the Contrast between Emic and Etic Consulting?

I begin this section with a contrastive description as a reflection on my own experience, setting the context for the reader of my emic involvement. I began

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6 Apart from beginning language and culture acquisition in the Cheke Holo language of Solomon Islands in 1989, I was the translation advisor who helped the team to complete and publish the New Testament translation in 1993. (This translation was well underway before I arrived.) I worked on a long-term grammar-focused Ph.D. on the language, and the result of that was A Grammar of Cheke Holo, eventually finished in 2018 at Leiden University and published in the Netherlands in the LOT series of linguistics publications (Utrecht: Landelijke Onderzoekschool Taalwetenschap, 2018). Since leaving residence in the Solomons in 1998, I have continued to work as a consultant on most of the Old Testament books and have been
work as a translation advisor to the Cheke Holo language group of Solomon Islands, south Pacific, in 1989. The term advisor was used, more or less, to indicate a 'local-language level translation consultant.' Through years of residence there, I learned to speak, read, and write this western Oceanic, Austronesian language. When my facility in the language was passable, I worked daily to assist a main translator with both exegetical checking and discovery questions of accuracy, clarity, and naturalness, all the while increasing my own facility in the culture, grammar, and socio-linguistics of the language group. Also, I assisted the duly recognized translation committee in their efforts at program planning, Scripture publication, and promotion. In a word, I was operating as an intro-level, emic translation consultant to a specific language program. This paper is not about that level of advisor-consultant work, though there is great merit in a further discussion on that role.

As I gained more experience with Cheke Holo, I attended workshops and training. Some of these focused specifically on biblical books, which we called one-book workshops, helping us to produce better drafts and be alerted to translation problems that needed addressing, to access translation helps that were available, and generally to provide encouragement and experience to mother tongue translators. And eventually I attended consultant training workshops, so I could be utilized to provide another set of eyes and ears to other translation teams in their goal to verify and improve their translations. So, instead of just working as a local level translation advisor-consultant, I was now entering into the world of multi-language consulting. In terms of this article, I realize now that I was building on my emic experience with Cheke Holo to assist in etic translation consulting with others.

In my current work with SIL International, I have returned for a season to a heavy focus on emic consulting with Cheke Holo in an attempt to help the Anglican Diocese of Isabel of the Church of Melanesia to finish the translation of the entire Bible. I corresponded with the SIL leadership in the Solomon Islands some years ago to get their thoughts on my continued involvement, which they approved. “If the translator/s and language authority structures are pleased to have your assistance, then proceed. We know that you are not involved in the day-to-day translation work and production of these drafts, and you bring insider, professional help to the project.” That was the gist of it, recast in the language of this article.

Additionally, and importantly for building context, I was specifically invited by the bishop of the Anglican Diocese with a “Macedonian call” to please come over and help us. His words to me were, “You are the one who is qualified to help us proofread our Old Testament!” I was fascinated by his term “proofread.” That was designated as the consultant of record to help bring the Old Testament to its completion, projected for 2022.
his emic expression for what I as a consultant would be doing. It would be easy for me to say that “proofread” is actually an “etic” understanding of the full range of what I do. But then in fairness, I would have to challenge myself and say, “Actually, that term makes a lot of sense, and I understand exactly what he means.” I wasn’t able to leave my previous role and take him up on his firm request, but I have been able in my current role to travel and assist. I spend many hours preparing consulting notes in advance of each of three on-site visits per year.

Over the last three years, I have also worked as an etic consultant in four languages of a world region that we call West Asia. Though I worked briefly with a couple of languages of that region many years ago, I am a true outsider. I cannot read the orthography of any of these languages. Some of these I assist by Skype, some on-site, and some with language team members far away from the homeland, but with a combination of Skype and team-insiders physically present.

Having served in both emic and etic roles, I provide the following comparisons of the two experiences.

### Types of Questions

The types of questions in emic and etic approaches vary. With an etic point of view, I find that the following query interaction is common with a translation team:

- “How do you say...”
- “Can you say...”
- “What is your term for...”
- “What is your key term for XYZ and what does it mean?”
- “Grammatically, can you...”
- “Discourse-wise, do you need to repeat the verb tense?”
- “How is participant reference marked for subject, for object, and what are the inferences?”
- “Remind me; is this an SVO language?”
- “What are the uses of rhetorical questions in the language?”
- “How do you mark emphasis in the genre of poetry?”
- “Culturally, who is identified by this particular term/label?”
- “Can you actually read this in church?”

As someone with emic knowledge and experience of Cheke Holo, I can answer all of those above questions with some level of satisfaction or resource reference. However, as an outsider to west Asia, and thus firmly in the etic reality of my role, I would need help to answer every one of them.

Contrast the etic questions with more emic-like comments:

- “Look at what you have, and compare with this...[and the ‘this’ is from a language example generated by the consultant, in the language.]"
Often, the consultant is in much more of an editor role: “Don’t you think we might have used that particular conjunction too often in this paragraph?”

“I don’t see the plural marker; isn’t it supposed to be there?”

“Remember, the direct objects are singular throughout the passage—but that distinction seems to be missing here?”

“I noticed this term three chapters ago in the so-and-so discourse; what do you think about using it again here?”

“That completive aspect marker construction is incomplete...agreed?”

“Can we hear a UNS comment on this, in the language, with a tell-it-again test; I want to see if it’s coming through.”

**Level of Engagement**

One thing I try to stress when I begin an etic consulting session that might last for either a day or a week or more is, *I'm here to help. You all know your language. I don’t. I’m not here to tell you what to do. I’m here to help you achieve your goals. Tell me what kind of translation you are working towards, and let's work together to reach that goal. I have experience in translation work over many years in a number of languages. Mostly what I'm here to do is to ask questions and help you look at the text again, in different ways, and see if you think there might be improvements needed. We are handling the most important documents in the world. They demand our best effort.”

More so in etic consulting, it seems there is almost a Socratic method at play; questions and probes to help a translation team to reach their own conclusions (and which may or may not intersect with the afore-held conclusions of the consultant). I learned long ago that people do not accept conclusions unless they reach them for themselves. I try to help the team see that this effort is a win-win situation. What do I mean by that? If in my asking questions, a resulting change makes for an improvement, then that’s a win for the team, and a win for the language group. If my question leads to nothing and, in doing so, confirms the direction and choices already made by the team, then that is also a win; it is a confirmation of being on the right track.

I have found that the etic consultant often has bigger hurdles to jump, because he or she needs to prove their worth and usefulness to the language group. I can still see in my mind the look on a lead translator’s face after I had traveled far to join them (and when I say far, the travel to there was actually 6 days—within the same country). Somewhere early in the first session, he looked at me like, “Who are you? Do you know our language? You really think you can help us? Are you going to tell us what to do?” That air of defensiveness evaporated as we worked together in a collegial fashion. It is through interpersonal relationships
that both etic and emic consulting is built. An interpersonal pledge of help and teamwork is the entry point for both types of consulting. But for the emic consultant, the advantage is that she is already on the inside, “is one of us,” and we can trust her.

Here is some quantitative data in an otherwise mostly qualitative article and presentation:

I counted (through the Comments tool in ParaTExt in addition to manual edits I kept track of) the number of queries in a recent emic checking session of Cheke Holo 1 and 2 Kings: I contributed well over 800 queries, changes, edits, and suggestions. Those were made to a highly-trained and experienced mother tongue translator (MTT). I noted, after being queried by someone about my queries, that about a half to a third of mine resulted in some kind of change to the text. That was significant. Consider that number of 800 in light of the following comparison.

In a recent etic session in West Asia, it is safe to say that I could count my input and contribution in the dozens rather than the hundreds. Admittedly, the content under investigation was less in volume, but still I found that my range of contributions was much more limited. I was told that for the most part, my comments were useful, but I know they were not the same. There are different levels of usefulness. I was functioning as an etic consultant, and my insider-knowledge and experience were lacking.

The longer someone works with a team, ideally and usually the more emic one becomes. The etic level at the beginning gives way to a continuing deeper engagement, trust, and proficiency and efficiency. However, I would characterize my etic consulting as much more surface level. It’s more investigative. It’s discovery. It’s my attempt, as a consultant, to become more emic. But that is a long road.

**Main Goal of the Consulting**

Some might balk at the mention of the following obvious statement, but it needs to be heard: our goal is to help edit and improve the translation. However, what often happens in a session marked by etic interaction? We end up commenting, analyzing, revising, and scratching our heads on the back-translation, that is, a translation of the translation back into a major language. After a consultant session, the following statement has not been uncommonly uttered: “We deduced that the translation itself seems great, though it took us a while to get to that conclusion; we spent most of our time trying to figure out what the back translation was saying [or not].” That’s where emic consulting shines. There is no back translation to decipher. The emic consultant is handling the ‘primary text’ in the language, rather than a secondary text (i.e. the back translation) about the primary.
Categories of Emic-icity

Here’s another coined term: the categories of emic-icity. How do we characterize a consultant’s familiarity with a language and hence their level of engagement? How can we assess starting points and progress in our emic-icity?

Put in a practical way, someone wrote to me recently and said, “How is a man from Solomon Islands able to work with a team from West Asia? I wouldn’t think that you would have expertise there? Must be a story behind that.” (The story is actually very short; I got invited and said I would try. One invite turned into four. That’s it! Maybe they were semi-desperate?) In his mind, my position on the emic-icity scale is so low in west Asia that he wondered how I could possibly contribute there?

I propose four categories for assessing emic-icity.

Category 1 = little or no emic-icity

The consultant has never worked in this language before and has no prior knowledge of the language situation. He may be familiar with some of the key ideas of the major religion of the area, but most likely will need the most basic of introductions. The orthography may be in a script that he has no facility in whatsoever, and that will make him feel extra lost.

Category 2 = minimal immersion

Maybe the consultant has some reading experience of the region/country/language group; knows someone from there; traveled there ten years ago, did not work in translation, but did sample the culture and has that to depend on for the interpersonal side of consulting, which is always a bonus.

Category 3 = some prior experience/immersion

The consultant might have worked in a related region; he does not speak the language but maybe speaks a related one (and how closely related is an important question); he has some idea of the characteristics or distinctions of the language area; cross-linguistically, he has important data and experience. Some of the consulting details will be familiar to him, but others will not.

Category 4 = full immersion

The consultant speaks, reads, and writes the language under investigation. Most likely the consultant has lived among the language group for an extended period of time. The consultant may have not lived there for a while and will need
help with factors of language change, words/terms/concepts he either has not seen in a while (or which might have shifted/changed in his absence) or never experienced in context.

| 1=Little or no emic-icity or immersion | 3=Some prior experience and immersion |
| 2=Minimal immersion | 4=Full immersion |

**Figure 1: Categories of Emic-icity**

A challenge question: how can we, the global BT community, work to employ more people in categories 3 and 4 in our shared, global work? How can we utilize more consultants who are as close to categories 3 and 4 as possible? While I will not attempt an extended answer, I will offer that it is imperative that we present the need and the advantages for emic consulting, and particularly help those consultants with prior experience in the language to re-engage. Perhaps they need help with discernment in regard to unexpected open doors for service, significant life events which enable their re-engagement, or a simple realization and challenge that it is time to make this contribution.

In the following sections, I discuss a few advantages and disadvantages of emic consulting.

**ADVANTAGES OF EMIC CONSULTING**

**Efficiency**

As if the translation of the Bible were not hard enough and the road long enough, etic consulting requires a second translation! There is no other way around it. Producing a translation back into a language to be used by a consultant is a huge task. Some will tell me that this can be done orally. I am not interested in arguing that point or going into much detail, analysis, and debate on the topic in this limited-scope essay, though I will propose that a written back translation is superior as a working platform and opens the door to a much better consultant engagement.

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7 I remember being at the Papua New Guinea Branch of SIL during the 1990s when I learned that a significant milestone had just been reached: a Japanese translation consultant was going to consult with a Japanese translator in Japanese regarding his minority language work. The back translation could be done in Japanese, instead of English, which was the Branch standard up to that time. In fact, it was referred to in shorthand as a V/E, or Vernacular to English. The Japanese to Japanese engagement was seen as a huge step forward. Actually, for one to do a V/E in this language, it could be a considered a third translation!
Also, from the MTT side of things, I recently apologized to the Anglican priest that I was assisting as an emic consultant. I knew I was raising many issues, questions, and alternatives, and I was fearing that I was burdening him with a steady stream of input. We have worked together for 30+ years, now see each other infrequently, and I felt that I needed to give him all I had when we were together (and it is perhaps helpful for context of this point to reference back to the 800 queries I raised in Kings). However, I did offer that if he wanted to continue to use my services, then no back translation would be required. He immediately blurted out, “I don’t want to do any more of those! Takes too much time!” In whatever way he personally would be involved in back translation generation, the point remains that it would take a boatload of extra time and effort. Thus, here is a significant domain of emic consultant advantage: severe efficiency is gained by not generating a back translation, or checking a back translation, or improving a back translation. Depending on the level of emic consultant expertise and engagement, often a back translation is not an integral part of the process. I will occasionally ask a UNS for a back translation of a particular verse or phrase, but rendering the entire text back into English or Solomons Pijin is not a standard operating procedure.

However, I will add something here regarding the trade-offs of translation work: while not generating a back translation saves the translation team inestimable work, it is a loss in a couple of senses. One is that other teams are not able to reference this work as a regional back translation of a related language. These back translations can be valued resources in the production of first and subsequent drafts for potentially many others. Another apparent loss is that there is not, yet again, a separate set of eyes going through the translation, verse by verse, wrestling with and expressing the meaning of the text. It is always valuable for a team to receive this kind of input on their work.

*Editing*

Depending on the level of teamwork, trust, and length of time in working together, the emic consultant becomes an editor (actually, ‘consultant as editor’ was one of the original seminal thoughts of this article). While some may protest that position, and say that the consultant is interjecting himself or herself into the translation unnecessarily, my response is that this is perhaps no different than a position on one of the editorial committees of a major language translation. One will notice, for example, in the front of the NIV and the NLT, that after the names of translators, there is a list of editors, committee members, etc. All of those are emic consultants. The major languages use them; why can we not use them in minority language work as well? I am not proposing editing without consulting and signoff by the translator/s, but I believe it is undeniable that this editing
function takes place in various forms and is actually a very valued role. Contrastively, etic consultants do not contribute to this editing function, but the emic consultant’s role in editing is a definite advantage for the team.

I have just finished a review of the book of Proverbs in the Cheke Holo language. It was checked by another consultant while I was engaged full-time in a different role in my organization. I will mention just a few examples of things requiring a further look that I, as an emic consultant, have discovered, but which remained in the translation that had been examined by an etic consultant by means of a back translation.

One was a missing negator in a verb phrase. As I considered it in my reading review, I realized it would have been easy to miss when generating an oral or written back translation. The back translator may have thought or assumed it was there, intuitively, or expectantly, or whatever the motivation may have been. I believe that experienced consultants can testify that an ‘assumed reading of the intended meaning’ of a back translation is not uncommon. But as I read it emically, I saw that it was missing, and needed to be supplied in order for the verse to capture the intended meaning. Without it, an opposite meaning was presented. If the error was not stumbled upon by chance, or the back translator had not hesitated in his verbal production and instead had rendered it with the negative even though it was missing, the etic consultant would not have queried it.

Another error is what appears to be a wrong word choice between two similar words, and that was probably caused by a transposed typing error. Filo (“to see”) was used instead of foli (“to buy”). In context it is clear to the reader of the translation that foli was intended, though spelled as filo. Foli fits perfectly, as it is in line with two other uses of foli in the same proverb, and that frequency of use may also have contributed to the overlooking of the error in the translation by the presence of a similar word. Interestingly, before ruling out filo (“to see”) as the intention, I spent some time analyzing how filo could have been intended, considering relative clause formulation, or back-reference to the previous sentence, and wondering about other grammatical gyrations that a Cheke Holo analyst might make. However, it was clear that filo was a dyslexic typing error, and foli was intended. Again, this could be easily missed in a back translation, and the correct and similar word substituted without a thought. Its presence would have been completely outside the expertise of an etic consultant, because that consultant would not have a reading knowledge of the language.

While there are several others that have arisen, two others are worth noting. As an emic consultant, I discovered a singular marker that was included in the translation, though in context, it should have been plural. That was evidenced from the plural marker and object connected to it from the previous verse. This would easily have been missed or glossed over in an oral, or perhaps even a written back translation into Solomons Pijin (which is at times much less precise
than English, and which often requires further inspection as to whether the singular or plural was the translator’s intent).

Yet another was obvious to the Cheke Holo reader: in Proverbs 24:31, the ubiquitous, multi-functional Pijin preposition long was in the actual Cheke Holo translation, instead of the expected Cheke Holo word ka. Again, long would have been read aloud or written in the back translation and accepted by the etic consultant, but the emic consultant would have immediately chuckled at that inadvertent inclusion in the translation of this Solomons Pijin word. Admittedly, it would have assuredly been noticed in a further reading review before publication, but it was edited by the emic consultant, and that is a step towards building in more efficiency of the production of the final product.

Extras

The emic consultant can offer a range of suggestions that are not in the purview of the etic consultant. For example, the emic consultant can offer to help with computer matters such as spelling and word divisions, all of which are out of reach of the etic consultant. The emic consultant is more of an integral team player, wearing multiple hats as needed, and in doing so builds upon a long-term relationship with the translator/s.

Again, referencing my reading review of Proverbs as an emic consultant in Cheke Holo, I am noting issues of comprehensive consistency regarding common nouns, verbs, or key terms which have been dealt with and decided upon in other sections of the translation. While many of those needing a decision and which remain will be adjusted in final ‘computer checks,’ the emic eye will already have been alerted to many of those needing attention.

Disadvantages of Emic Consulting

What are the disadvantages, either real or potential? The advantages are significant, but I do not want to paint this approach as the end-all, be-all to consultant work, and mistakenly boil this down to: “If we just had an emic consultant working with us, we would have a masterpiece translation!” Obviously, there is more involved than that. But I offer the following as some potential pitfalls that come to mind.

Over-reliance on one key person could be disadvantageous. There are inherent limitations of reliance on one consultant. No matter how good the consultant, he or she is limited in their knowledge and experience. We used to hear in consulting that “every consultant comes with their own bag of tricks.” I interpret that to mean that each of us has different areas of specialty and interest and experience. Over-reliance on one person can set us up to perhaps unnecessarily
accept those limitations. If the load were shared with an etic consultant occasionally, or for part of the work, we would benefit as a team in our growth, depth, and capacity building.

Referencing again Cheke Holo, the primary language I am consulting on at present, I counted that we have had at least eleven different consultants work with us on this full Bible. I feel that is a generous and healthy number of trained consultants who have each brought their own expertise: some have been Greek scholars, some great at naturalness considerations, some extra-sticklers on exegesis, some intent on meaning-based considerations that seem to supersede other means of help the consultant could give. It has been a well-rounded package of consulting input. My job now as the emic consultant trying to help the team across the finish line is to take these insights and hopefully combine it all into a helpful and comprehensive package that utilizes the best of each.

With adaptation from and apology to the likes of the ancient Roman writer Publius and the English literary giant Chaucer, I ask, does familiarity breed inattentiveness? My answer is that it can, and it does. Maybe the emic consultant would get distracted by surface issues, when a deeper dive with a back translation in hand would be the better road? The text, the grammar, the word choices (agreed-on years ago, for example, but perhaps no longer in use) may be so familiar, the emic consultant fails to raise the particular issue, and the translator has also missed it, either through assumption or neglect, or just inattentiveness. It is a big series of documents that we are handling! I will venture to say that in Bible translation we are translating a library of books, rather than, of course, just a single volume done by a single author. In the long journey, it is likely that inattentiveness will set in at some point.

The emic consultant’s perceived position of power could be a disadvantage. Here is a not uncommon scenario: the consultant has been connected to the project for many years, with great experience, expertise, and training. He or she has delivered a lot of significant help. But does that ‘emic-ness’ and insider affinity put the consultant, perhaps unknowingly, into a position of power? That is, with their documented dedication to the team and to the project, will the team members feel free to question them? The team members might actually feel freer to question the etic consultant—he is not one of us, and so we might have a bit more latitude in expressing ourselves. And besides, soon the etic man will leave, and we really are not in relationship with him. But the emic consultant is one of us, and we will continue to live with him or her and we do not want to appear

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8 Chaucer popularized the line “familiarity breeds contempt” in his Tale of Melibee in the 1300s.
9 I acknowledge with appreciation my SIL colleague Dan Paul pointing this out to me in the question and answer session which followed the initial presentation of these thoughts as a conference paper at BT 2019 in Dallas.
ungrateful or disrespectful in our questioning of their contributions. We are in significant relationship, but do not quite know the best way to tell them to throttle back on their position—which they, the consultants, are obviously sold on, and might be pushing, but on which we team members are definitely not in agreement with. Power dynamics are in play in different translation working relationships, and we have to be vigilant to guard against unnecessary interference. Emic consulting could inadvertently work against a successful outcome, as noted.

Consider potential derailment. What if “emic man” or “emic woman” becomes no longer available, perhaps having either taken a different job, been sidelined due to sickness, “life events,” or any number of possible scenarios. Then what? What are the team’s options? Are those options built-in as contingencies, or do we slow down and just figure it out, and wait for a rotation until “etic man” can help out? At the least, planning is needed for “just in case.” In BT work, as in other professions, life happens.

CONCLUSION

I hope the reader will agree that the need is there for increased emic consulting in minority languages. It is fairly well established that this would yield and has yielded some significant advantages, and it would improve the translation process. Employing more emic consultants would help things get done faster. And I note that “speed” is an issue currently being addressed by BT leaders with financial investors; just eliminating the back translation from the equation is a huge improvement in speed!

I will offer that the work of an emic consultant, particularly one asked for by the translation team—one who knows them, and their language, their culture, their history—will presumably yield better quality than that of an outsider consultant, with all factors being equal. Investors are of course concerned that the products they are helping to sponsor materially are of the highest quality. It is my belief that with other factors being equal, emic consulting positions us for the best possible outcome in regards to quality.

And actually, the use of an emic consultant yields a less costly end-result in terms of finance. I say that because emic consulting reduces extra time either in delivering a back translation, or in trying to line up a consultant to rotate to a particular language group in the midst of being shared with others. And, obviously the longer a team takes to generate an adequate back translation, share it with an etic consultant for analysis, and then wait for and participate in the actual consulting session, the time frame for all involved in the project has significantly lengthened. Time and cost factors are also involved for etic consultants to acquire the necessary learning and entry points into a language. The oft-used expression is noted here, that time is money. Therefore, because of its efficiency,
emic consulting often proves to be “cheaper,” which again is an expressed value of current investors. Emic consulting is one answer to the dilemma of and quest for cheaper, faster, better quality translations. That triad is a stated goal of those who are fully vested in this global work financially.

How are these emic consultants developed? One of the most important ways that comes to mind is through a consultant growth plan. The following are possible considerations for such a plan:

1. “When this translation you are working on is finished, then consider doing the following in the consulting realm…”
2. “You’ve been working on a New Testament? Then recycle! Let’s talk about the inventory of related languages that could use your emic knowledge and experience.”
3. “We want you training, developing, and helping others; but we want you giving first-hand help as well to a specific language for which you are an insider. We need to do all we can to help them get to full Bible status.”

Let me anticipate a string of queries to the author: “Doesn’t this seem like it’s going to take a long time? I mean, emic consulting doesn’t happen overnight! What’s your response to that?”

As I reflect on my personal journey into Bible Translation of more than thirty years, I am landing hard on the realization that this is a Generational Work. It’s not quick, it’s not easy, it’s not mechanical. It’s long, hard, and interpersonal. It’s art and science, developed over a generation.

I will tag on to this with a look back at SIL’s Vision 2025. It was about generational change. We were challenged in 1999 to consider how we all in SIL and Wycliffe Bible Translators would have to act differently if by the start of the next generation, or about 25 years later, a translation program would have at least started in every language group on earth that needed one. It is perhaps natural to think of a generation as a long time; my response is that it is long enough to build a platform for change and to make deep change.

I close with a brief story. Our Solomon Islands colleague Erastus Otairobo (now recently-deceased and way too young to have left us) was the first Melanesian to be fully accredited by SIL and recognized by The Bible Society in the South Pacific as a full translation consultant. I remember getting a report on his progress early in his consultant training. One of the SIL Papua New Guinea senior consultants with whom Erastus was training told me a significant story. Some of them had been consulting with a translation team, and Erastus was involved as a trainee, and I took it as mostly an observer at that point. They came to the end of the passage, and the lead person said, “If no more questions, let’s move on.” Erastus said he had a question. He raised it. The consultant told me that all
eyes went to the back translation—and they realized they had *all* missed it, except Erastus. His query made for a significant change to the translation. Why? I will venture that Erastus had read the Back Translation through something probably approaching category 3 on the emic-icity categorical description. He was not native to the language, but he was to the region. He read the Back Translation through a Melanesian grid and Melanesian eyes. Those eyes and his grid were more closely related to emic-ness than to etic-ness. And thus, he offered his input as a consultant. May his tribe increase!

**References**


The Infinitive Absolute in Hebrew as a Substitute for a Finite Verb

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Abstract: This paper discusses the functions of the infinitive absolute from a cross-linguistic perspective when it is used in the Hebrew Bible where a finite verb might have been expected. It distinguishes passages in which the infinitive functions in an anaphoric way, “as the continuation of a preceding finite verb” (gkc); and those in which it functions in a cataphoric way, implying that there is more to come. When used in an anaphoric way, it associates the event concerned more closely with that of the previous verb than would have been the case had a finite verb been used, as when it describes an attendant circumstance or adds further details about an event. When used in a cataphoric way, particularly at the beginning of hortatory speeches, it often implies that the event or exhortation concerned is of a preliminary nature. Alternatively, it may introduce a topic that is followed by further instructions in second person. The paper concludes with suggestions as to how the above functions of the infinitive absolute might be reflected when translating into other languages.

Key words: Biblical Hebrew; Infinitive Absolute; Anaphoric; Cataphoric; Potency of Exhortations

INTRODUCTION

The infinitive absolute is a “non-finite verb form” (van der Merwe 1999, §20) which “is described as being in the absolute state because it stands on its own as an independent grammatical entity” (unfoldingWord’HebrewGrammar).¹ It is “an adverbial specifier par excellence” (van der Merwe et al., 2017, §20.2.1) whose basic function is to “emphasize the abstract verbal idea, without regard to the subject or object of the action. It stands most frequently as an adverbial accusative with a finite verb of the same stem” (gkc §45a), “to give emphasis with various nuances, the basic idea being that by giving the verbal idea in abstracto, the writer or the speaker wants to indicate that he is especially interested in it or to demand that

¹ uhg.readthedocs.io/en/latest/infinitive_absolute.html
reader or hearer give especial attention to it” (Muraoka 1985, 92). See, for example, Exod 3:7b (rāʾāh rāʾīṯ [literally ‘to see I have seen’]), which emphasises ‘see’: “I have marked well” (Sarna 1991, 15), “I have surely seen” (Cassuto 1967/1997, 32).

This paper concerns the functions of the infinitive absolute on the 202 occasions when it is “substituting for a finite verb” (van der Merwe et al., 2017, §20.2.1). The phrase “in the place of a finite verb” implies that the finite verb is viewed as the default way of portraying the event concerned, and that the infinitive absolute is a marked way of describing it. It follows that, if the finite verb is the default way of portraying an event, but an author chooses to use an infinitive absolute instead, then “he must have intended to convey special contextual effects” (Gutt 1991, 103). By choosing a more marked form, “the communicator makes the utterance more costly to process... [and] this would entail that she intended to convey additional implicatures to compensate for the increase in processing effort” (ibid., 41).

The cognitive effects of using an infinitive absolute instead of a finite verb depend in part on whether the infinitive relates back to previous verbs (an anaphoric usage) or forward to following ones (a cataphoric usage). In its anaphoric usage, the infinitive absolute may be thought of as a reduced verb form acting “as the continuation of a preceding finite verb” (gkc §1132), which has the effect of associating the event concerned more closely with that of the previous verb than would have been the case had a finite verb been used. See, for example, Jer 32:44: ‘People will buy[yqtl] fields for money, and sign[inf] deeds and seal[inf] them, and call in witnesses[inf].’ which describes four aspects of a single event (the purchase of a field) (discussed further in §1). In its cataphoric usage, as when a reported speech begins with an infinitive and is followed by a finite verb, in contrast, its presence implies that there is more to come and, under certain circumstances, the cognitive effect of using the infinitive is to background

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2 Figures obtained from SIL’s Bible Analysis and Research Tool (BART): search “vdm §20.2.4*”, but excluding those instances that are classified as an “Infinitive construct as infinitive absolute” (search “jm 123.q”).

3 van der Merwe and Andason (2014, 255) argue that, in such circumstances, the infinitive absolute “should be viewed as a non-prototypical or ‘intermediate’ category, located between the non-finite and finite edges of the linguistic continuum.”

4 Watts (1962, 142) argues that infinitives absolute that are hortatory in nature are always “defined by a grammatical construction either preceding or following.” The only possible exception he notes is 2 Kgs 3:36 (‘Make this valley full of ditches’—NIV), which he judges to be indicative (‘I will make this dry stream-bed full of pools’—RSV) (ibid., 142–43).

5 The following abbreviations are used to refer to verb forms in this paper: imp—imperative; inf—infinitive absolute; ptc—participle; qtl, wqtl—finite verbs without or with waw that are unmarked for aspect (Levinsohn 2020, §2.2); yqtl, wyqtl—finite verbs without or with waw that are marked for imperfective aspect; w-con—waw consecutive. Unless otherwise indicated, quotations are from the RSV, adapted as appropriate to more closely reflect the Hebrew.
the event concerned in relation to the following one (e.g., ‘Go[inf] and say[wqtl] to David’—2 Sam 24:12)—see §2.2.

Some Hebrew verb forms may be parsed as either an imperative or an infinitive absolute. Such is the case, for example, with kabbēḍ 'honour' in Exod 20:12. Under such circumstances, the linguistic norm is to opt for the parsing that would be default in the context. Since this verse occurs in a hortatory context and I consider the infinitive absolute to be a marked form of exhortation, I therefore follow WHM⁶ in parsing kabbēḍ as an imperative.⁷ I likewise consider bāre’ ‘cut out’ in Ezek 21:19 (HB 21:24) (bis) to be an imperative, even though WHM parses it as an infinitive absolute.⁸

Section 1 discusses the anaphoric usage of the infinitive absolute in the place of a finite verb as a way of marking a close association of the event concerned with that of the previous verb. Section 2 concentrates on cataphoric infinitives absolute that express exhortations, particularly at the beginning of discourse units, and compares the degree of “potency” (Wendland 2000, 58) that is cross-linguistically associated with exhortations expressed with finite verbs versus those expressed with dependent verbs such as infinitives.

1. **Infinitives Absolute Used Anaphorically to Associate Information Together**

Consider the following pair of English sentences (based on Jer 32:44):

- without elision: ‘People will buy fields for money, they will sign deeds, they will seal them and they will witness them.’
- with elision: ‘People will buy fields for money, sign deeds, seal them and witness them.’

The iconic effect of eliding ‘they will’ is to create a close association between the clauses, thereby implying that the events concerned are also to be associated together more closely than if there had been no elision.⁹

A similar effect in Hebrew is achieved by using a stripped-down form of the verb (viz., the infinitive absolute)¹⁰ instead of a finite form:

‘People will buy[yqtl] fields for money, and sign[inf] deeds and seal[inf] them, and call in witnesses[inf].’

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⁷ Contrast Joüon and Muraoka 2006, §123 v, footnote 6.
⁸ For an exception to this principle, see 1 Kgs 22:30=2 Chr 18:29 (discussed in §2.6).
¹⁰ The “infinitive absolute defines neither person nor mood nor type of action,” and so “is dependent upon its context to determine these matters” (Watts 1962, 142).
The use of infinitives absolute in Jer 32:44 is consistent with the acts of signing deeds, sealing them and calling in witnesses being elements of the single event of purchasing a field. These acts do not even have to be presented in chronological sequence (it would appear from Jer 32:10 that weighing out the money for the seller takes place only after the deeds have been signed, sealed and witnessed).

In Jer 32:44, the infinitives are linked to the finite verb with waw. In some passages linked by waw, the close association of the events concerned is due to them being mentioned together earlier in the passage. For example, Jer 3:1 begins, 'If a man divorces[yqtl] his wife and she goes[wqtl] from him and becomes[wqtl] another man’s wife, will he return[yqtl] to her?’ This sentence concerns the unlikely combination of a woman becoming someone else’s wife and then returning to her original husband. Consequently, when a parallel is drawn with Israel’s behaviour, an infinitive absolute can be used to associate the events concerned more closely together: ‘You have played the harlot[qt] with many lovers; and would you return[inf] to me?’

Infinitives absolute may also be used following ‘ô ‘or’ to introduce an alternative, as in Lev 25:14: ‘And if you sell[yqtl] to your neighbour or buy[inf] from your neighbour.’ Using an infinitive absolute associates the alternatives more closely together than if a finite verb had been used (compare Exod 22:1 [HB 21:37]: ‘If a man steals[yqtl] an ox or a sheep, and kills it[wqtl] or sells it[qt],’ in which stealing and killing are not associated together to the same extent as selling and buying).

The event described in an infinitive may be closely associated with the one presented with the preceding finite verb even when waw or ‘ô is absent and the link is asyndetic. See, for example, Deut 9:21: ‘... and I crushed[w-con] it, grinding[inf] it very small.’ In such passages, “the construction with the infinitive absolute functions adverbially” (van der Merwe et al., 2017, §20.2.3.1), often describing “more particularly the manner or attendant circumstances... under which an action or state has taken place, or is taking place, or will take place” (gkc §113h).

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11 [T]he IA typically ... depicts activities that occur simultaneously with an action of the foreground” (van der Merwe and Andrason 2014, 269), Jer 32:44 being cited as an instance of this usage.
12 Rubinstein (1952:363) lists 45 passages in which an infinitive absolute is linked to a preceding finite verb by conjunctive waw (the question marks “(?”) are his): Gen 41:43; Exod 8:11; Josh 9:20; Judg 7:39; 1 Sam 2:27–28; 1 Kgs 9:25; 1 Chr 5:20; 16:36; 2 Chr 28:39; Neh 7:3; 8:8; 9:8, 13; Esth 2:3; 3:13; 6:3; 8:8; 9:6, 12, 16–18 (“three times”); Eccl 8:9; 9:11; Isa 37:39; Jer 31:7; 18:15; 19:13; 22:14; 32:44: 36:23 (?): 37:21; Ezek 23:47; Dan 9:5, 11; Amos 4:5; Hag 1:56; Zech 3:4; 7:5; 12:10; plus Isa 8:6 and Jer 13:6Q (in both, an infinitive construct in WHM); Jer 32:33 (discussed in §2.6); Ezek 23:36 (?)(imperative in WHM). Additional examples are found in Exod 6:7; Esth 9:1, 4; Job 15:35; Eccl 4:17; Isa 22:13 (thrice); 31:5 (bis); 37:30; 59:14 (bis), 13 (thrice); Jer 22:19; 23:14; Ezek 24:10; Hag 2:35.
13 See also Exod 8:31.
14 See also Num 30:3; Deut 14:21; Isa 7:11.
15 See also Gen 30:32; Num 6:5; 2 Sam 8:2; 16:33; Job 15:3, 35 (with the subject referring back to ‘the godless’ in v. 34); Ps 17:5; Isa 14:31 (the subject changes from ‘O city’ to ‘O Philistia’); 22:23
In other passages, the infinitive absolute may present an amplification of the event described with the finite verb, as in Deut 3:6 (‘And we utterly destroyed[w-con] them, as we did to Sihon the king of Heshbon, destroying[inf] every city, men, women and children’).\footnote{See also Num 6:23; 15:35; Josh 6:3, 11; 11:11; Job 26:9; Isa 7:11; 31:5 (bis); Jer 23:14; Hos 10:4 (thrice); Mic 6:13.}

Even when the infinitive absolute is preceded by a non-verbal constituent, it is still the case that the event concerned is to be closely associated with the preceding finite verb. One such example is Ps 35:15–16 (bolding marks the pre-verbal constituent): ‘... they tear[qtl] and are not still[qtl]. With impious, mocking grimace they gnash[inf] their teeth at me’ (JPS, adapted).\footnote{See also Ezek 1:14 (the preverbal constituent signals a return to the topic of ‘the living creatures’) and, possibly, Ps 65:10 (HB 65:11; the ETCBC4 database [accessed via https://bibleol.3bmoodle.dk/] parses both infinitives as imperatives).}

See also 2 Kgs 11:15 (‘Bring[imp] her [Athaliah] out between the ranks; and slay[inf] with the sword anyone who follows her,’ in which the event in the infinitive is an attendant circumstance to the one in the imperative (it may or may not occur as Athaliah is brought out).

Occasionally, the infinitive absolute is separated from the clause or clauses to which it directly relates by another clause. For example, ‘They shall eat[inf] and have some left[inf]’ (2 Kgs 4:42–43) is separated from ‘Give[imp] them to the men, that they may eat[wqtl]’ by ‘for thus says the LORD.’\footnote{Similarly, ‘Your ways and your doings have brought[inf] this upon you’ (Jer 4:18) is separated from vv. 16b–17 by ‘utterance of the LORD.’}

Finally, consider Eccl 4:1–2: ‘And I returned[wqtl] and saw[w-con] all the oppressions that are practised under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and there was no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors (was) power, and there was no one to comfort them. And I thought[inf] the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive...’ The pairing of what the writer saw and his reaction to it has already occurred in 3:16–22 and is implicit in earlier passages of the book. So, the effect of using the infinitive absolute in 4:2 is to associate the same two elements (‘thought’ and ‘saw’—v. 1), notwithstanding the lengthy description of what the writer saw that separates them.

2. **Infinitives Absolute Encoding Exhortations Used in a Cataphoric Way**

The infinitive absolute is used about 61 times to encode an exhortation.\footnote{BART search “vdm §20.2.4.i.a” (“Inf. as an imperative”) yields 53 hits. Additional instances of exhortations (labelled “Inf. as an imperfective”—BART search “vdm §20.2.4.i.b”) are Gen 17:10; Exod 12:48; Lev 26; 67; Num 6:5; 15:35; Josh 6:3; Esth 2:3.} The
thirteen that are closely associated with an earlier exhortation have been covered in §1. The remaining exhortations are presented in five groups: those that are of a preliminary nature because they involve movement to the location where exhortations expressed with finite verbs are to be realised (§2.2); those such as ‘remember’ and ‘hear’ in which the subject is an experiencer rather than an agent (§2.3); those in which the infinitive absolute is the target of a cataphoric pronoun (§2.4); infinitives absolute in Proverbs (§2.5); and residual examples (§2.6). I begin, though, with some cross-linguistic observations about the relative potency of different forms of exhortation and their distribution in discourses of an instructional nature.

2.1 The Relative Potency of Different Forms of Exhortation

Exhortations may be expressed in a variety of ways, including, in the case of Hebrew, with imperatives (e.g., ‘Be fruitful[imp] and multiply[imp]’—Gen 1:28), with other finite verbs in first, second or third person (e.g., ‘Let us make[yqtl] man in our image’—Gen 1:26) and, as we have already seen, with infinitives absolute. In addition, the voice of the verb may be active or passive (e.g., ‘Every male among you shall be circumcised[inf]’—Gen 17:10).

One way to distinguish different forms of exhortation is on the basis of their relative potency. Wendland (2000, 58) defines the potency of an exhortation as “its relative directness, urgency, or degree of mitigation.” “Mitigate” means “make less severe” (Oxford English Dictionary).

The potency of an exhortation depends on a number of factors, including its mood (imperatives are typically more potent than indicatives, unless a mood marker such as ‘will’ or ‘must’ is present), person (second person exhortations are typically more potent than first or third person ones), voice (exhortations with active verbs are more potent than those with passive ones), dependence (exhortations with finite verbs are typically more potent than those with non-finite ones), and the presence or absence of mitigating expressions such as ‘please.’

Whereas the above summary asserts that exhortations with finite verbs are typically more potent than those with non-finite verbs, Hebrew grammarians often cite passages in which the infinitive absolute appears to function as “an emphatic imperative” (gkc §113bb). Noonan (2020, 207) judges “that recent material is right to characterize the infinitive absolute as a strong, enduring command. It does not attempt to ‘save face’ or be polite in any way but represents a very direct request from a greater to a lesser.” This implies that many grammarians

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20 Num 6:5, 23; 15:35; Josh 6:3; Neh 7:3; Esth 2:3; Eccl 4:17; Isa 7:11(bis); 14:31; 37:30; Ezek 24:19 (bis).
21 See Zeynali Dastuyi (2018) for a detailed application of these factors to different hortatory forms in online medical books in Persian.
consider the infinitive absolute to be a more potent form of exhortation than a finite verb (at least in the passages that they cite).

In contrast, I argue below (§2.4) that exhortations expressed with an infinitive absolute are never more potent than those expressed with a finite verb and that any emphasis associated with an infinitival exhortation is because a proximal demonstrative such as zeh ‘this’ has been used in a cataphoric way to point forward to the exhortation.

Another cross-linguistic observation that is relevant to this section is the following: “When more than one form of exhortation is employed in a text that gives counsel [or instruction], the exhorter usually begins with less potent exhortations and concludes with more potent ones” (Levinsohn, in press-a, §7.1.2). This principle is consistent with some instructional discourse units in Hebrew beginning with an infinitive absolute, before continuing with finite verbs.

An additional cross-linguistic distinction that is relevant to this paper is between instruction and persuasion (see Longacre 1996, 18–20). For instructions, the “speaker or writer (exhorter) considers him or herself to have the right or authority to tell the exhortee how to behave” (Levinsohn, in press-a, §2.4). For persuasive discourses, the exhorter “appeals to the reasoning logic of the recipient, seeks to convince” (Kompaoré 2004, 40). This explains why, in Hebrew, the infinitive absolute “is never accompanied by the politeness marker na’” (Noonan 2020, 207). Na’ is associated with situations in which one person is seeking to persuade another, as in Exod 4:6, where the LORD is still trying to persuade Moses to go to Egypt, so tells him, ‘Put[imp] na’ your hand into your bosom.” Conversely, the impersonal nature of the infinitive absolute tends to make it an inappropriate means for persuading someone else to act. Indeed, it may even be the case that, when a speaker begins a hortatory discourse with an infinitive absolute, this guarantees that the discourse will be of an instructional nature.

The term ‘instruction’ includes both those that are addressed to a specific occasion (corresponding more or less to the occasions when Joüon and Muraoka [2006 §123 u] consider infinitives absolute to be the “equivalent of the imperative”) and those that are of a general nature (since they are often used in quasi-legal contexts, Joüon and Muraoka [ibid., §123 w] consider them to be the “equivalent of the injunctive future”).

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22 Only after the LORD fails to persuade Moses to return to Egypt does He become angry with him and make him go (Exod 414–17).
23 According to van der Merwe and Andrason (2014, 265), “As a deontic category, the infinitive absolute expresses obligations, orders and requests.” Obligations and orders may both be thought of as instructions, whereas requests are more likely to occur in persuasive discourses. Furthermore, none of the examples cited by van der Merwe and Andrason (ibid., 265–268) are classified as requests.
2.2 Movement to the Location of a Further Exhortation

When the fulfilment of an exhortation requires movement to the place where it is to be realised, it is not uncommon in languages for the movement to be backgrounded in some way in relation to the main exhortation. For example, NT Greek uses a prenuclear participle, as in Matt 28:19 (‘going, therefore, make disciples of all nations’). Similarly, Inga (Quechuan, Colombia) verbs include a movement root such as ri- ‘go’ or samu- ‘come’ when the main exhortation is preceded by “contingent movement” (“un movimiento contigente”—Chasoy, Levinsohn and Bilbao 1978, 428). Hebrew achieves the same effect by using an infinitive absolute to describe the movement that needs to take place in order to realise the main exhortation. We have already noted 2 Sam 24:12: ‘Go[inf] and say[wqtl] to David.’ The following passages are also of the pattern: ‘go[inf] and main exhortation[wqtl]’: 2 Kgs 5:10; Jer 2:22; 13:1; 17:19; 19:3; 28:13; 34:2; 35:2; 13; 39:16.

Passages in which the verb of movement is ‘take’ work in the same way. One example is Jer 32:14: ‘Take[inf] these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put[wqtl] them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time.’ Deut 31:26, Ezek 24:5 (with the object pre-verbal—see the end of §1), and Zech 6:11 are similar.

One additional passage with a verb of movement in the infinitive absolute is Ezek 23:46–47 (‘Bring up[inf] a mob against them and make[inf] them an object of terror and spoil. The mob will stone[wqtl] them...’). Verse 46 contains two infinitives, implying that the events concerned are to be viewed as of a preliminary nature in relation to what the ‘mob’ (NIV) will do once they have arrived on the scene.

2.3 Exhortations in Which the Subject is an Experiencer

The subject of verbs such as ‘remember’ or ‘hear’ is sometimes described as an “experiencer” because he or she is “affected” by the action of the verb (Crystal...
1997, 143), rather than being its agent. When such a verb is in the infinitive absolute and occurs at the beginning of a hortatory unit, the event concerned lends itself to being interpreted as preliminary in relation to further exhortations in which the subject is an agent.27 An example is found in Deut 25:17–19: ‘Remember[inf] what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, how he attacked you on the way, when you were faint and weary, and cut off at your rear all who lagged behind you; and he did not fear God. Therefore [whyh-wqtl] when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your enemies round about, in the land which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out[yqtl] the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget[yqtl].’28

The same reasoning applies to Exod 20:8–10 (‘Remember[inf] the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9Six days you shall labour[yqtl] and do[wqtl] all your work; 10but the seventh day (is) a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do[yqtl] any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates’). The act of remembering the sabbath day reminds the hearers of what they already know about the sabbath (e.g., from the incident of Exod 16:22–30, as well as Gen 2:2–3) and is of a preliminary nature in relation to what follows. In contrast, the prohibition of v. 10b is of the same type as eight of the other nine commandments in the passage.29

Note in passing that Exod 20:12 (‘Honour[imp] your father and your mother’) is not encoded in the same way as the commandment of v. 8, even though it is a “strong, enduring command” (Noonan 2020, 207). This is because it does not point forward to another command within the same hortatory unit, but is a main commandment in its own right.

See also Deut 1:16 (‘Hear[inf] the cases between your brethren, and judge[wqtl] righteously between a man and his brother or the alien that is with him’), in which the act of hearing cases (something that judges are expected to do) is of a preliminary nature in relation to the exhortation to judge righteously.

When an imperative is used to instruct the hearers to remember, then the exhortation is a main command in its own right. This is evident in passages which also contain paraphrases of ‘remember,’ as in Deut 9:7 (‘Remember[imp],

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27 van der Merwe et al. (2017, §20.2.3.2) describe such infinitives absolute as being “at the head of commands or instructions.”

28 Exod 13:3 and Josh 1:13 are similar.

29 “The emphasis does not lie on this introductory phrase with the infinitive absolute but on the second and third clauses which do carry full imperative weight” (Watts 1962, 144). Deut 5:12 is analysed in the same way as Exod 20:8, even though the infinitive is šāmūr ‘keep.’ See also Deut 16:1, 27:1.
do not forget[yqtl] how you provoked the L ORD your God in the wilderness’) and Deut 32:7 (‘Remember[imp] the days of old, consider[imp] the years of many generations’).³⁹

A residual passage involving the infinitive absolute of ‘remember’ is Deut 24:8–9 (‘Take heed[imp], in an attack of leprosy, to be very careful to do according to all that the Levitical priests shall direct you; as I commanded them, so you shall be careful[yqtl] to do. Remember[inf] what the L ORD your God did to Miriam on the way as you came forth from Egypt’). The instruction of v. 9 (‘Remember’) is a “supportive exhortation” (Levinsohn in press-a, §2.2.4) which supports the main exhortation of v. 8 (“Take heed”). This means that the infinitive absolute has been used in an anaphoric way in this passage, rather than a cataphoric one.

2.4 Exhortations in Which the Infinitive Absolute is the Target of a Cataphoric Pronoun

On three occasions, a cataphoric pronoun introduces a passage in which the first exhortation is an infinitive absolute, and instructions with finite verbs follow it. In each instance, the exhortation expressed with the infinitive may be viewed as being of an introductory nature in relation to what follows.³¹

Consider Gen 17:10–13: ‘This [zōṯ] (is) my covenant, which you shall keep[yqtl], between me and you and your descendants after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised[inf]. 11And you shall be circumcised[wqtl] in the flesh of your foreskins... 12He that is eight days old among you shall be circumcised[yqtl]... 13both he that is born in your house and he that is bought with your money must be circumcised[inf + yqtl].’ In this passage, the exhortation expressed with the infinitive introduces the topic of circumcision, while subsequent exhortations elaborate on it.

The exhortations of this passage vary in potency, with the infinitive absolute being more mitigated than the finite verbs of vv. 11–12 and the infinitive absolute plus yqtl combination in v. 13 being emphasised.³² The mitigated – default –

³⁹ The qal imperative of zkr ‘remember’ is most often found in persuasive discourses, with or without the politeness marker na’, as when someone directs a prayer to God (e.g., ‘I beseech thee, O L ORD, remember na’ how I have walked before thee in faithfulness...’—2 Kgs 20:3=Isa 38:3).

³¹ When a pronoun is used in a cataphoric way, the grammatical category that matches it is a noun. In such passages, the infinitive absolute might be functioning more like a verbal noun than an independent verb (e.g., in Isa 58:6–7 and, possibly, Zech 14:12). In Jer 9:23, the cataphoric pronoun is ‘in this’, so the infinitives absolute could be adverbial.

³² Joüon and Muraoka (2006, §123.v) describe the infinitive in Deut 17:10 as “equivalent to an injunctive future rather than to an imperative.” However, they do not indicate whether such a classification would make the infinitive more or less potent than an imperative.
more potent sequence of potency within vv. 10–13 is consistent with the hortatory unit being an instruction.

At the same time, the effect of using a cataphoric pronoun such as ‘this’ is to “give prominence to the material to which they refer” (Levinsohn in press-a, §5.2). So, when a writer claims that an exhortation such as that of v. 10 is “emphatic,” it is not the infinitive absolute that conveys the emphasis, but the cataphoric pronoun.\textsuperscript{33}

2.5 Infinitives Absolute in Proverbs

Several proverbs consist of two parts, the first of which is in the infinitive absolute, while the second uses a finite verb. This suggests that the first part is backgrounded in relation to the second. A non-hortatory example is Prov 12:7: ‘The wicked are overthrown\textsuperscript{[inf]} and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand\textsuperscript{[yqtl]}.’\textsuperscript{34}

Now consider Prov 25:4–5: ‘Take away\textsuperscript{[inf]} the dross from silver, and there emerges\textsuperscript{[w-con]} a vessel for the smith; take away\textsuperscript{[inf]} the wicked from the presence of the king, and his throne will be established\textsuperscript{[wyqtl]} in righteousness.’ Although there are two parts to the proverb, both of them begin with an infinitive absolute. It is possible to argue that, in both verses, the act of taking away is backgrounded in relation to the result. However, it may well be that the infinitive absolute is simply an appropriate way of expressing an indirect exhortation which has no specific actor in mind.

Finally, Prov 17:12 (‘Let a man meet\textsuperscript{[inf]} a she-bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly’) seems to be a proverb that stands by itself, rather than being “defined by a grammatical construction either preceding or following” (Watts 1962, 142). Once again, the infinitive absolute may be an appropriate way of expressing a jussive which has no specific actor in mind.\textsuperscript{35}

2.6 Further Passages in Which an Infinitive Absolute is Used in a Cataphoric Way

This section discusses other passages in which an infinitive absolute encodes an initial exhortation, which may be judged to be of a preliminary or introductory nature in relation to what follows.

First, consider Num 4:2–3: ‘Take a census\textsuperscript{[inf]} of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their families and their fathers’ houses, from thirty years old up to fifty years old, all who can enter the service, to do the work in the tent of meeting.’ Watts (1962, 143) suggests that this sentence “simply name[s]

\textsuperscript{33} See also Lev 6:14 (HB 6:7) and Deut 152. 2 Kgs 19:29=Isa 37:30 and Isa 55(bis) are similar, though the passages are not hortatory.

\textsuperscript{34} See also Prov 13:20 (Kethib); 15:22.

\textsuperscript{35} ‘Sooner meet a bereaved she-bear than a fool with his nonsense’ (JPS).
the topic which is about to be discussed. Since vv. 4–15 concern ‘the service of Kohath in the tent of meeting,’ the preceding infinitive absolute may indeed by viewed as introductory in relation to what follows.

Num 4:22 (‘Take a census[inf] of the sons of Gershon also, by their families and their fathers’ houses’) is similar, though it would be possible to argue that v. 22 is also preliminary in relation to the more detailed instruction of v. 23: ‘from thirty years old up to fifty years old, you shall number[yqtl] them, all who can enter for service, to do the work in the tent of meeting.’

Now consider Exod 12:47–48: ‘All the congregation of Israel shall keep[yqtl] it [the Passover]. And when a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised[inf], then he may come near[yqtl] to keep it.’ The main concern of this passage is the keeping of the Passover, so the circumcision of male strangers is of a preliminary nature in relation to it.

Ezek 21:26 (HB 21:31) has two pairs of infinitives absolute: ‘Remove[inf] the turban, take off[inf] the crown; things shall not remain as they are (lit., ‘this not this’). Exalt[inf] that which is low, and abase[inf] that which is high. A ruin, ruin, ruin I will make it[yqtl].’ Both pairs of infinitives are backgrounded and consequently give prominence to the statements that follow.

Num 25:17 (‘Harass[inf] the Midianites, and defeat[wqtl] them’) is a residual example. The infinitive absolute implies that ‘harass’ is to be understood as being of a preliminary nature in relation to the act of actually defeating the Midianites.

Nah 2:1 (HB 2:2) (‘Guard[inf] the fortress; watch[imp] the road; gird[imp] your loins; collect[imp] all your strength’) is another residual example. Is ‘guard the fortress’ to be understood as being of a preliminary nature in relation to the other exhortations?

1 Kgs 22:30=2 Chr 18:29 (‘I will disguise[inf] myself and go[inf] into battle, but you wear[imp] your robes’) is a quasi-hortatory speech. The effect of using infinitives absolute to present what ‘I’ [the king of Israel] propose to do is to back-ground these actions in relation to what ‘you’ [Jehoshaphat] are to do.

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36 See also van der Merwe and Andrason (2014, 265).
37 See also Isa 57:17 (a non-hortatory passage), in which ‘hid’ is an infinitive absolute, and ‘I was angry’ (repeated from the beginning of the verse) is the main assertion. 2 Chr 31:10 is similar; the chief priest is answering a question from Hezekiah about the heaps of offerings; in his reply, ‘we have eaten[inf] and had enough[inf] and have plenty left[inf]’ is backgrounded in relation to the part that actually answers the question: ‘for the LORD has blessed[qtl] his people, so that [we have] this great store left.’
38 Burney (1918 [1970], 256) suggests that the infinitives should be translated, “Let me disguise myself and enter the battle!” JPS parses them as imperatives and translates them, “Disguise yourself and go into the battle”, but it is clear from the latter part of the verse (‘So the king of Israel went into the battle disguised’) that the subject is not the addressee.
39 “The fact that Ahab disguises himself while directing Jehoshaphat into battle in royal regalia... is consistent with Israel’s dominant position at the time” (NIV 1987, 631).
Now consider Lev 2:5–6: ‘And if your offering is a cereal offering baked on a griddle, it shall be[qt] of fine flour unleavened, mixed with oil; it shall break[inf] it in pieces, and pour[wqtl] oil on it; it (is) a cereal offering.’ The infinitive absolute of v. 6 cannot easily be interpreted as functioning anaphorically, to associate the instruction with v. 5, because of the change of subject between the clauses and because v. 6 has an overt direct object, ‘ōṯāh ‘it.’ The act of breaking the offering in pieces therefore seems to have been presented as of a preliminary nature in relation to the pouring of oil on it.49

I conclude this section with some passages in which the infinitive absolute does not encode an exhortation, but is still used in a cataphoric way.

First, consider Isa 21:5: ‘They prepare[inf] the table, they spread[inf] the rugs, they eat[inf], they drink[inf]. (Suddenly the command rings out:—GNB) “Arise[imp], O princes, oil[imp] the shield!”’ As the GNB translation suggests, the pragmatic effect of backgrounding the first four events with the infinitive absolute is to highlight what happens next.

Now consider Jer 7:9–10: ‘Will you steal[inf], murder[inf], commit adultery[inf], swear[inf] falsely, burn incense[inf] to Ba’al, “and then come[wqtl] and stand[wqtl] before me...?” The pragmatic effect of the sequence of six infinitives absolute in v. 9 is to highlight the question of v. 10.

Finally, in Jer 32:33 (‘They have turned[w-con] their back to me and not their face; and I have taught[inf] them rising early[inf] and teaching[inf], and they do not listen[ptc] to receive instruction’), the infinitives absolute are backgrounded in relation to ‘they do not listen’ (‘though I have taught them persistently’—RSV), which corresponds to ‘they have turned their back to me.’40

3. CONCLUSIONS AND APPLICATION TO TRANSLATION

This paper has argued that the functions of the infinitive absolute, when “substituting for a finite verb” (van der Merwe et al., 2017, §20.2.1) are best understood by dividing the passages concerned into two sets: those in which it functions in an anaphoric way, “as the continuation of a preceding finite verb” (gkc §113z); and those in which it functions in a cataphoric way, implying that there is more to come.

When used in an anaphoric way, a useful distinction is between infinitives that are linked to the finite verb with waw or ‘ō ‘or,’ and those that are asyndetic. With an overt link, infinitives absolute have the effect of associating the event concerned more closely with that of the previous verb than would have been the case had a finite verb been used. With asyndeton, the infinitive absolute describes

49 Oil was a required ingredient for all the grain offerings discussed in Lev 2:1–16. See Tidball 2005, 48 for discussion of its significance.

40 Other non-hortatory passages in which the infinitive absolute is used in a cataphoric way are: Job 40:2; Jer 8:35; Hag 1:9.
“the manner or attendant circumstances... under which an action or state has taken place, or is taking place, or will take place” (gkc §113h) or else amplifies the event described with the finite verb. In translations into English, this effect is often captured by using a post-nuclear participial clause, as in Deut 9:21: ‘... and I crushed[w-con] it, grinding[inf] it very small.’

When used in a cataphoric way, particularly at the beginning of hortatory speeches, infinitival exhortations imply that there is more to come. Most often, they are of a preliminary nature (e.g., ‘Go[inf] and...’). Alternatively, they may introduce a topic that is followed by further exhortations in second person (e.g., ‘Remember[inf] the sabbath day, to keep it holy’ [Exod 20:8], which is followed by instructions as to what ‘you’ are to do and not do).

Cross-linguistically, languages have means of indicating when events are to be closely associated together. Devices used include ellipsis (see the introduction to §1); an associative connective, rather than a disjunctive marker (Levinsohn, in press-b, §6.1); and, in verb-object languages, post-nuclear participial clauses.

Languages also have means of indicating when events or exhortations are of a preliminary or introductory nature. Devices include specific verb forms (as in Hebrew and Inga), pre-nuclear subordinate clauses (as in NT Greek), and "spacers" that separate information of unequal importance, especially, but not exclusively, in object-verb languages (Levinsohn, in press-b, §5.2.3–4).

REFERENCES


“Was This Not My Concern?”: Jonah and the Problem of Theodicy

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**Abstract:** If God is truly good, then why did my grandmother die of cancer? Why did I have to bury my child? Why does the darkness overcome so many? These questions typify discussion of theodicy. What we want to know is, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” The book of Jonah, however, presents us with the other side of the problem when he cries out at God because God has caused some good thing to happen to bad people in the world. Indeed, what are we to do when God forgives the evildoer? And this was Jonah’s fear from the very beginning:

But it was a great evil to Jonah, and he became angry. So he prayed to Yahweh and said, “Please! Was this not my concern when I was in my country? It is why I hastened to flee to Tarshish. For I knew that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, abounding in covenant faithfulness, and relenting concerning the evil. And now, O Yahweh, please take my life from me, for my death is preferable to my life. (Jonah 4:1–3)

While Jonah doesn’t outright answer why God forgives evil, the book paints a clear enough picture of what it means to struggle with the reality of God’s forgiveness of those who most certainly don’t deserve it. Therefore, Jonah’s contribution to the question of theodicy is crucial for those of us who continue to struggle with the great mystery of the gospel, that God would make siblings out of enemies (Eph 2:15).

**Keywords:** Jonah, Theodicy, Suffering, Evil, Justice, Forgiveness

**INTRODUCTION**

In his 1978 article, Terrence Fretheim frames well the role of the book of Jonah in the larger discussion over theodicy: “The stumbling block for the faith of Jonah is not so much some ancient counterpart to the Lisbon earthquake, the visitation of evil upon the innocent, but the Nineveh deliverance, the proffering of divine mercy to those who are evil” (Fretheim 1978, 227). That is, Jonah engages the question of God’s goodness in light of the existence of evil by coming at the question from the opposite angle of books like Harold Kushner’s immensely
popular *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Jonah’s concern is not why bad things happen to good people; rather, his concern is why good things happen to bad people. Such a concern was at least common enough in ancient Israel to grant the inclusion of Jonah’s wrestling in the Hebrew Scriptures, and I can attest personally to the ongoing significance of questioning God’s goodness in light of the prosperity of those who do evil (as could the author of Ps 73).

The present study will tackle Jonah’s contribution to theodicy in the following manner. First, it will outline the meaning of theodicy and various approaches to it in the Hebrew Scriptures. This overview is necessarily brief and will serve only to sketch the rough contours of how the authors of the Hebrew Bible sought to “vindicate God and his justice in a world in which there is apparent evil” (Cook 2019 13 n. 16). Second, this paper will examine how Jonah differs from the typical formulation of theodicy, paying particular attention to elements indicating Jonah’s struggle not with evil visited upon the righteous but rather with goodness visited upon the unrighteous. This examination of the theodicy’s counter-formulation will lead into a discussion of reading Jonah’s formulation of theodicy in conversation with other members of the Twelve. Finally, I will conclude the paper with personal reflections on what role Jonah might play in helping modern readers to engage both their own trauma and the trauma of others.

**THEODICY IN THE HEBREW BIBLE**

The term “theodicy” was first used by Gottfried Leibniz in his 1710 work, *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l’homme et l’origine du mal*. Since then, scholars have proposed variations on an exact definition for the term, though the basic contours of what is meant are consistent. James Crenshaw’s definition is representative: “Theodicy is the attempt to defend divine justice in the face of aberrant phenomena that appear to indicate the deity’s indifference or hostility toward virtuous people” (Crenshaw 1992, 6:444).

Crenshaw’s definition is consistent with what we can call the typical formulation of theodicy in the book that discussions of theodicy most often call to mind: Job. Scholars disagree over the primary concern of the book of Job, but it seems clear from even a cursory reading of the book that its titular character is imminently concerned with the why of his suffering. A concern shared in the broader ancient Near Eastern culture, as evidenced by works such as the Egyptian “A Dialogue of a Man with His Ba,” the Sumerian “Man and His God,” and the Babylonian “The Dialogue between a Man and His God.”
book Job struggles to reconcile his experience of suffering with the fact that he has lived a righteous life, a characterization with which the narrator agrees, according to the opening verse ("He was a man of complete integrity, who feared God and turned away from evil"; Job 1:1). Job’s friends, on the other hand, propose a variety of reasons for Job’s suffering, all of which seem to be offered for the purpose of justifying God. That is, God is just and would therefore not unduly cause suffering; Job is suffering, and therefore Job must be the cause of his own suffering (see, e.g., Job 4:7–11; 18:5–21; 20:5–29; 36:5–9)—a tidy theodicy (Longman 2012, 54–60, 62–63).

Job, for his part, maintains his innocence throughout; even if he does believe “it is sinners who suffer,” he is not one of them (Longman 2012, 459). After God addresses Job in the epilogue—resulting in Job’s repentance (Job 42:1–6)⁴—God then has strong words for Job’s friends: “After the LORD had finished speaking to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, ‘I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has’” (Job 42:7 CSB).⁵ That is, their attempt at theodicy by means of retribution theology has failed, and now they must also repent.⁶ The book of Job thus engages a theodicy that lays the blame for suffering at the feet of the sufferer, but the author indicates that this theodicy is insufficient, arguing instead—through Yahweh’s speech in chs. 38–41—that God’s ways are unsearchable.

In sum, Job’s friends valiantly defend God’s goodness in light of human suffering, but the book as a whole leaves readers with the same question as at the start: Why do bad things happen to good people?⁷ Because God causes them to happen, it seems. Job’s readers must therefore hold in tension that Job is righteous and that God is sovereign, good, and causes great suffering to Job.⁸ Despite

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⁴ Martin 2018 surveys how various interpreters have understood 42:1–6 and posits that it is Yahweh, not Job, who repents. This is a minority position.

⁵ The question of how Job spoke rightly of God is a bit thorny, with commentators offering various opinions of what exactly that phrase means. For an overview of the interpretive possibilities, see Ortlund 2018, esp. 350–53.

⁶ As Longman 2012, 459, points out, “Their retribution theology (sinners suffer; therefore sufferers are sinners) was inadequate, and they showed no sign of movement from their position. They did not change their minds at the end of the debate [as Job did]; they simply gave up.”

⁷ On the book of Job returning readers’ questions to them, see Saur 2010.

⁸ Brenner 1981, 131, notes, “Job never doubts God’s omnipresence or omnipotence—his ability to exercise both good and evil is not questioned.” See also Whybray 1999. Whybray argues that the whole point of the book is to demonstrate God’s sovereignty, not to answer the question of unjust suffering. Not all readers, of course, will agree that God is shown to be sovereign in the book of Job (e.g., Kushner 1979). However, this seems to read against the grain of the book of Job, which presents God as permitting the satan to attack Job in various ways in the earlier chapters of the book (see Page 2007), as supreme over creation in Yahweh’s speeches, as requiring repentance from Job and his friends, and finally as restoring Job in the book’s closing chapter.
the book leaving readers with the same questions with which we started, it makes sense that even today people go to the book of Job to wrestle with suffering. In Job we see the same sort of attempt to find some way to reconcile our perceptions of God with our experience of suffering, and in Job we see a righteous sufferer with whom we can identify—whether rightly or not. Jonah is another, similar voice in the Hebrew Bible that can help modern readers in our wrestling—spiritual and psychological—as it illuminates the prism of theodicy from a slightly different perspective and yet seems to arrive at a similar answer as the book of Job.

There is precedent for reading Jonah and Job together, as scholars have argued that they actually form part of a splinter group from theodicy: antitheodicy. Following Katharine Dell (1997), Stephen Cook (2019, 299–301) points out the “striking thematic similarities” between Jonah and the book of Job, particularly in how the books depict God’s interactions with his interlocutors (Job and Jonah). We argued above that Job’s friends sought to justify God’s actions in the book of Job by trying to convince Job that he sinned: sinners suffer, Job is suffering, ergo Job is a sinner. This theodicy—as all theodicies—is predicated on the view that God is both good and sovereign. The book as a whole, though, maintains God’s goodness and sovereignty while also refusing to legitimize the friends’ theodicy. Jonah, on the other hand, sees the Ninevites as wicked and deserving of suffering, and yet they do not suffer. His problem is not unjust suffering of the righteous (vis-à-vis Job); rather, Jonah’s problem is the unjust blessing of the wicked. In the end, neither book “justifies, explains or accepts as meaningful the relationship between God and the suffering of his people” (Cook 2019, 301).

**Theodicy in the Book of Jonah**

The title of this section admittedly begs the question by assuming that Jonah is about theodicy before demonstrating that it is, in fact, about theodicy. Indeed, T. Desmond Alexander has outlined four streams in the book’s history interpretation that proffer a distinct purpose for Jonah:⁹ to urge Jewish readers toward repentance, to examine how best to navigate aspects of non-fulfilled prophecy, to urge a change in Jewish readers toward Gentiles (e.g., to evoke a missionary mindset in them or to “rebuke the grudging attitude of some Jews concerning God’s willingness to forgive Gentiles” [Alexander 1998, 93]), and, finally, to examine the issue of theodicy, “the relationship between divine justice and mercy” (Alexander 1998, 95). Alexander helps us navigate these streams of interpretation by proffering theodicy as the one theme to rule them all. To use a kinder metaphor, each of the four primary classifications for the purpose of Jonah fits

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⁹ For discussion and bibliography on each of these streams, Alexander 1998, 88–99.
well underneath the umbrella of theodicy in Jonah.10 Thus, while there are many things that could be said about Jonah and what the author is doing with what s/he is saying, the present discussion will follow Alexander in zeroing in on Jonah’s concerns about God’s relenting from evil against the Ninevites.

THE CAUSE FOR JONAH’S (ANTI-)THEODICY

Returning to Crenshaw’s representative definition above, note that it addresses theodicy from the angle of evil being visited upon “virtuous people.” Jonah addresses theodicy from a different angle. He is “angry enough to die” (Jonah 4:9), not because he has suffered unjustly but rather because God has not meted out punishment on the Ninevites. Jonah’s displeasure is evident throughout the book. He clearly does not want to preach to the Ninevites, as evidenced by at least two of the prophet’s actions. First, he attempts to flee from God by loading onto a ship headed to Tarshish. Second, once Yahweh sends the storm that threatens the ship heading to Tarshish, Jonah convinces the sailors to throw him overboard, an act that indicates his preference for death over fulfilling the mandate to deliver Yahweh’s word to Nineveh.11

While readers at this point likely have some idea as to the cause of Jonah’s reluctance to go to Nineveh, he makes clear his reasoning in chapter 4. Chapter 3 ends with what by most accounts would be a statement of prophetic success: “God saw their actions—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it” (Jonah 3:10 CSB). Jonah has proclaimed Yahweh’s message, the people of Nineveh have heard it and repented, and God has withheld the promised disaster.12 Readers familiar with the prophetic tradition are no doubt surprised at this turn of events, for prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were not met by such receptive hearts and Yahweh did not relent from disaster at the hands of the

10 Alexander 1998, 97: “Of the various proposals for the purpose of Jonah, it is apparent that there is little to choose between them; it is easy to see why no clear consensus has yet been reached. Having said this, however, the view that Jonah is ultimately concerned with justice and mercy has at least one major advantage over the others. While the other proposals rightly reflect important themes in the story, that can all be satisfactorily subsumed under the heading of theodicy.”

11 This episode evinces significant irony and presents a parallel between the responses to Yahweh of the non-Israelite sailors and the Ninevites, in contrast to the Israelite Jonah’s responses to Yahweh. See, e.g., Eynikel 2011, McLaughlin 2013, and Strawn 2010. Jeremias 2004 argues that the two groups (sailors and Ninevites) represent two separate “others” in the Israelite worldview: the nations in general (sailors) and the enemies of Israel (Ninevites).

12 Walton 1992, 52–53, argues based on a comparison between Jonah’s hut in chapter 4 and the Ninevites that “the ‘repentance’ of Nineveh should be understood as being shallow and naïve, though it is certainly a positive step in the right direction.”
Assyrian and Babylonian empires.\textsuperscript{13} Yahweh’s relenting, however, angers Jonah:

Jonah was greatly displeased and became furious. He prayed to the Lord, “Please, LORD, isn’t this what I said while I was still in my own country? That’s why I fled toward Tarshish in the first place. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from sending disaster. And now, LORD, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” (Jonah 4:1–3, CSB)

Readers now learn that Jonah knew all along that Yahweh very well may forgive the Ninevites, and that is what prompted his attempted flight from God’s presence and plea to the sailors to toss him overboard. Now that his fears have become reality, he accosts God for doing what is in his nature to do. Further, Jonah cites Exod 34:6 as the basis for his belief in God’s mercy.\textsuperscript{14} In this Jonah demonstrates that he knew of God’s propensity to forgive sin, a propensity with which he has no qualms when it concerns him and his sins (see Jonah 2).

Jonah’s concern that Yahweh would forgive the “other” also hints that he may have some knowledge of God’s inclusion of the other in the rest of Hebrew Bible. For example, included among the Israelites whom Yahweh delivered from Egypt were a “mixed multitude” (בָּנָיָא בָּנָיָא) (Exod 12:38).\textsuperscript{15} From its very inception God’s people included those who were children of Abraham and those who were not. As Aaron Sherwood (2012, 153) puts it,

The mixed multitude of [Exod] 12:38 thus marks an implicit instance of the nations being unified with Israel to be God’s people, and one that is unargued, unexplained, and unassuming. The narrator simply supplies as a given that God’s prize of Israel was made up of both Israelites and non-Israelites who were united in and as worship of him.

Those who were once outside of God’s covenant community are now included within it, and this glorifies Yahweh, the God who is much more than a tribal deity.

As the newly established people of Israel continued their journey out of slavery and into the promised land, God would continue to show his propensity for

\textsuperscript{13} Again, setting aside for our purposes the questions of dating and reading the Hebrew Bible canonically and from the vantage point of a completed body of literature—the Tanak—in conversation with each other and its readers.

\textsuperscript{14} This key passage is repeated throughout the Hebrew Bible, indicating its importance for the community’s understanding of God and his nature (e.g., Num 14:18; Ps 86:5; 15; Neh 9:31; Joel 2:13). On the use of this passage as a didactic device in Jonah and the Book of the Twelve, see Boda 2011 and Barriocanal 2016.

\textsuperscript{15} Stieglitz sees this group as the reasoning behind Torah legislation that provided justice for foreigners in Israel. However, the biblical text offers its own explanation: the Israelites were foreigners in Egypt (Exod 22:21; Lev 19:34; Deut 10:19). See Stieglitz 1999.
extending mercy to those outside of the covenant community. The narratives of Rahab and Achan, which bookend the account of Jericho’s fall, illustrate well the paradox of God’s hesed—his unending, faithful love for and commitment to his people—and the value he places on covenant faithfulness (Lockwood 2010). Joshua 2 tells of the spies sent to Jericho and Rahab’s faithfulness in defecting to the Israelites. Rahab acknowledges both Yahweh’s giving of the land to the Israelites and Yahweh’s supremacy, then she requests that the spies return to her and her family the hesed she has shown them (Josh 2:9–14). The spies assure her that they will show hesed to Rahab, indicating again that Yahweh—and, at times, his people—extend hesed to those outside of the covenant community, like the Ninevites.

Israel conquers Jericho, keeps its word to Rahab (Josh 6:22–23), and is then routed by Ai, for they “were unfaithful regarding the things set apart for destruction” (Josh 7:1). It turns out that the Israelite Achan rebels against Yahweh and is thus treated as if he—along with his entire family—were a Canaanite. Yahweh shows mercy to Rahab, a covenant outsider, who acts faithfully toward Yahweh, and he destroys Achan, an Israelite from the tribe of Judah who rebelled against Yahweh (Spina 2001).

A final example rounds out the evidence Jonah could draw on in his anticipation that Yahweh would forgive the Ninevites. Ruth, like Rahab, was an outsider, not least as a Moabite. As a Moabite, descended from Lot’s incestuous relationship with his daughter, she was barred from the “assembly of the LORD” (Deut 23:3 ESV) because of the Moabites’ refusal to aid Israel on its journey out of Egypt and because of their failed attempt to curse Israel in Num 23–24.

Ruth’s story takes place “in the days when the judges ruled” (Ruth 1:1 ESV), a period well known for the blatant covenant unfaithfulness of God’s people: “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 21:25). This Moabite widow contrasts sharply with the Israelites who raped, murdered, and trafficked women during the period of the judges (see Judg 19–21). Ruth demonstrated hesed to Naomi by leaving her own homeland and hopes for provision and traveling with her mother-in-law to Israel. There, of course, Ruth met Boaz, who acted as her kinsman-redeemer and extended hesed to her and thus to Naomi as well. The book of Ruth ends with David’s genealogy, putting a sharp point on the contrast between the events recounted

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16 Hawk 1996 explores this issue as it relates to the Gibeonites, Rahab, and Achan.
17 On similarities between Jonah and Ruth, see Diebner 2011.
18 Given the opening of Ruth, some see it as originally a conclusion to Judges (Bell 2001).
19 Ignatius 2006 argues that the raped and murdered concubine of Judg 19 should be considered a survivor because of the symbolic role she takes on as a representative of those who suffer similarly. For discussion of sexual violence in the Hebrew Bible, including Judges, see, among many studies, Eynikel 2005; Keefe 1993; Niditch 2015; Scholz 2010.
20 For discussion of the covenant relationship between Ruth and Naomi, see Smith 2007.
21 For discussion of the meaning and function of חֶסֶד in Ruth, see Koroth 1991.
in Judges and those in Ruth.\textsuperscript{22} Read in conversation with the book of Judges, we see highlighted the theme of Yahweh’s inclusion of non-Israelites. God repeatedly demonstrates hesed to those outside of the covenant community while he visits his judgment upon those covenant community members who do not keep hesed with him.

The Hebrew Bible includes a long history of inclusion of the other, and it seems that Jonah sought to avoid being part of that sort of inclusion. Thus, Jonah was right to be concerned that God may relent from the disaster he planned for Nineveh, and he was speaking truly about God when he said, “I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from sending disaster.”

**YAHWEH’S RESPONSE TO JONAH’S CONCERN**

While there is disagreement over exactly what is happening in Yahweh’s response to Jonah, it is clear that the book ends without resolving much, just as Job ends without resolving why Job—a righteous insider—suffered as he did. Jonah is apparently still angry, and God’s final words simply point out the problem. Readers do not know whether Jonah came around to seeing things God’s way or whether he persisted in his insistence that Yahweh’s grace should be confined to a select group. We do not know what the Ninevites’ relationship with Yahweh looked like after repentance, though the book of Nahum makes it clear that they at some point returned to idolatry and injustice. Readers, like Jonah, receive no clear-cut answer to Jonah’s concern, apart from what seems to be—as in Job—a reiteration of Yahweh’s concern for and sovereignty over all of his creation: the plant, the storm, the sailors, the Ninevites, and Jonah. We are left to ponder Jonah’s response, God’s response, and, ultimately, why bad things happen to good people, with the only guiding principle to direct their thoughts seeming to be that Yahweh is sovereign and does what he wills, including, most importantly, extending his grace to those within and outside of the covenant community.\textsuperscript{23}

**JONAH’S (ANTI-)THEODICY IN CONVERSATION WITH THE TWELVE**

It has been instructive to read Jonah in conversation with Job and also to consider some of the intertexts he may have had in mind when protesting Yahweh’s display of hesed to the Ninevites. And while other passages could also be examined profitably, this essay will focus on two final intertexts (albeit briefly) from

\textsuperscript{22} For discussion of the contrasts between the actions of the characters in Ruth and those of the characters in Judges, see Raskas 2015.

\textsuperscript{23} For further discussion of how Jonah ends and its relationship with the book of Job, see the discussion in Cook 2019, 267–68.
Jonah’s counterparts in the book of the Twelve: Micah and Habakkuk. Each of these books wrestle with the interconnection between suffering, evil, and God’s judgment and sovereignty.

Micah presents one of the more straightforward discussions of the relationship between evil and suffering in the Hebrew Bible, though it is not without its difficulties. Micah engages this conversation in two ways. First, Micah excoriates these leaders because they have failed both to love God (e.g., Mic 1:2–7) and to love people (e.g., Mic 2:1–3). Their covenant failure in these two aspects of life—faithfulness to Yahweh and faithfulness to people—means that the political and religious leadership of Israel has caused God’s people significant suffering. Because of these sins, Micah says, God will judge them. This first portrait of suffering and judgment brings much relief, for readers see Yahweh rebuking political and religious leadership for their mistreatment of the weak. Indeed, much of Micah comprises material in which the prophet, speaking for Yahweh, laments the sins of Israel’s leadership and promises that severe judgment would come.²⁴

Further, Micah sometimes speaks in eschatological tones, referring to a time when Yahweh would raise up a messianic figure to rule over Jerusalem and restore his righteous reign (Mic 5:2–4), not only for the covenant people but also for all nations (e.g., Mic 4:5). Micah therefore assures readers that evil will be punished, the Lord will rule from Jerusalem, and the oppressed will be restored. Micah’s first engagement with theodicy is hope-filled and encourages the book’s readers, both ancient and modern, who have suffered unjustly, particularly at the hands of corrupt authority figures.

However, second, there exists a wrinkle in Micah’s presentation of Yahweh’s judgment of evil and restoration of those who suffer. Namely, the instrument of Yahweh’s judgment—exile—will itself cause significant suffering, and this without distinguishing between the righteous and unrighteous (e.g., Mic 5:3).²⁵ Both the wicked leadership of Israel and the people of Israel will suffer under Yahweh’s punishment, suffering for which Yahweh takes credit. Yahweh promises to “assemble the lame and gather the scattered, those I have injured” and to “make the lame into a remnant, those far removed into a strong nation” (Mic 4:6–7; see also Mic 7:15–20), yet it remains that Yahweh has caused the suffering—he ultimately bears the burden for the judgment that wounds both the righteous and the wicked. Yahweh will certainly preserve his people through suffering, and he will certainly judge the wicked leadership for their role in harming his people, yet it remains that suffering must come, even to those whose cause Yahweh is upholding. The solution Micah seems to offer, then, is that God will bring about restoration ultimately, though not immediately, and that ultimate hope for restoration provides his people with what is needed to endure the suffering they will experience.

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²⁴ On Micah’s confrontation of abuses of power, see Wessels 1998.
Micah’s presentation of judgment on the wicked in Israel that also entangles the righteous in Israel is not unlike the complaint readers find in the book of Habakkuk. There, Yahweh answers the prophet’s complaint of unrighteousness in Judah by promising a coming judgment. That is all fine and well until, of course, the prophet learns that it is the Chaldeans who will judge God’s people. Yahweh’s use of a more wicked nation to punish his people perplexes the prophet, though Yahweh promises judgment also for the Chaldeans (Hab 2:6–20; Whitehead 2016). Ultimately, the prophet decides he “must quietly wait for the day of distress to come against the people invading us” (Hab 3:16 CSB), and the book ends with Habakkuk proclaiming his trust in Yahweh (cf. Hab 2:4b). Habakkuk thus voices his theodicy in terms of the prosperity of the wicked in Israel, then in terms of the relative righteousness of those in Israel over against Yahweh’s instrument of judgment, and finally concludes by voicing his trust in Yahweh after Yahweh assures the prophet that there will be ultimate judgment for all the wicked—including the Chaldeans—not only those in Israel. Habakkuk’s contribution to theodicy in the Twelve, then, seems to be its confident assertion that Yahweh will judge wickedness, even though the timeframe for doing so remains outside of human knowledge.26

In sum, Jonah’s voice in the Twelve complements voices such as Habakkuk and Micah, who present a somewhat straightforward picture of Yahweh visiting judgment upon wickedness, though those books contain their own difficulties as well. Whereas readers see just judgment against wickedness in Habakkuk and Micah, in Jonah readers take a front-row seat to the (unjustified, it turns out) anguish caused when Yahweh does not judge wickedness but rather forgives it. Alongside Micah, Habakkuk, and the rest of the Twelve, Jonah’s testimony contributes to a fuller picture of the social, psychological, and religious complexities of God’s dealings with humanity and humanity’s struggle to understand those dealings.

ENGAGING TRAUMA WITH JONAH TODAY

Leaving aside the more academic context of the preceding discussion, I would like to end this essay on (anti-)theodicy in Jonah with a much more personal and autobiographical discussion of how Jonah has shaped me. This sort of deviation from academic discussion may seem jarring to some, but my hope is to demonstrate how academic engagement with the biblical text can and should interact with our daily lives.

In my own context, church leaders typically counsel survivors of trauma to forgive those who sinned against them. That is fine and good, and it certainly jibes with biblical teaching about the importance of forgiveness. It is even a primary

26 On the building tension and resolution of Habakkuk’s theodicy, see Thompson 1993.
theme in the book of Jonah, as we have seen above. However, abuse is a difficult thing to process. It does things to humans that are hard to understand and hard to cope with. I am not a psychologist, I know that an anecdote is not data, and I also know that each person's journey toward forgiveness will be different. My own story of forgiveness has meandered, often taking more steps backward than forward. So, I offer these reflections on my identification with Jonah as one way that Scripture can be appropriated in an effort to understand the mystery of God's love toward those who we think do not deserve it.

When I was twelve years old my mom married a deacon ("George") at our local church. He also led a small group (a "Life Group," we called them), was generous, evangelized fervently, and read the Bible daily. The church and local community regarded him highly for his acts of kindness and generosity toward others, as well as his faithfulness to preach the gospel to every sinner who came his way. So it is not really surprising that the pastors at the church didn't believe me when I told them that he was full of rage, abusive, and beat my younger brother so severely as to leave welts all over his body. Never mind the fist-sized hole in the door to my childhood bedroom that remains some decades later as a dark reminder of what hell a person can bring to his family.

The worst part, for me at least, is that George was unpredictable. I could never really be sure what would set him off, and that type of uncertainty tends to scramble the brains of a young kid. I avoided home as much as possible and tried at all costs to steer clear of George, but I was not as successful as I would have liked. And anyway, there is no getting away from the yelling that came through my door when George would berate my mother for some failing at being a good Christian. I eventually mustered the courage to move in with my alcoholic father the semester before I left for college, and during college I was welcomed into another family's home.

Even though I was able to escape physically, it has taken some time, and lots of starts and stops along the way, to heal psychologically. After I became a Christian, someone showed me the imprecatory psalms, and they helped to quell the anger that threatened to rise up at any moment (see Meek 2019). They helped, that is, until George repented to my mother for all the evil he had done. Then I found myself looking instead to Jonah. Like him I could say, "I do well to be angry, angry enough to die." Though I knew Jonah was in the wrong in his narrative, I identified with him anyway. I viscerally understood Jonah's anger at Yahweh's graciousness. The Ninevites should be destroyed! George should be destroyed! From my perspective, it was not right for God to extend his grace to someone who had hurt my family and me like George had. And it did not matter much to me that the gospel message is that Christ died to reconcile sinners to

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27 Repentance is a significant issue in the scholarly literature that deserves much engagement in its own right; however, there is no space for such discussion here.
himself. Out of enemies, Christ made brothers (Eph 2:11–22), sure, but I was not prepared to be the brother of my enemy.

After processing some of the rage I felt at George’s repentance and seeing in Jonah myself, I was reminded of Jesus’s parable of the unforgiving servant. Here Jesus picks up on the theme of grace that we see in Jonah but personalizes it in a most uncomfortable way. Jesus tells the story of a person who had been forgiven an impossibly large debt, but “when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe’” (Matt 18:28). When the second servant’s pleas for mercy fell on deaf ears, the master found out and threw the first servant into prison. “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart” (Matt 18:35). I am certain this message was as difficult for the original readers as for me some two thousand years later. This unforgiving servant was me.

It has been several years now since George repented. It is only he and my mother living in my childhood home now, and life has gone better for my mother since then. My own process of forgiveness has been different. I no longer identify with Jonah’s anger at the Ninevites’ repentance in the same way that I used to. But I still understand well where he is coming from. Some days I still feel the anger at George as fresh as the abuse just happened, but most days I do not think of my childhood in those terms. I am able to talk with George at family gatherings, but then again I do not spend much time at such gatherings. I understand the danger of withholding forgiveness, and I also understand the frustration that happens when injustice seems to reign.

It turns out that perhaps Jonah’s answer to the question of God’s justice is not that different from that of Job or Ecclesiastes. God’s response in those two books is that he is sovereign and has all wisdom, whereas we humans have just a small part of the picture. Humans should therefore trust in him and follow him, no matter what abuses we may suffer. With Job we should say, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21 ESV). Yahweh’s open-ended question that concludes the book of Jonah echoes the same sentiment—if we can care so much about something over which we have no control or influence, then should not Yahweh care for every human being, whom he created in his very own image? It is an easy truth in the abstract, but when Yahweh’s care extends to the person abusing your mother, it is a bit more difficult.

This is why Jonah’s narrative is so important for the concept of theodicy in the Bible. His story captures the heart of anti-theodicy, that anger and frustration we experience when good things happen to bad people. There is no easy way to extend forgiveness to an enemy, at least not one that I know of. But the book of Jonah does show us that our experience is not solitary. It should be comforting that
even God’s prophet struggled mightily to accept God’s extension of grace to his enemies.

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From Silent Exodus to Silent Divergence: Changing Immigrant Society Unchanging Immigrant Church

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Abstract: In 2018, multiple Korean denominations in the US reported decreasing trends in the size of their membership. They all stated that it was due to decreasing immigration trends without citing any hard statistics. This paper will show that immigration from Korea, on the contrary, is increasing by analyzing census data from the US and Korean governments. This paper will also analyze the Korean media’s reporting of those census data and reveal how an incomplete reporting of the census data has contributed to Korean denominations’ erroneous conclusions. The reality is that the Korean church is no longer the central place for the Korean immigrant community. Unlike the immigrants of the 1970s and 1980s who sought comfort and identity through the Korean churches, the new immigrants of the 2010s no longer feel any need to attend a Korean church. However, the church continues to believe that when Koreans immigrate to the States, they would naturally come to a church just as they did back in the 1970s and 1980s. If “Silent Exodus” describes the phenomenon occurring internally within the Korean immigrant church between the English-speaking second-generation and Korean-speaking first-generation Korean Americans starting from the mid to late 1980s, then “Silent Divergence” describes the phenomenon occurring externally between the Korean immigrant society and the Korean-speaking first-generation immigrant church in the new millennium. The Korean church is blind to the tectonic shift that is occurring in the Korean community. The Korean church must open her eyes and understand that the transition that she is experiencing is not a continuous one but a discontinuous change and therefore, must engage the community in fresh and new ways.

Keywords: Korean Immigrant Church, Silent Exodus, Silent Divergence, Diaspora

“Unless you know the road you’ve come down, you cannot know where you are going.”
Temne Proverb, Sierra Leone

温故而知新
“Embrace the past to understand the future.”
Analects of Confucius
INTRODUCTION

In 1976 when I was just ten years old, my parents immigrated to the United States. On the first Sunday, my family went to the nearest Korean church in town. My father did not know a single word of English, but the very next day the senior pastor of that church, who worked in maintenance at a general hospital during the weekdays, helped my father find a job at that hospital as a custodian. Within a week of coming to America, he got a job and worked as a custodian until the day he retired from a local school district. The senior pastor not only helped him find a job but also helped him acquire his driver's license, buy a used car, and get his children enrolled in school. He went out of his way to help our family with many things required to settle into our new life in America.

Forty-some years later in 2018, I met a newcomer at a church which I attend at present who had arrived from Korea just two weeks prior. The family came on an exchange visa to a university in the Dallas area and were planning to stay for about one and a half to two years. Their two sons were starting fifth and third grade. I told them that while the younger son would be able to attend one elementary school for the two years that they were here, the older son would have to move up to a middle school after just one year in fifth grade. The mother then inserted that that is why while they were in Korea, she had searched to see if there was a school district that had elementary school up to sixth grade. While all the school districts near the university had elementary grades only up to fifth grade, she was able to find that one school district that had elementary school up to sixth grade. While all the school districts near the university had elementary grades only up to fifth grade, she was able to find that one school district with that condition near the university. So, while they were in Korea, they searched on the internet for an apartment inside that school district boundary and made an online deposit. When I asked how they came to our church, they answered that after searching several churches on the internet, they had decided to come to this church. Shocking. It is a completely different world from when my parents came to the States back in 1976. The immigrant society is changing.

In my title, “Silent Exodus” describes what was happening internally between the Korean-speaking first-generation and the English-speaking 1.5 and second-generation' Korean Americans within the Korean immigrant church starting from the mid to late 1980s. As the English-speaking generations were emerging within the Korean immigrant church, they were searching for their own identities, and the biblical paradigm with which they most identified was either the exodus or exile paradigm (Kim 1993). I remember participating in various conferences in

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1 The 1.5 generation, the children in immigrant families, refers to those who were born in Korea and attended primary school for a minimum of one to two years in Korea before immigrating to the US, or those who were born in Korea and attended up to secondary school but who did not graduate high school in Korea but immigrated and graduated high school in the US. The second generation includes those who were born in Korea but immigrated to the US before attending primary school and those who were born in the US.
the early 1990s, where emerging identity issues were addressed and where the Exodus paradigm was quickly embraced over exile, and “Silent Exodus” was eventually coined. In 1994 the phrase entered the lexicon of a local mainstream media when the *Los Angeles Times* carried a front-page article with “Silent Exodus” in its title (Carvajal 1994). Then two years later in 1996, the phrase entered the national lexicon when *Christianity Today* published a news article with the title “Silent Exodus” (Lee 1996). If “Silent Exodus” describes what was happening internally within the Korean immigrant church, then “Silent Divergence” describes what is happening externally between the Korean immigrant society and the Korean-speaking first-generation immigrant church in the new millennium.

The subtitle, “Unchanging Immigrant Church,” has a double meaning to it. The Church that Jesus built upon the rock (Matthew 16:18), the one that Jesus bought with his blood on the cross, the Church that was started on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2)—that Church is unchanging. However, the demonstration of that unchanging Church in the world will not remain unchanged. For every generation, in every locality and in every culture, the visible demonstration of that Church will change. However, the current Korean immigrant church is unchanging in the face of changing immigrant society.

For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on only two changes that Korean immigrant society is experiencing. First, the Korean immigrant society is transitioning from immigrants who are legal permanent residents (LPRs) or green card holders to nonimmigrants who are short-term residents such as international students and company personnel. I will analyze immigration data of Koreans in the United States to show this transition from immigrants to nonimmigrants. The analysis of the immigration data will also show that the trend of Korean immigration is changing from LPRs who were admitted as newly arrived in the 1970s and 1980s to Koreans who were admitted as nonimmigrants in the 2000s and 2010s who are seeking to adjust their status from nonimmigrant to LPR status. The “New Arrivals” are those who apply for green cards in their home country and are granted, and who then are admitted into the US as LPRs. The “Adjustments of Status” are those who previously entered the United States with a nonimmigrant visa, such as tourist, business, international student, work, etc., who are already residing in the US as short-term residents. They are not undocumented but are residing in the US with valid visas. They then qualify to apply for LPR status and are granted “Adjustments of Status.”

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2 The United States Office of Immigration Statistics (USOIS) organizes immigrants and nonimmigrants into two separate categories. However, when reporting their numbers, USOIS reports both immigrants and nonimmigrants under the umbrella of immigration data and statistics. In this paper, when referring to immigrant society or immigrant church, both immigrants and nonimmigrants will be considered together. When comparing the differences between immigrants and nonimmigrants, it will be specified.
Second, the Korean immigrant society is changing from an offline to an online community. In the 1970s and 1980s the primary offline community was the Korean immigrant church that functioned as a de facto community center. However, in the 21st century, the tech savvy generation no longer depends on the offline community for assistance in settling down in America. They are connecting with the online community to find what they need.

As I travel from the East Coast to the West Coast, I hear from pastors of Korean immigrant churches that membership is declining and that new church plants are becoming more and more difficult. The pastors believe that the primary reason for the decline and difficulty is due to sharp decline in Korean immigration to the US. I have read Christian denomination reports and Korean media articles declaring that Korean immigration is in sharp decline. The reasons for declining church membership and new church plants are beyond the scope of this paper; however, I will show that a narrative that connects church decline with sharp decrease in Korean immigration trend is a false narrative. It is a false narrative because Korean immigration is not declining, rather it is increasing dramatically. I will conclude with my personal reflection on the present future of the Korean church in the United States.

**Changing Immigrant Society**

It is often stated that the three principles in real estate are: “location, location, location.” There is a saying within the Korean community that during the 1970s and 1980s the three principles of church planting and growth were: “airport pickup, airport pickup, airport pickup.” Joseph Ahne (1995, 468) writes that during the 1970s and 1980s, Korean pastors in the Chicago area met new immigrants at O’Hare airport, gave them driving lessons and helped them find jobs. If a pastor or a church member picked you up from the airport, then you would attend that church on the following Sunday. Much like my parents, new Korean immigrants would go to church and gather necessary information on settling down in the US, and more importantly, to eat kimchi. We Koreans love to eat together. Therefore, following the line from the movie, *The Field of Dreams*, if you planted a church, people came.

According to research cited in *The Korean Americans* (Hurh 1998, 107), during the 1980s approximately 70 percent of Koreans in Los Angeles and 77 percent in Chicago were affiliated with Korean immigrant churches. Karen Chai (1998, 300) cites a study that found 75 percent of Koreans in the New York City area attended Korean immigrant churches. With Los Angeles, New York and Chicago being the top three metropolitan areas with Korean populations during the 1980s, one may approximate that nationally, three out of every four Koreans living in the United States were affiliated with Korean churches (see Table 1). Pak, Lee, Kim,
and Cho (2005) and Yoo and Chung (2008) estimate that 70 to 80 percent of Korean Americans in the early 2000s were affiliated with Korean churches.

In 2012, Pew Research Center (2012) published *Asian Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths* where it reported that only 22 percent of Asian Americans affiliated themselves with Protestant Christianity. Of the 22 percent of Asian American Protestants, 32 percent were native-born and 68 percent were foreign-born, that is, first-generation immigrants. Given this ratio, we can calculate that about 7 percent of all native-born and 15 percent of all foreign-born Asian Americans affiliated as Protestants. On the contrary, an overwhelming 61 percent of Korean Americans affiliated themselves with Protestant Christianity. According to Pew Research Center’s report on the foreign-born population in the United States in 2010, 36 percent of all Korean Americans were native-born and 64 percent foreign-born (Patten 2012). Given this ratio, about 22 percent of all native-born and 39 percent of all foreign-born Korean Americans affiliated as Protestants. Even though 2010 includes only foreign-born Korean Americans, the drop in Korean church affiliation is still significant and alarming (See Table 1).

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</table>

*Table 1: Percentage of Koreans Affiliated with Korean Churches*

According to the US Census Bureau (1993, 2), in 1990 approximately 800,000 Koreans resided in the US. That translates to 600,000 (75 percent) Koreans who were attending Korean churches by the end of the 1980s. In 2000, the US Census Bureau (2002, 9) reports 1.2 million Koreans residing in the US. That translates to 900,000 (75 percent) Koreans who were affiliated with Korean churches at the beginning of 2000. From 2018-2020, I collected data from nine major Korean denominations on their total number of churches and members which resulted in a total of 3,256 churches and some 380,000 members (see Table 2). That averages to 117 members per church. This total number of 3,256 churches from the nine major denominations does not include numbers from other smaller Korean denominations and independent churches. *Christian Today*, a weekly Korean language Christian newspaper, reported just under 4,500 total number of Korean churches at the end of 2017 (Suh 2018), and kcmusa.org, a Korean American Christian media resource website, reported just over 3,500 Korean churches at the beginning of 2020 (KCMUSA 2020) in the US. Taking the average of the two (4,000 Korean churches) and the average number of members per church (117), there were approximately 470,000 Koreans attending churches in the US by the end of the 2010s. However, that number was 900,000 at the turn of the millennium in 2000. In the past 20 years, attendance in the Korean church has declined...
by approximately 430,000 (48 percent) while overall the Korean population in America has likely increased by approximately 1.3 million (108 percent). My question is: what explains this precipitous decline in overall church attendance?

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<th>DENOMINATION</th>
<th>CHURCHES</th>
<th>MEMBERS</th>
</tr>
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<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>380,000</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Korean Denominations in USA. Source: Multiple denomination reports and personal communications (2019-2020)

1. **Explanations from Korean Denominations**

At the General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad (KPCA) in 2018, the Special Committee on Integration of Presbytery recommended that KPCA merge and reduce the total number of presbyteries by more than one-half, from 22 to 10 (Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad 2018, 46). The KPCA was founded in 1976 with three presbyteries and expanded to 22 primarily due to increasing Korean immigrants and natural church splits. Furthermore, at the

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3 At the time of this writing, the results of Census 2020 had not been released yet. My estimate of Korean population in the US in 2020 is taken from data released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of the Korean government in 2019 (see Section 2: Explanation Utilizing Census Data). MOFA states that there were 2.55 million Koreans residing in the US in 2019. MOFA’s number, 2.55 million, is an increase of 1.3 million from the US Census Bureau’s number, 1.2 million, in 2000.
annual meeting of the Korean Association of the United Methodist Church (KAUMC) in 2018, the KAUMC reported that in the past ten years, over 100 churches had closed their doors and that the number of mid-sized churches of 50-100 members had rapidly declined (Korean Association of the United Methodist Church 2018, 18–23). If there are 270 KAUMC churches in 2020 after 100 churches had closed their doors, then the number of churches in KAUMC has decreased by a little over one-fourth. KPCA cut their presbyteries by more than one-half. What is the root cause of this sharp decline? According to the denominations, the decline is due to decreasing immigrants from Korea.

At the 2017 General Assembly of KPCA, the Special Committee reported that one of the primary reasons for proposing the merger of presbyteries was due to the rapidly declining number of Korean immigrants and the resulting limitations on church planting or growth (Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad 2017, 53). However, the report does not cite any hard immigration data to support its claim. It simply states that their membership is decreasing and church planting is becoming more difficult due to rapidly declining immigration trends. Their argument is anecdotal at best but not based on actual data.

In the KAUMC analysis, they listed the decline of immigration as the first reason for its decline. They cite immigration data from Kim Chan-Hie (2016, 138) who wrote that, in the 2000s, the number of KAUMC churches started to decrease because immigration trends from Korea rapidly declined throughout the decade. In the 2010s KAUMC continued to experience a declining number of churches and membership, and Kim cites data from which he claims that Korean immigrants had declined to a mere 10 percent compared to the 1980s, which he attributes as the cause for the decline of KAUMC churches. However, Kim arrives at his explanation through considering only one type of Korean immigrant and ignoring the other types. Both denominations claim that immigration is decreasing, but do not cite complete data to support their claims. An analysis of the complete immigration data later will reveal this interpretation to be false.

2. **Explanation Utilizing Census Data**

According to the US Census Bureau (2002, 9), in 2000, there were 1.2 million Koreans residing in the US. In 2010, the Korean population in the US had increased to a total of 1.7 million (U.S. Census Bureau 2012, 14). The 2020 census just finished, and there was a heavy promotional campaign to encourage everyone to participate in order to achieve an accurate count of the population. The national rate of mail-in participation of all households in the 2010 census was 74 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). According to a Korean media report, back in the 2010 census, about two-thirds of Koreans residing in Los Angeles county were omitted from the census. *The Korea Daily* reported, “The last 2010 census
recorded 216,000 Koreans residing in LA county which is only 1/3 of the 600,000 unofficial count” (Chang 2019; my translation). Yoo and Chung (2008, 15) also write, “Census figures offer some guideline in terms of population, but it is likely that the figure is low because of underreporting.” In the 2000 census, the participation rate of Koreans residing in the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan area was 50 percent (Kwon 2004, 239–241). The national Korean participation rate is somewhere between the low of 33 percent of Los Angeles County and 74 percent national mail-in rate of all households. If one assumes a 50 percent participation rate for Koreans residing in the US, then the unofficial count would be 3.4 million. If we take this average into consideration, then it is plausible that in 2010 there were over 3 million Koreans, both naturalized and native-born citizens, permanent residents and nonimmigrant short-term residents, residing in the United States.

Moreover, the US Census Bureau conducts an annual survey called the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is different from the decennial census. The Census Bureau explains, “While the main function of the decennial census is to provide counts [emphasis added] of people for the purpose of congressional apportionment and legislative redistricting, the primary purpose of the ACS is to measure the changing social and economic characteristics [emphasis added] of the U.S. population.” The ACS is mailed out to 1 percent of households and whatever the participation rate, it is extrapolated out to 100 percent of the population. Therefore, the Census Bureau states, “As a result, the ACS does not provide [emphasis added] counts of the population in between censuses” (U.S. Census Bureau 2008, 4).

According to the ACS 2017 report, there were almost 1.9 million Koreans residing in the US in 2017 (U.S. Census Bureau 2017), which would be an increase of only 180,000 from 2010 to 2017. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of the Korean government reported that the total population of Koreans residing in the US increased from 2.09 million in 2013 to 2.55 million in 2019 for an increase of 460,000 (22 percent increase) in just six years, possibly the largest increase in Korean immigration in any six-year span (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019, 14). MOFA’s reported number of Koreans residing in the US is 34 percent larger than the ACS 2017 reported number. Following MOFA’s numbers (since the ACS does not provide official counts), data reveals that Korean immigration is not rapidly declining. Rather, it is dramatically increasing. The immigrant society is changing.

However, as it was shown above, over the past 20 years, the total number of Korean church attendees has decreased by 430,000. If we take 2.55 million Koreans to have been residing in the US in 2019, then only 18 percent (470,000) attend a church and 82 percent (2,080,000) do not. Within that 82 percent are obviously those who, in the past, attended churches but who presently do not.
As noted above, at the turn of the millennium in 2000, three out of four Koreans attended churches; however, only two decades later the present reality is that only one out of five are attending churches. The immigrant society is changing.

The anecdotal analysis put forth by the Korean denominations was that immigration was rapidly declining. However, data shows that immigration is not decreasing, rather increasing dramatically. Therefore, it appears that Korean denominations are erroneously pointing to a declining trend of Korean immigration as the reason for their decline. What is the source of this false narrative that states that Korean immigration is rapidly declining? One of the sources is the Korean media.

3. Explanation from Korean media

The Korean media has unwittingly contributed to this false narrative that immigration is declining. On September 23, 2017, The Korea Times, a daily Korean language newspaper, reported that the total population of Koreans in the United States was 2.7 million (Kim 2017). One year later, on September 13, 2018, The Korea Times reported that the Korean population in the US was 1.9 million, a decrease of 800,000 in just one year (The Korea Times 2018). Seven months later, on April 18, 2019, the same newspaper reported that the official Korean population in the US was 1.1 million, another decrease of 800,000 (Kim 2019). In just over a year and a half, according to the newspaper, the Korean population had decreased from 2.7 million to 1.1 million, a decrease of 1.6 million in just 19 months. These numbers do not make sense. How does one interpret these numbers?

The reason for the seemingly unrealistic numbers is that the three numbers reported above are from three different sources. The 2.7 million from 2017 is a number reported by the Korean government along with undocumented Koreans residing in the US. The 1.9 million from 2018 is from the American Community Survey (ACS). However, The Korea Times does not mention that the ACS survey does not report an official count of the population but rather the changing social and economic characteristics of the population. The 1.1 million from April 2019 is a number reported by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) that utilized the ACS. The MPI report focused on foreign-born Koreans, those who were born outside of the US and who were now residing in the US. The foreign-born Koreans are like my parents and my siblings who were all born in Korea but who are now living in the US. Therefore, the number 1.1 million is not the total number of Koreans residing in the US. It only accounts for the foreign-born Koreans in the US. Interestingly, MPI reported that there were almost one million people with Korean heritage living in the US who were born outside of Korea. This means that there are almost one million second generation and beyond Koreans living in the US (O’Connor and Batalova 2019). Again, The Korea Times failed to point out
that the MPI number had focused only on foreign-born Koreans. Therefore, the Korean media had their sources but failed to report the full context of the numbers resulting in misconstrued information leading to possible confusion for the readers. It appears that many Korean Christian denominations and Korean media in the US are erroneously pointing to the rapidly declining trend of Korean immigration to the United States as the reason for limitations in new church plants and growth in the past decade.

Allow me to share an illustration to demonstrate the above point. In the 1990s and through the mid-2000s Koreans flocked to video rental stores to catch up on the latest hit dramas from Korea. Video rental stores seemed to pop up in every corner strip mall. However, only several years later by the late 2000s, video rental stores started to disappear from strip malls. In 2012 The New York Times reported on video rental stores surviving among the immigrant communities such as Korean, Latino, African and South Asian. The New York Times reported that according to video rental stores’ owners, "Videocassette sales and rentals, though now only a small and shrinking slice of their business, were sustained in part by older immigrants [emphasis added] who seemed less inclined than the young to adopt new gadgetry" (Semple 2012). The article led with Hwang Jae Video in Queens, New York; however, some years after that article, that video store is no longer there in Queens. What happened? What would you think if the video rental store owner put out a press release, saying that they were closing their shop because there was a sharp decline in immigration? He does not cite any data but only provides anecdotal evidence that most of his customers were older immigrants. You would think that he was out of his mind. Because what happened in reality? It was not the case that younger generations were not coming to America. Rather, the younger immigrants had migrated to video streaming services on the internet such as OnDemand Korea. The immigrant society is changing.

The argument for the decline in both Korean churches and video rental stores seems to be the same: the average age of the Korean immigrant population was becoming older. As noted above, the video rental stores closed their doors not because there was a decreasing number of younger immigrants in the community but because an increasing number of younger immigrants were accessing Korean dramas on streaming services. The video rental store owners acknowledged reality when they observed the younger generation migrating to streaming services. Korean church leaders agree with video rental store owners in stating that the average age of the congregations is growing older. However, in explaining the absence of younger generations in the church, the church leaders’ explanation is flawed. They claim that there are no younger generations in the church because of the rapid decline of immigrants from Korea. In following this false narrative, they fail to understand the true reality of the changing immigrant society.
4. Explanation Utilizing Immigration Data

In his book *The Sky is Falling?! Leaders Lost in Transition*, Alan Roxburgh (2005, 29) explains two different types of change: continuous and discontinuous change. Continuous change aligns with prior experience and understanding. It is a “comfortable, manageable, and predictable” change. It is akin to the change one experiences as one goes from elementary school to middle school to high school to college and to graduate school. However, in discontinuous change there is no prior pattern or experience to follow for guidance. It is “difficult to know which to pay attention to and what to do next.” In a changing immigrant society, one needs to investigate whether the change is continuous or discontinuous. If one knows which change one is experiencing, then one can apply a proper strategy in adapting to that change. This paper will focus on changes observable through the immigration data.

According to the United States Office of Immigration Statistics (USOIS), during the 1980s, there was a total of 339,000 Koreans who immigrated to the US as legal permanent residents (LPRs), also known as green card holders (see Table 3). However, in the 1990s, Korean LPRs decreased by 45% to only 188,000. In 1997, only 14,239 became LPRs. Compared to 35,849 in 1987 (see Table 3), the total number of LPRs in 1997 had decreased to only 40 percent of the 1987 number. In the 2000s and 2010s, the number of Korean LPRs increased slightly to 215,000 and 204,000 respectively. In 2015, the total number of Korean LPRs was 17,138 with only 3,664 admitted as new arrivals. Compared to 32,135 new arrivals in 1987, the number of new arrivals in 2015 is only 11 percent (see Graph 1, solid line). This is the partial data that Kim Chan-Hie referenced in developing his explanation of a rapidly declining Korean immigration trend. When he states that Korean immigration in the 2010s had decreased to a mere 10 percent compared to the 1980s, he was referencing only this new arrival data and was not analyzing the complete immigration data. Then what is the complete picture of Korean immigration data?

From 1980-1999, Table 3 shows that 420,000 of the total Korean LPRs were admitted as new arrivals and that only 106,000 were granted adjustments of status. The new arrivals were four times the number of adjustments of status. However, from 2000-2019 this ratio reverses to 105,000 who were admitted as new arrivals and 314,000 granted adjustments of status. The adjustments of status are now three times the number of new arrivals. This data clearly reveals that the immigration trend over the last 40 years has shifted from New Arrivals to Adjustments of Status. Specifically, over the past 20 years, the immigration trend has been for Koreans to first enter as nonimmigrant, short-term residents and then qualify and apply for Adjustment of Status. Unlike the new arrivals who were admitted to the US after their applications were approved, those who are granted adjustments of status had previously entered the US with valid nonimmigrant visas and afterwards qualified to apply for LPR status while residing in the US. The
entry record of adjustments of status are therefore recorded many years prior to being granted LPR status. In order to obtain a complete picture of Korean immigration trends, one must analyze nonimmigrant visa entry records into the US.

In 1985, Korean passports recorded 115,000 entries into the US in the nonimmigrant visa category (see Table 4). Just eleven years later in 1996, entry records jumped 639 percent to 850,000. Up to the 1980s, most Korean LPRs were admitted as new arrivals. However, after the Seoul 1988 Olympics in Korea, the trend of Koreans traveling abroad increased dramatically as the exponential increase

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Adjustments of Status</th>
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in nonimmigrant visa entry records reveal. So, rather than applying and waiting for many years in Korea for a green card, many Koreans entered the US as nonimmigrant short-term residents. Then, when they met the requirements, they applied for adjustments of status to LPR status.

During the 1990s, the annual average of Korean passports entering the US in nonimmigrant visa categories was 524,000 (see Table 4). Most nonimmigrant entries were tourist visas, so most travelers returned to Korea. Then in the 2000s, that annual average increased by 69 percent to 888,000. Then in the 2010s, it increased by another 117 percent to a 1.9 million annual average. In 2017 and 2018, the number of Korean passports entering the US with nonimmigrant visas was over 2.5 million each year. Whereas the LPR new arrivals in the 2010s decreased to a mere 11 percent (3,700 in 2015) compared to 1987, the nonimmigrant visa entry records exploded to 1,800 percent (2.5 million in 2018) compared to 1987 (see Graph 2). This is a clear indication that in the 21st century, the Korean immigration trend is not decreasing, but exploding. It is also evident that Koreans coming to the US are no longer traditional newly arrived LPRs. They are nonimmigrant short-term residents. The immigrant society is changing.

<table>
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So what is the plausible explanation of the decline of the Korean immigrant church? I propose that it is the “Silent Divergence” between the Korean immigrant society and the immigrant church. For over a decade now, the Korean immigrant society and the Korean immigrant church has traveled along divergent paths.
It is the author’s observation that one of the identifying characteristics of an immigrant church is that she engages her own ethnic immigrant society. The Korean immigrant church is no different as she engages the Korean immigrant community. In the 1980s, the greatest decade in Korean LPR immigration, 2,000 new Korean churches were planted (see Graph 3). In sharp contrast, the 1990s saw only 400 new Korean church plants. This does not imply that 1,600 churches had closed their doors. The 2,000 churches that were planted in the 1980s continued to grow. It is showing that the 1990s saw only 400 new churches planted. When new arrival LPRs were high in the 1980s (see Graph 2), there were greater numbers of new church plants. When the new arrival LPRs dropped low, there were fewer new church plants. This is an example of continuous change.

Graph 3: New Korean Church Plants by Decades. Source: christiantoday.us and kcmusa.org

Up until 1999, the number of new arrivals had been higher than the number of adjustments of status (see Table 3). However, starting from 2000, the adjustments of status have consistently outpaced new arrivals such that from 2000-2019 the total number of adjustments of status (314,000) is three times the number of new arrivals (105,000). Along with the increase of the nonimmigrant short-term residents and the rise of the immigrants in adjustments of status category, there were 1,600 new church plants during the 2000s. In the 2010s, with a similar number of permanent residents but an exponential growth in nonimmigrant visa entries (see Graph 2), one would expect over 2,000 new church plants, possibly even larger than the number of new church plants of the 1980s. However,
the reality is that it is not over 2000. On the contrary, more than 500 churches have closed their doors.4

If one looks at just the new arrivals in Graph 1 (solid line), then one could expect a decreasing trend in new church plants. It is apparent that this was the interpretation that Korean denominations were forging. They were analyzing only the decreasing trend of the new arrivals, and because they were observing only partial data, they arrived at an erroneous conclusion and settled for a false narrative. However, the complete data of the 2000s show that with increasing immigration trends, there were 1,600 new church plants in the 2000s. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to show the correlation between immigration trends and new church plants, it is apparent that the increase in new church plants in the 2000s seems to coincide with the increase in nonimmigrant visa entries. Following this logic, an exponential growth in nonimmigrant visa entries in the 2010s should result in greater new church plants. However, the present reality is that rather than witnessing increasing numbers of new church plants, over 500 churches have closed their doors.

As noted earlier, by the end of the 1980s, there were 800,000 Koreans residing in the US with 600,000 attending churches and 900,000 attending churches by the turn of the millennium in 2000. The Korean population has dramatically increased to approximately 2.5 million by the end of the 2010s. However, church attendance has declined to 470,000 over the last 20 years. This change is not a linear, continuous one. From the 1980s, as the Korean population increased, the Korean church experienced parallel growth, a continuous change. The Korean immigrant church continued to play the central part of the immigrant community. When Koreans came to the States, they went to church. However, some time towards the end of the 2000s, the path started to diverge. The reason for the divergence is beyond the scope of this paper. But data clearly shows that the Korean population continued to grow. As a matter of fact, the last ten years have witnessed exponential growth of Koreans coming to the US. However, because it was such a silent divergence, many have failed to observe the development of this discontinuous change over the past decade. For over a decade now, the Korean immigrant society and the immigrant church have traveled along divergent paths. One of the silent divergences in the Korean immigrant society is from offline community to online community in the past decade.

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4 Between Christian Today’s 4,454 Korean churches at the end of 2017 and KCMUSA’s 3,528 Korean churches at the beginning of 2020, there is a difference of 926 churches. I have had personal communications with people who have utilized Christian Today’s Korean church database and who have consequently uncovered that there are churches in that database that have closed their doors. However, those closed churches were at one time open. The KCMUSA database may be a cleaner database without the closed churches included. Then, when comparing the two databases, one may assume that 926 churches have closed their doors. For this paper, I have assumed that over 500 Korean churches have closed their doors.
Throughout the 20th century, the Korean immigrant church welcomed newly arrived permanent residents who were offline. However, in the 21st century Koreans are no longer seeking out churches to find a community where they can belong. Nowadays, the vast majority of Koreans coming to the States are nonimmigrant short-term residents who are online. As described above with the family I met at my church, many Koreans search the internet to educate themselves on what is required to live in the US such as a good school district, options for dining, shopping, leisure, etc. before coming to the States. If they need anything, they can always search the Korean American websites or seek out various Korean American community centers for assistance. There are plenty of secular community websites providing services. The church is no longer the center of the Korean immigrant society. However, church leaders are blind to this silent divergence.

Graph 4: Silent Divergence

UNCHANGING IMMIGRANT CHURCH

The Korean immigrant church persists in thinking that she is the central player within the immigrant society. As church leaders experience decreasing numbers of people coming to church and ask themselves why membership is declining and church planting is becoming more difficult, they are attempting to explain it from a framework of continuous change. They persist in believing that when Koreans come to the States, they would naturally come to a church. This persistence, however, leads to an erroneous conclusion that if there are decreasing numbers of younger people coming to church, then it must be the result of decreasing numbers of Koreans coming to the States. They find solace in discovering
that newly arrived permanent residents have been sharply declining since the late 1980s. However, they fail to observe the overwhelming numbers of nonimmigrant short-term residents entering their community.

Since the 1980s I have heard the clarion call that a transition of leadership from the first generation to the second generation will occur. Joseph Ahne (1995, 470) observed that early in the 1990s the Korean immigrant church was “on the brink of transition from the first to the second generation.” Robert Goette (1993, 239-247), also in early 1990s, described a transition process of the Korean immigrant church from the Korean-speaking first-generation to the English-speaking second-generation, and wrote, “This transformation process will probably take some 25–40 years.” Nearly 40 years have passed since I first heard of this leadership transition from first generation to second generation; however, the transition remains simply a clarion call, not a reality.

In the 21st century a different leadership transition is developing within the Korean immigrant church. The historical understanding of transition to the next-generation within the Korean church was from the first-generation Korean-speaking congregation to 1.5 and second-generation English-speaking congregation. However, the occurrence of this historical understanding of transition is too few and infrequent in number within the Korean churches in the United States. In its place, a different transition is transpiring. The leadership of Korean churches is being transferred to younger-aged, Korean-speaking leaders. As noted above, they are recent arrivals to the US. These younger-aged Korean-speaking leaders are described as the “next-generation” leaders due to their age; however, they are culturally first generation. They are replacing the historical understanding of next generation from the bilingual and bicultural 1.5 generation to yet another first generation that is simply younger. Moreover, the children of this new first generation will grow up as a new 1.5 generation of the 21st century. However, this new 1.5 generation of the 2000s will be replaced by yet another new first generation of recent arrivals from Korea in the 2020s. In the 1980s, the immigrant church began searching for a bilingual and bicultural pastor. Almost 40 years later, it is still searching for one. The immigrant church is unchanging.

It is incorrect to propose that the reason for limited or decreasing church growth is due to the decreasing number of Korean immigrants to the US. The answer is not that immigration is decreasing. The true reality is that the number of Koreans residing in the US no longer feel the need to come to church for anything. Moreover, the Korean immigrant church seems to isolate herself from the immigrant community. This “Silent Divergence” has been transpiring for over a decade. The younger generations in Korea are often called the “N-po generation”

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5 See Oh 2014 for a detailed explanation on the transition that was expected. For the purposes of this paper, first generation refers to the immigrant generation who were born in Korea and came to the United States during their college years or beyond.
(meaning that they have given up on everything in life). Since they have given up on everything and any hope in life, they would not on their own seek out an institutionalized church that is entangled in tradition. However, the one true living God is the one true living hope for those who have given up on everything. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the true hope of life. The people of God, that is the community of believers, must reveal to the “N-po generation” the true living hope by living out the providence and reign of God in their lives. The Korean church community must no longer simply plant and wait for the people to come to her. Rather, the church community must come out and engage those who have abandoned all hope of life. The Korean church is unchanging in demonstrating the living hope and the providence and reign of God in our everyday lives in spirit and truth. This Church is unchanging.

PRESENT FUTURE: FROM IMMIGRANT CHURCH TO DIASPORA CHURCH

Just as there was a need for Korean-speaking immigrant churches 40 years ago, there is a need for one today and there will be 40 years into the future. Since her beginnings in the early 1900s, the Korean church in the United States started with immigrants and rapidly grew into the late 20th century. As with many other immigrant communities, the Korean immigrant community also locates its comfort and identity within the Korean immigrant community itself. The Korean-speaking immigrant generation has continued to locate itself within the boundaries of the Korean community. However, while providing comfort and identity to the first generation, ethnocentrism is the weakness that develops, if the church is not cautious.

Many of the English-speaking Korean generations, having grown up in a multi-ethnic environment both in academia and in marketplaces, seek to locate their identity beyond the boundaries of the Korean community. Therefore, many English-speaking generations have withdrawn from the Korean-speaking churches to attend other multi-ethnic or mainstream American churches. However, the weakness of the English-speaking 1.5 and second generation is that they may become “peer-centric” if the English-speaking congregation is not cautious. By “peer-centric”, I am referring to a group of people whose ages are all within one generation. They lack membership that is multi-generational. The consequence is that a generational divergence has emerged within the Korean immigrant churches (Oh 2014, 207).

Moreover, the growth witnessed towards the end of the 20th century is turning out to be more and more like a mirage, for it appears that the growth rate of the total number of Korean churches was more related to immigration trends than to the gospel movement. If the gospel movement spreads when immigration trends increase and the gospel decreases when immigration trends decrease, then
could that movement be a genuine gospel movement? A genuine gospel movement spreads unrelated to immigration trends. The fact that the growth rate of the Korean churches since 2010 no longer correlates with the immigration trends signals that the Korean community no longer seeks out the church.

Unlike the 1970s and 1980s, the Korean immigrant church has been pushed out to the margins of the community. However, it is in the margins of the community, ironically, that God, in his sovereignty, has called the Korean church to rediscover her identity of “sojourners and exiles” (1 Pet 2:9-12). In his groundbreaking book, Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology, Lee Jung Young developed his theology of marginality and challenged, “One fundamental problem that the church faces today is its tendency to seek a central place in our society. The church becomes authentic when it is situated at the margins of the world” (Lee, 4). The Korean church must seek out and reengage the community so that she is not completely isolated from the members of the community. In the midst of constantly changing immigrant society, the Korean church must live out the unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ.

I believe that in the 21st century the Korean church in the United States is encountering a new crisis. The present crisis of the 2020s is the fact that the growth rate of the Korean church no longer correlates with immigration trends. Since the early 1990s, the Korean immigrant church has endeavored to maintain an outward appearance of generational unity through managing tension between the generations through pragmatic solutions. They adopted Korean-speaking and English-speaking congregational structures as a solution to generational tension. However, it only addressed the language barrier that obviously surfaced. The Korean-speaking and English-speaking structure did not address the more foundational problem of relational breakdown between the generations.⁶ It is imperative that the Korean church reconciles this relational breakdown between the generations and restore what it means for the people of God to truly live out the reign of the triune God as a community composed of a “triume generation”.

Therefore, I believe that a transformation must occur within the Korean churches in the United States. In the 21st century, I believe there is a call for a transformation from immigrant church to diaspora church. If an immigrant church is reactive to immigration trends, then the diaspora church is proactive in engaging the changing community. If an immigrant church is about providing pragmatic solutions, then the diaspora church is about rediscovering the core values and what it truly means to be the community of the people of God indwelling one another through genuine koinonia. If an immigrant church is about extracting members out of the world, then the diaspora church is about being

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⁶ See Oh 2014 for detailed explanation on historical development of Korean-speaking and English-speaking congregational structures within the immigrant church.
sent, that is, scattered into the world. It is imperative for the Korean diaspora church to rediscover what it truly means to be sent, in other words, scattered into the world and to engage the world in living out the reign of the Kingdom of God and the providence of God in their daily lives. The Korean immigrant church must change to demonstrate this unchanging Church to the changing immigrant society.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. How many Koreans residing in NY/NJ, MD/VA and Southern California, who dissociated from Korean churches are now affiliated with non-Korean churches? What are the main factors in the decline of church membership of first-generation Korean immigrants and new Korean immigrant church plants in the 2010s?
2. What impact does affiliation with Korean immigrant churches have on the cultural identity of Korean immigrants? What are the similarities and differences between the impact that an affiliation with Korean immigrant churches have on the cultural identity of Korean permanent residents of the 1980s and the nonimmigrant short-term residents of the 2010s?

RELATED TOPICS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. What impact does affiliation with Korean immigrant Buddhist temples have on the cultural identity of Korean immigrants? What impact does “Silent Divergence” have on Korean immigrant Buddhists?
2. What are the similarities and differences between Korean immigrant churches and Chinese immigrant churches? What, if any, impact does “Silent Divergence” have on the future of Chinese immigrant churches?
3. What impact does affiliation with Islam and Hinduism have on the cultural identity of Muslim and Hindu immigrants? What are the similarities and differences between “Silent Divergence” in the Korean immigrant community and the Muslim immigrant and Hindu immigrant communities?

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Moses’ Two Memorial Songs in Deuteronomy: On the Importance of “Remembering”—Also “Today”

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Abstract: In this multifaceted study, the closely paired poetic texts found at the end of the book of Deuteronomy are investigated with respect to their construction, content, function, transmission, and contemporary significance. Initially, these poems seem to be distinct. Chapter 32 exhibits a stern covenantal-lawsuit warning, while chapter 33 features a reassuring patriarchal blessing. The two songs are first briefly described in terms of their compositional location within the book of Deuteronomy. Next, the discourse structure, subject matter, and rhetorical intention of this pair of thematically linked pericopes are examined individually as well as in relation to each other and their immediate context. The importance of meaningful, ongoing textual transmission is then practically exemplified in these conjoined songs by translations of their respective endings—an “oratorical” English version (32:39–43) followed by a musical Chichewa rendition (33:26–29). In both cases, special attention is devoted to the oral-aural medium of communication and the adoption of an appropriate consumer-language style. Finally, the significance of these two ancient poems is briefly explored with reference to their relevance for believers today. What is the dynamic message that the Lord, through Moses, so eloquently urges all those in covenant fellowship with him today to remember—especially to heed (the warnings), but also to take comfort in (the blessings)?

Keywords: Deuteronomy, Pentateuch, Moses, Text Analysis, Biblical Poetry, Law, Covenant, Lawsuit, Land, Memorial Discourse, Contemporary Communication, Bible Translation, Applied Theology

Overview of the Discourse Organization of Deuteronomy

The text of Deuteronomy, the fifth Book of Moses, presents us with a highly

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1 In preparing a final draft of this study, I gratefully acknowledge many helpful corrective comments from the editors of JLCR and an unnamed reviewer; they are not responsible, however, for any remaining errors or infelicities.

2 Due to what I perceive as the unified composition of Deuteronomy itself as well as the preceding four books in the Pentateuch (e.g., Numbers; de Regt and Wendland 2016), and in view of the lack of a credible alternative, I consider “Moses” to be the author (perhaps using a
creative composition with regard to genre when viewed in light of the entire Torah and related literature of the Ancient Near East. Though Deuteronomy includes portions of narrative mixed with legislation, similar to Numbers, the whole text largely adopts a hortatory, sermonic style. Still, many scholars have pointed out that the book reflects another overlapping pattern of macro-discourse organization, the underlying pattern being exemplified by a number of ancient international treaties between two nations or kingdoms—generally with one ruler, the suzerain, governing or dominating the other, the vassal.3 The following chart indicates one common perspective on the ten main structural components of such a covenantal, suzerain-vassal treaty along with selected verses that clearly manifest them in Deuteronomy (Miller 1990, 13; cf. Grisanti 2012, 52–53; Kline 1963, 9–10):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treaty Elements (not ordered)</th>
<th>Deuteronomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preamble (text setting)</td>
<td>1:1–6a, 5:6a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical prologue</td>
<td>1:6b–3:29; 5:9–10:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covenant legislative clauses</td>
<td>12–26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invocation of witnesses</td>
<td>4:26; 30:19; 31:28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blessings and curses</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imprecatory oath</td>
<td>29:9–28, especially vv. 12–15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document deposition beside Ark</td>
<td>10:1–5; 31:24–26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodic reading prescribed</td>
<td>31:9–13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplicates and copies (implied)</td>
<td>17:18–19; 31:25–26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The book of Deuteronomy appears to incorporate the preceding genre-based constituents within a larger homiletical and didactic framework. It consists of

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3 For a comparative survey of this type of legal literature in the ancient Near East, see Weinfeld 1970.
seven principal sections that convey an assorted collection of the divinely inspired instructions and motivational speeches, or “sermons,” of Moses. The distinct, often repetitive, formulaic style of the text features a first-person perspective, whether that of Yahweh or his spokesman, Moses.

One primary communicative aim of Deuteronomy was memorial—to remind Israel’s present generation of the covenantal principles that bound Yahweh and his people into a unique fellowship, instituted and consummated through many divine acts of provision and deliverance. Deuteronomy thus represents the nation’s de facto theocratic constitution, intended to act as a legislative framework and guide as the people prepared to enter and establish themselves in the land of Canaan. A second important aim was hortatory—to encourage the nation to remember that Yahweh is surely the one and only almighty Creator-God, to whom they owed faithful obedience and grateful allegiance, to promote the overall well-being, or shalom, of their frequently fractious community. The third major goal of the book was minatory—to sternly warn all the obstinate and rebellious among the people of the absolute holiness of Yahweh, who would not tolerate any deliberate or persistent sinfulness on their part. This was evidenced by his periodic just punishments inflicted upon the preceding generation, which are also a matter of recurrent record in this book, from beginning (1:26–46) to end (32:15–21).

The seven constituent discourse divisions of Deuteronomy are headlined below. They indicate from an organizational perspective the obvious culminating position of the two songs of Moses currently in view. Brief explanatory footnotes are included in order to provide some linguistic-literary support for the sequence of distinct text segments that have been posited

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4 The essential orality of the text of Deuteronomy is thus everywhere apparent, including certain apparent stylistic infelicities that some scholars mistakenly attribute to alien “sources” or to errors that require their enlightened efforts at “emendation.”

5 For a distinctive, highly informative perspective on the “missiological significance” of Deuteronomy, see Wright 1996, 8–17.

6 The following structural description does not differ radically from that suggested by other scholars, except that my scheme identifies seven main divisions in contrast to most other proposals—e.g., four (McConville 2003, 183–184), five (Kalland 1992, 15–18), or six (Dempster 2015, 315–316).

7 We will not find agreement among scholars, commentators, and translations with respect to all aspects of the following structural-thematic outline (let alone its specific internal segments, which have not been indicated). Therefore, my proposals should be critically compared with those of others, for example, regarding the focus section VII, e.g., Hamlin 1995, vi: “31.1–34.12: Life After Moses; 31.1–30: Continuity after Moses; 32.1–47: Identity after Moses; 33.1–29: Moses’ Vision of a New Israel; 32.48–52; 24.1–12: Remembering Moses. An excellent overview and synopsis are found in ‘Analysis and Synthesis of the Book of Deuteronomy’ (Biblical Studies Foundation, 2013),
I. Prologue: Historical Introduction (1:1–5)8
II. The First Speech: Historical Overview (1:6–4:43)9
IV. The Second Speech—Part 2: Supplementary Regulations (12:1–26:19)11
VI. The Third Speech—Part 2: Final Exhortations (29:1–30:20)13
VII. Epilogue: Historical-Lyric Conclusion (31:1–34:12)14
   A. Moses and Joshua, Israel and the Covenant Law (31:1–29)15
   B. Moses’ Covenant-Lawsuit Song (31:30–32:43)16

8 The end of segment I and onset of II is clearly indicated in 1:5 by the formulaic speech-introducer “…Moses began to expound this law, saying…” (והוא יהוה שלם באъא את ה התורה).  
9 This unit concludes with a passionate appeal to worship Yahweh alone as the true God (4:32–40).  
10 A short narrative insertion further marks the end of section II (4:41–42) (structural “closure”), while a formal introduction begins section III (4:44; structural “aperture”): “This is the law Moses set before the Israelites…” (והוא התורה אשר נשא משה לפני כל ישראל). For an explanation of these and other common discourse markers (in both Hebrew and Greek biblical texts), see Wendland 2017, 50, 132; also 2020.  
11 This lengthy second discourse of Moses may be roughly divided topically into major (III) and minor (IV) regulations of the Torah, as shown above, but also more formally by chiastically arranged formulaic repetition (an “overlap” construction) at the juncture of 11:32 and 12:1—“Be sure that you obey (שָׁמַר) all the decrees and laws I am setting before you today. These are the decrees and laws you must be careful to follow (שָׁמַר) in the land…” (NIV).  
12 The major discourse break between chapters 26 and 27 is quite pronounced, with the former being distinguished by a general concluding hortatory plea for Israel to remain faithful to Yahweh as his “holy people” (26:16–19), while the new section V begins with instructions that pertain to the future building of an altar of testimony on Mt. Ebal after they have crossed the Jordan River. There is a subtle lexical interlocking device that links these two portions in the repeated injunction to obey the LORD’s commands (26:16; 27:1).  
13 The beginning of section VI is marked in 29:1–2a [Hebrew 28:69–29:1a] by an obvious formal declaration, “These are the terms of the Covenant…” (אלוֹת בְּרֵי בְּרֵי אֲשֶׁר צִבְּאָה אֶלֶּיהָאָבְרָם אֲבֹאֶל יְהוּדָא), followed by a new speech introducer: “Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them…” (ו יַקְּרְאָם אל־כֹּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־אֲלֵיהָאָבְרָם יְהוּדָא).  
14 The “final exhortations of Moses” (section VI) conclude in 30:19–20 with a climactic passage marking this division’s closure: “This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you… For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (NIV). The last structural section VII is demarcated by the alternating passages of prose (historical narrative) and poetry (the two songs of Moses), as indicated in the outline above.  
15 Chapter 31 features an interesting literary structure that ties its three main themes closely together (as in the case of the entire macro-unit of section VII): (a) reference to the succession of Joshua (1–8, 14, 23); (b) writing down and regular reading of the Covenant Law (9–13); (c) Israel’s future rebellion (15–18); a combination of b and c (19–22, 24–29).  
16 The content and intent of the first song of Moses (B) is artistically foreshadowed in the preceding narrative passage (A), through Yahweh’s explicit prior directive to Moses (31:15–22),
MOSES’ TWO MEMORIAL SONGS IN DEUTERONOMY

A’ Israel and the Covenant Law, Moses to Die on Mt. Nebo (32:44–52)\textsuperscript{17}

B’ Moses’ Song of Covenant Blessings for Israel (33:1–29)\textsuperscript{18}

A’ Moses’ Death on Mt. Nebo, Joshua takes over (34:1–12)\textsuperscript{19}

The preceding compositional framework highlights the intricate literary construction of the concluding section (VII), which is a common stylistic feature in Hebrew discourse (end-stress), but one that is not often recognized. From a historical perspective, the final earthly transition of Moses—“man of God” (33:1), “servant of the LORD” (34:5), and “prophet” of Israel (34:10)—is an obvious narrative peak-point and an appropriate way to conclude the Pentateuch attributed to him. On the other hand, from a topical viewpoint, this closing textual arrangement emphasizes the book’s distinctive, paired poetic passages, which function together rhetorically as a hortative climax to underscore the critical importance of communally “remembering” (32:7)\textsuperscript{20} Yahweh’s foundational Covenant with Israel and its promised benedictions for faithful obedience (ch. 33), in contrast to dire punishments for willful disobedience (ch. 32). Interestingly, these two farewell songs of Moses also clearly reflect back upon and vividly memorialize the dramatic pronouncement of “curses” and “blessings” found in division V (chs. 27–28).\textsuperscript{21}

A STRUCTURE-FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF DEUTERONOMY 32–33

In this section, the two songs of Moses in Deuteronomy 32–33 will be sketched in terms of their respective structural arrangements in order to reveal the significant stylistic elements of each text and also to suggest how these two lyric pericopes are creatively interrelated to carry out the unified rhetorical purpose of specifically: “Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them” (NIV). The first major part of this song condemns the people’s repeated unfaithfulness to their covenant commitments and the LORD’s consequent punishments (cf. 32:5–25). Narrative references to Moses’ speaking (singing) the words of this song border it on both sides, i.e., a literary-structural exclusio (31:30, 32:44–45). Regarding the “contention” genre (ר יב), see Lovelace forthcoming.

17 References to Moses’ seeing the promised land of Canaan end section A’ and begin section A’ (32:52, 34:1–4), thus enclosing section B’ (another structural exclusio).

18 A formal introduction with an indication of genre marks the beginning of this song (aperture) in 33:1: “This is the blessing which Moses, man of God, blessed the sons of Israel” (וְזֵֹ֣אתָ ה בְּר כ ִ֗הָָאֲשֵֶ֨רָה אֶת־בְּנֵ֑י יִש ־֖ר אָמְרָהּ מֹשֵֶ֛ה וַי־ר ָ֖כַּן כְּל ָֹל פְּר אֶת־נְא ָ֑ו רִי). Explicit references to Joshua’s leadership following Moses’ death and his qualifications for this role occur in both the A and A’ sections (e.g., 31:6–8, 34:9).

19 Explicit references to Joshua’s leadership following Moses’ death and his qualifications for this role occur in both the A and A’ sections (e.g., 31:6–8, 34:9).

20 Both poetical discourses were delivered by Moses orally in a public gathering (31:30, 33:1).

21 While curses (27:15–26) transition to blessings (28:1–14) and back again to curses (28:15–68) in section V, curses (32:1–35) proceed to a declaration of the LORD’s just judgments (32:36–43), and finally to blessings (33:1–29) in the lyric (A) subunits of section VII.
emphasizing the LORD’s message of caution and consolation for his people. I consider these two texts to be “songs” since they demonstrate many of the typical artistic and oral-aural oriented elements that are found also in the Psalter, including their principal genre categories. Thus, Deuteronomy 32 is noticeably similar to a historical-imprecatory psalm, while Deuteronomy 33 exhibits many features that constitute psalms of petition and praise (Wendland 2017, ch. 3).

A thematic outline of each of these two distinctive lyric compositions follows, with a representative selection of prominent poetic attributes being periodically described in footnotes. Afterwards, the chief aspects of their rhetorical interrelationship are summarized—again with the aim of supporting the premise of this paper that these Mosaic poems function as the climactic portion of the great prophet-leader’s closing written exhortation to his people and a crucial message from God that he wanted Israel always to remember throughout their generations.

The judicial song of Moses, directly inspired by the LORD in chapter 32, may be divided structurally and topically into two major units, each of which is comprised of seven strophes (poetic paragraphs) as shown below:

DEUTERONOMY 32 – YAHWEH’S MITIGATED WARNING TO HIS PEOPLE

A. The LORD’s Covenant Lawsuit Against Israel (32:1–25)
   a. Formal preamble (1–4)
      i. Invocation of witnesses and divine authority (1–2)

22 Note the inclusio formed by the reference to “song” (םִירָה) in 31:30 and 32:44.
23 The stylistic qualities manifested in the poetic texts of Deut. 32–33 may be compared with those found in Moses’ “Psalm by the Sea,” as recorded in Exodus 15 (cf. Wendland 2017, ch. 8). My opinion of the compositional excellence of the two Songs of Moses in Deuteronomy is echoed by a distinguished “literary study Bible”: “Moses ends the book of Deuteronomy with a high-pitched litany of accusations against the plaintiff, his people Israel, who have been blatantly unfaithful to the
basic principles of the Covenant. First, the impartial and permanent witnesses of heaven and earth are invoked (i). The Lord’s fundamentally gracious purpose in condemning the guilty to provoke their repentance is highlighted by four images of life-giving rain (ii), thus literally anticipating the latter portion of this poem (vv. 36ff). In effect, the ‘song’ of chapter 32 stands as a witness against the past (and future) sins of Israel (Deut 31:19).

27 Leading off with an asseverative בְּ, “Surely!”, Moses praises the “name” (ברות) of Yahweh “the Rock” (יהוה, a major motif in this song, fronted here for emphasis, i.e., constituent focus), cf. vv. 15, 18, 30–31, by listing seven of his familiar divine attributes (vv. 3–4), including one feature described negatively: “and never unjust” (יהוה), this traditional commendation (cf. Ps 18:30) further establishes the righteousness of Yahweh’s judicial complaint against Israel.

28 Dramatically, in immediate contrast, Israel (referred to collectively in the 3rd person) is overtly accused: “he has acted corruptly towards him [Yahweh, and therefore they] not his children” (יהוה ארץ, v. 5). The utter impudence, arrogance, and folly of such behavior is underscored by a pair of rhetorical questions that again highlight Yahweh’s fundamental covenantal relationship to Israel as their one and only “Father” (יהוה), who has “acquired” (יהוה), “formed” (יהוה), and “founded” (יהוה) them as a nation (v. 6).

29 This strophe begins (v. 7) with the thematic verb of Deuteronomy—“remember,” i.e., deliberately call to one’s mind (יהוה)—a fact that should have been forever (יהוה) engraved upon their collective memory. And what was this? The truth that Israel was Yahweh’s special “inheritance” (another key concept that circumscribes vv. 8–9: יְהוָה בְּאֶֽרֶץ). This nation/people-group had been graciously chosen by “the Most High [God]” (יהוה) from among “all the sons of humanity” (יהוה, גּוֹיָבְנָה) on earth. What an amazing blessing that they were wickedly despising—could they not realize this, Moses passionately and poetically rea-

30 Yahweh’s ongoing (imperfective verbs) providential care for Israel (“like an eagle,” v. 11) during her wanderings. “In the wilderness” (יהוה אֶֽרֶץ) the subject of this unit internal strophe (d-i), which ends in in a categorical assertion of monotheism: “YHWH alone [front-shifted focus] he guided him—and there was not with him a foreign god” (יהוה אֶֽרֶץ). The series of imperfective verbs continues in v. 13, indicating the Lord’s sustained provision for his people, but featuring now a sharp shift in setting—from a “desert” wasteland (v. 10a) to the hilly “heights” of a new, rich and productive land (v. 13a, parallel “apertures”). The remainder of this strophe through v. 14 is packed with a sequence of picturesque agricultural images that predictively depict the idealized situation of Israel in the land of Canaan. Everything would go so well for them as a result of Yahweh’s blessed beneficence! A sudden shift of person (from 3rd to 2nd sg.) marks strophic closure (d–ii) along with a vivid reference to “the blood of a grape”—probably symbolic of a joy-filled life of ease.
e. Accusation of Israel’s blatant rebellion against Yahweh (15–18)  
f. Yahweh’s general pronouncement of judgment upon Israel (19–21)  
g. Yahweh’s specific pronouncement of judgment upon Israel (22–25)  

B. Yahweh’s Personal Reflection and Reconsideration (26–43)  
a. The potential reaction of Yahweh’s enemies (26–27)  
b. The folly of Israel in rejecting their Rock (28–30)  

d32 A poetical honorific (but here ironic and rhymed) reference to Israel announces the beginnings of this new, divergent strophe in v. 15, which documents the “fattened” people’s proud rebellion against Yahweh: “And Jeshurun ['Upright One'] grew fat...” (וִיֶּשֶׁרְוִי). Israel’s protecting, providing “Rock of their salvation” (צָוָּרְיַסִּעִנְּוּ, v. 16) is strikingly contrasted with a litany of references to pagan deities (v. 17). A caustic, chiastically arranged accusation in the second person of direct speech (cf. v. 14d) foregrounds the closure of this strophe in v. 18: “the Rock [that] bore you [A] you neglected [B] and you forgot [B’] the God giving you birth” (מְחֹלְלֶֹֽךָ אָל וָתֹּ שְּכְֹ֖חָתֶָֹ֑ש יָ֥רְיֶּל דְּךָָֹ֖). Verse 18 clearly links up topically with v. 6 (structural “epiphora”), and thus the negative strophes (b) and (e) enclose the positive picture of Israel in strophes (c) and (d) (structural exclusio).  

d33 The switch to a new primary subject, Yahweh in v. 19, and a direct declaration of his renouncement of Israel (v. 20), distinguish this strophe, which concludes with another mention of the cause (idolatry) (v. 22a) that will have this punitive effect—a shocking shift of Yahweh’s attention to other people (v. 22b). The latter reference may be understood as having a positive or a negative connotation; Paul’s citation of this passage in Romans 10:19 would favor the former interpretation, as would this song’s concluding imperative calling upon all nations to “rejoice” with Israel (v. 43a).  

d34 This strophe features a listing of some of the specific “calamities” (רֶעֶּות, v. 23) resulting from Yahweh’s fiery “wrath” (אָּרָּה, v. 22a) that will befall Israel on account of (ב) their willful, Covenant-breaking idolatry (cf. strophe f). The terrors of war will “devour their land and its harvests” (v. 22b) and result in the “sword” decimating their nation (v. 25—end stress climax) Part A of Yahweh’s warning to his people (32:1–25) thus comes to an ominous, depressing conclusion that offers no hope for the future at all.  

35 A disjunctive, first-person marker of direct speech to come, “I said” (אֲמֹּרְתֹּי), explicitly signals the onset of the second portion of Yahweh’s complaint against his people, which seems to begin in the same way that the last part ended—with his intention to “blot out their memory from mankind” (v. 26). However, this line of argumentation is suddenly curtailed in v. 27 by the initial “negative unreal conditional” conjunction לולא (van der Merwe, et al. 1999, 304), as the LORD, anthropomorphically-speaking, reflects on the possible adverse outcome of his decision to extinguish his people. His righteous reputation would be destroyed as the pagan nations boast about their apparent victory—in fact, blaming him (in dramatic direct speech) for Israel’s demise: “So has not YHWH [himself] done all this?” (וְּלָֹ֥א יְּהו ֹּ֖ה פ ע ָ֥ל־ז ֹּֽאת !)  

36 The emphatic assertion of Yahweh’s more mitigated assessment of Israel initiates this strophe in v. 28: “Surely a nation devoid of discernment they are!” (כ י־גֵ֛וי אֹב ָ֥דָע צֹּ֖ותָהֶֶ֑). In their seditious blindness, they could not envision their destiny under Yahweh’s direction (v. 29), and when they rejected the leading of “their Rock” (צָוָּרְיַסִּעִנְּוּ; cf. v. 15), is it any wonder that he no longer fought for them, but allowed the weakest of enemies to defeat them (v. 30)?
c. The deadly “rock” of pagan deities (31–33)\(^{37}\)
d. Yahweh will take vengeance upon his enemies (34–35)\(^{38}\)
e. Yahweh will teach his people through discipline (36–38)\(^{39}\)
f. Yahweh proclaims his uniqueness and sovereign rule (39–42)\(^{40}\)
g. A final call to rejoice in Yahweh’s justice and atoning mercy (43)\(^{41}\)

This first song of Moses in Deuteronomy is undoubtedly a masterfully wrought example of Hebrew poetic accusatory composition. It presents a succinct, selective, lyric review of Israel’s history after the divinely led Exodus from Egypt. First Moses, speaking on behalf of the LORD—and then Yahweh, speaking eloquently for himself—butterly anticipate the future unfaithfulness of Israel

\(^{37}\) A prominent lexical play on divergent references introduces this strophe: “For not like our Rock [is] their rock [an idol]” (כֵ֛יָלָֹאָכְָּרֶֽךְ) (v. 31). Under the interlocking imagery of vines, Sodom, Gomorrah, grapes, wine, and the venom of serpents, the deadly danger of pagan religions is graphically described (vv. 32–33). How could Israel not perceive this?

\(^{38}\) A deliberately ambiguous, pictographic rhetorical question, uttered in the first-person by Yahweh himself, topicalizes this strophe that accentuates his inevitable justice in dealing with humanity (v. 34). Sooner or later, those enemy nations that he employs to chastise Israel for their wickedness will themselves meet their disastrous doom (v. 35). This divine principle of Covenant Law is succinctly, stressfully stated in the center of the strophe (v. 35a): “To/for me [is the determination] of vengeance [upon enemies]/vindication [of his people]” (לֵ֤יָנֵֽה).

\(^{39}\) Two more יִֽכְּ constructions in v. 36a continue Yahweh’s internal deliberations with himself over the fate of recalcitrant Israel—the first conjunction being arguably asseverative: “For sure, Yahweh will requite (ד יִֽכְּן) his people in his compassion” (נחם, and why? Because they are so physically weak (v. 36b; cf. Ps 135:14) and spiritually frail as well (v. 37) due to their foolish dabbling in the fickle “rock” (צור) religion of pagan deities. Yahweh concludes this strophe by ironically suggesting that the impotent false gods who supposedly consumed the people’s misguided offerings (v. 38a) should now be called upon by Israel to deliver them from all their foes and provide “shelter” (ס תְּר ה) (v. 38b). Indeed, this is a didactic, albeit rather poignant, divine argumentum ad absurdum!

\(^{40}\) In this penultimate strophe, which leads off in v. 39 with the emphatic focus imperative “See now…” (רְּאֵ֣ו׀וע תֹּ ִ֗ה), Yahweh makes a powerful proclamation of his sovereignty and exclusive claim to deity in the world: “…that I, I [am] he, and there is no god besides me!” (note the reiterated pronoun אֲנ י). He is the God who determines life and death, prosperity or punishment, and either “deliverance” (נֵֽלֹּכּ) or the contrary. In v. 40 Yahweh swears by himself with the heavens as his witness (cf. v. 1), “…as surely as I live forever…” (ח ָ֥י א נֹכ ֹּ֖י), to declare in a graphically detailed warning that none of his evil enemies will escape due justice and appropriate punishment (vv. 41–42).

\(^{41}\) In vivid contrast to the preceding unit’s frightful threat, this short, final and climactic strophe (v. 43) predicts the opposite future for “his people” Israel and, quite unexpectedly, for all those from among the world’s “nations” who become “his servants” (עֲב ד ֹּ֖יו) under the Covenant (cf. v. 21b). He will mercifully “make atonement” (כפר) for them in sharp contrast to the “vengeance” that he will justly “return” (נ ק ם יִֽש ֵ֣יב) upon all “his foes” (לְּצ ר ֶׁ֔יו)! In a figurative, circumscribing manner, the content of the poem’s final strophe in part B (g) reiterates that of its first strophe in part A (a) with reference to Yahweh’s abundant mercy coupled with his awesome justice (structural “enclosure”).
through idol worship and their divine Rock’s (32:4, 15, 31) ensuing righteous retribution, as predicted already in the preceding historical passage (31:6–18). At the song’s virtual midpoint, and upon the nation’s nearly reaching the brink of disaster (32:25), Yahweh comes to himself, as it were, to assert his heartfelt “compassion” (חנִּים) for his wayward people (36) and give them new “life” (חָיָה, 39). In the end, the almighty God will “take punitive vengeance” (נָקִים) upon his enemies so that, by delivering his now penitent people, he might “make atonement” (כְּפָרָה) for them in the land that he has graciously provided as their covenantal surety (43). Here, in a surprising, somewhat cryptic reference to a future messianic expansion of God’s kingdom, Moses concludes on a high note by calling upon all “nations” (גוֹיִם) to “rejoice” (רָגַע) with Israel in praising their gracious Lord (cf. v. 21; Gen 12:2). Surely that is a promise worth remembering, also today!

DEUTERONOMY 33—YAHWEH’S UNMUTIGATED REASSURANCE FOR HIS PEOPLE

In contrast to the serious judicial “warning,” or legal indictment, against Israel, later mitigated by Yahweh himself in Moses’ first song (ch. 32), the gifted leader’s second poetic composition (ch. 33) prophetically expresses a benedictory message of unmitigated reassurance for Israel. The discourse structure of Moses’ second song, too, is quite different, for instead of a sequentially developed bipartite arrangement, we now see a more thematically static, but functionally appropriate A—B—A’ “ring construction.” In this case, the closing lyrical unit A’ serves to complete, with specific application to Israel, the fulsome, focused praise of Yahweh begun in the initial section A. In between, the long medial segment B presents a recital of blessings directed at the sons of Jacob and their descendants in prospect of their envisioned establishment in their future homeland of Canaan.

A. Theophany depicting Yahweh’s royal majesty (33:2–5)

a. Yahweh’s opening omnipotent arrival (2)

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42 Deut 32:43 (also 32:21b) therefore has important missiological implications for God’s people today.

43 There is, of course, a scholarly debate over the authorship of this second song, which seems too optimistic and Canaan-oriented to have been composed by Moses, who would obviously have been very familiar with Israel’s poetic prequel in Genesis 49. There is no textual or extratextual evidence that leads me to doubt the clear ascription to “Moses, the [prophet-ic] man of God” (מֹשֶׁה איש אֱלֹהִים) found in 33:1 (cf. Kalland 1992, 219). Obviously, a scribe would have recorded his words as they were being orally recited or sung.

44 The song’s initial fronted constituents “YHWH from Sinai” (יְהוָה מִסְיַּנִי) highlight respectively the topic (Yahweh’s majesty) and setting (that of giving the Law) of the entire section A. The glorious magnificence of this scene is underscored by imagery that depicts the
b. Yahweh’s loving provision of his Covenant for Israel (3–5)⁴⁵

B. Catalogue of divine blessings upon the tribes of “Jeshurun” (6–25)⁴⁶

a. Reuben (6)⁴⁷
b. Judah (7)⁴⁸
c. Levi (8–11)⁴⁹

dazzling display of the sun and theophanic (hyperbolic?) reference to the accompaniment of “myriads of holy beings” (נְצֵרֵֽת תָּשׁוֹרִים).

⁴⁶ The particle אַף (“Moreover, In addition...”; van der Merwe et al. 1999, 312–313) initiates a distinct segment of the opening strophe (or “stanza,” since it is partitioned). Amidst all the divine, regal potency (v. 2) and obeisance (v. 3), it is the affection of Yahweh, “The Lover” (חֹב), that is foregrounded by the Hebrew word order. This is evidenced by his giving of the “Law” (תֹּור ה), also emphasized by the fronted noun) through the mediation of Moses (v. 4) to the entire assembly of the “tribes of Israel” (שְּׂבֵט יִשְׂרָאֵל). The latter is also referred to by the poetical “praise name” “Jeshurun” (יְשֻׁרְנָּה; contrast 32:15), “The Upright One” (ה י ש רָ), ideally so—upright through Covenantal [faith/obedience] association with holy King Yahweh (v. 5). This final reference to Israel’s tribal groupings forms a fitting segue to the individual benedic-
tions that follow.

⁴⁶ Yahweh, speaking through his prophet Moses (34:10), pronounces various blessings upon the tribes of Israel as they are about to enter the land of Canaan. The order of these tribal benedic-
tions is not the same as that of their patriarchal precursors. Simeon is not mentioned perhaps because this tribe seems to have been absorbed into Judah; this lack of recognition may also reflect the anger implied in their ancestor’s original reference (Gen 49:5–7). For a chart comparing the order of names here with Genesis 49, with their birth order, the order of their encampments in Numbers, and with subsequent tribal land allocations in Joshua, see Kalland 1992, 222. The paten-
tly oral character of this Mosaic recitation is manifestly indicated by a repeated, formulaic use of the verb “say, speak” (אָמַר).

⁴⁷ As in the case of Jacob’s paternal blessing (Gen 49:3), the tribe of the eldest son, Reuben (רְּאובָן) is mentioned first, though he had lost his birthright because of his adultery with Bilhah, his father’s concubine (Gen 35:22; 49:4). His “blessing” is indeed very basic: May the tribe “live” (ח י הָ) and not “die” (موتָ) out (v.7)! Surprisingly perhaps, Judah (יְּהוד ה) too (v. 7), is not afforded a very lengthy promise—certainly not in comparison with Jacob’s patriarchal benediction (Gen 49:8-12). It may be assumed, therefore, that those earlier verses foretelling praise (49:8a), prominence (49:8b), power (49:9), and a Messianic promise (49:10) for this tribe still held force, and that the only need necessary was an appeal for Yahweh to hear his (their) prayers for “help against his ene-
mies” (ע ָ֥זֶרָמ צּ ר ֹּ֖יוָ), who indeed would turn out to be very many in the years to come. Judah’s tribal blessing thus explicitly introduces this topic that will ring out loudly throughout the prophecies that follow, namely, that of warfare and fighting—indeed, the figure of Yahweh himself as the Divine Warrior (e.g., 32:43; 33:22, 27, 29). These aggressive military images are of course most appropriate in the effort to encourage a nation that is about to carry out a “holy war” in order to take over their divinely apportioned “inheritance” (32:8) as chosen agents of the LORD of Hosts who desires now to “make atonement for his land” (32:23), which is cur-
tently being occupied by some of the most wicked, pagan peoples (32:32-33).

⁴⁹ In sharp contrast to the patriarch’s prediction in Genesis 49:5-7, in which the violent anger of Levi (and Simeon) was cursed, the descendants of Levi (ל ו י), as the priestly servants of Yahweh, now receive a lengthy blessing. This begins with historical allusions to this tribe’s testing of Moses, their “godly” (ד ו לָךְ) representative, at the waters of Massah and Meribah (v.
d. Benjamin (12)

e. Joseph (13–17)

f. Zebulon, Issachar (18–19)

g. Gad (20–21)

h. Dan (22)

8; cf. Exod 15:22–26) in dramatic distinction to their total devotion to his leadership and that of the LORD after the golden calf incident (v. 9; cf. Exod 32:27–29). The tribe of Levi's vital religious role in Israel is summarized: (a) revealing the will of Yahweh by means of the Urim and Thummim (v. 8); teaching the laws of the Covenant to the people (v. 10); and (c) carrying out the prescribed sacrifices and other ritual acts on behalf of the entire nation (v. 10b). In this priestly service, the Levites greatly distinguished themselves since "your [YHWH] precepts alone [A] they observed [B] and they kept [B'] your Covenant [A']" (דָּבֶּר הָעֵדֶּנ יְּהוָה שֹֽמְּרוּ אַמְּרָתְּךָּו בָּלַק אָמְרָתְּךָּו לָּיְצָּו; v. 9c). In conclusion, the LORD is directly, and thus emphatically, called upon to "bless [A] his [the tribe's] abilities [B] and all his activities [B'] to prosper [A']" (בָּרָא יְהוָה עֹצֶּמֶּנְי הָעַלְו יְּצָה אָמְרָתְּךָּו לָּיְצָּו; v. 11).

50 Another strong shift in denotation and connotation is evident between the Jacobite and the Mosaic blessings of "Benjamin" (פִּנְיָמַּן) as the prior reference to a "ravenous wolf" (Gen 49:27) is changed now in 33:12 to the repeated epithet, "one beloved by YHWH" (יְּדֵי יְּהוָה; cf. Gen 35:18, 44:20). Though not a very eminent tribe, Benjamin would always be divinely "shielded" (חַפַּף) and endearingly carried on God's own shoulders, perhaps a prediction of its eventually being absorbed into the larger, more prominent tribe of Judah.

51 This beautifully composed poem dedicated to "Joseph" (יוֹסֵף), the second longest after that of Levi, may be divided into two unequal strophes. The first portrays in figurative terms reminiscent of Jacob's blessing (49:22–26) the abundant fruitfulness of the tribal territory of Joseph under the blessing of Yahweh (vv. 13–16a), while the second portion (vv. 16b–17) describes their impressive military prowess, as manifested under the leadership of the tribe later identified as "Ephraim" (אֶפְרָע; v. 17c). The superlative qualifier "choicest" (מֵֶ֤גֶד) is reiterated five times to foreground the bounty that characterizes Joseph's prime territory in Canaan—almost in response to Moses' initial prayer, "May Yahweh bless his land!" (בָּרָא יְהוָה אֶרֶץ; v. 13a)—a region richly provided for in all of its spatial dimensions as poetically depicted. Verse 16b transitions to the martial and numerical preeminence of "…Joseph [the ancestral name being significantly repeated at the start of this new unit] …the prince among his brothers" (יְסֵף וְלֵךְ יְשֵׂבָּה לָּיְצָּו לָּיְצָּו לָּיְצָּו; v. 19a) and their "drawing in the abundance of the seas [Kinnereth/Galilee?]" (כְּלַו לָּיְצָּו לָּיְצָּו; v. 19b; cf. Thompson 1974, 314).

52 “Zebulon” (צְבוּלון), conjoined with "Issachar" (יִשְׂחָר), begins a series of shorter strophes devoted to the sons and tribes that were not so renowned in Israel's national history. These blessings occasionally reflect those pronounced by Jacob (Gen 49), but they often seem quite general in their scope, and therefore the imagery is not easy to interpret with any certainty. In this case, for example, the tribes are encouraged to "rejoice" (שָׁמָּה) in apparent reference to their "summoning peoples to a mountain [Mt. Tabor?] to offer cultic sacrifices of righteousness" (v. 19a) and their "drawing in the abundance of the seas [Kinnereth/Galilee?]" (v. 19b; cf. Thompson 1974, 314).

53 The blessing of "Gad" (גָּד) begins in v. 20 with an implicit "praise" (תָּפִּלָּה) of God, who empowered this Transjordan-located tribe "like a lion" (דָּיָר לָּיְצָּו) to carry out "Yahweh's righteous will" (בָּרָא יְּהוָה לָּיְצָּו; v. 21)—perhaps when first entering the land of Canaan to fight on behalf of tribal brothers (cf. Num 32:1–33).
i. Naphtali (23)

j. Asher (24–25)

A' Theophany of Yahweh predicting blessings for Israel (26–29)

a. Yahweh’s majestic, protective, cosmic movements (26)

b. Yahweh’s bountiful provision of a land for Israel (27–29)

Despite the obvious differences in genre between the two songs of Moses in Deuteronomy 32–33, there are several noteworthy features that just as clearly bind them closely together as a most fitting final memorial message of the great
prophet of Israel to his people. In this lyric pairing the vivid prohibitions (“warnings”) and promises (“blessings”) of Deuteronomy are thereby recalled (from chs. 27–28) shortly after the Covenant has been renewed (cf. ch. 29). The nation is thereby given a solemn but expressive and memorable reminder as they prepare to embark on the ultimate portion of their arduous journey from slavery in Egypt—crossing the Jordan River into Canaan (Joshua 3). While the positive or negative disposition and behavior of the tribes of Israel form the main subject matter of these two poems, the unchanging attributes of their merciful, yet holy and righteous God, Yahweh, are highlighted at strategic, foregrounded positions in the discourse—in particular, at their respective beginnings and endings (32:3–4, 36, 39, 43: 33:1–5, 26–27).

It is instructive, too, to observe how the two songs of Moses are skillfully incorporated into the surrounding historical pericopes in the final division VII of Deuteronomy (see above). Thus, sections describing the necessity of Israel being “strong and courageous” (31:6) and ever vigilant in keeping the Law of the LORD (31:9–13) are sharply contrasted with the prediction of Israel’s forthcoming rebellions against him (31:14–29), which then lead directly to the detailed warnings of the lawsuit poem (32:5–25). A closing reference to the divinely provided “land” of Canaan in the preceding poetical text (32:43) is immediately followed by the narrative report of Moses urging Joshua to utilize this same song to regularly exhort the nation to maintain their obedience to “all the words of [God’s] law” in their new “land” (32:46–47). The LORD then confirms to Moses that he would be permitted to “view the land of Canaan” from afar (32:49) but would not be allowed to enter it along with “the people of Israel” (32:52). The subsequent recital of blessing by Moses (33:6–25) upon Israel’s tribes “before his death” (33:1) concludes with Yahweh’s encouraging promise to protect the community of “Jeshurun” and to drive out their enemies from God’s bestowed land (33:26–29). All that remains is for the book’s closing epilogue to record the fact that the chosen “man of God” obediently leaves the ministry to which the LORD had called him (34:1–8), having viewed “the whole land” from afar (34:1–3), and after officially handing the leadership over to Joshua (34:9), as previously arranged (31:7–8, which thereby forms a literary inclusio for section VII).

It is interesting to observe once more in the concluding division (VII) of Deuteronomy, as in this book and indeed the entire Pentateuch, a significant emphasis on the interrelated concepts of the “land” (לֵבָנָה, 32:43 or לָיָם, 33:13) and the “law” (תֵּור ה; 32:46, 33:4). These key terms may be perceived as effectively summarizing Yahweh’s foundational Covenant Charter with his chosen people, beginning with its initial basic expression in God’s promise to Abraham (Gen 12:2–3; 13:14–17; 15:4–21) and ending with the lengthy “Book of the Covenant”

59 These critical “blessings and curses” are later read (from Deuteronomy) by Joshua at Ebal (Josh 8:34).
Moses’ two memorial songs in Deuteronomy

(זֶבֶר יְהֹוָה; Exod 24:7) as detailed in the treatises of Exodus and Leviticus. This divine charter was later publicly restated for a new generation and setting in Deuteronomy (for example, “these are the words of the Covenant,” אַחֲרֵי הַבְּרֵי הָבְרֵי – Deut 29:1 [Heb 28:69]; cf. 32:2, 33:4).

One might further also view Israel’s present physical and social wellbeing (shalom) in the promised land of Canaan as functioning somewhat like a symbolic indicator that represented the relative degree of their current adherence to the Law of Yahweh. When the people faithfully obeyed the LORD, things went well for them as a nation, but these salutary circumstances were drastically reversed when Israel persisted in sin and rebellion against him. The warlike attacks and associated persecution by various enemies in their land then were tangible, providentially intended object lessons to remind them of the Covenant that they had willfully broken. But grace and mercy were always paramount in Yahweh's purposes, for he was ever ready to forgive, revive, restore, and fight for his people against their many surrounding foes—a fact that is underscored in the respective conclusions of both Mosaic remembrance songs (32:39–43; 33:26–29).

TRANSMITTING “MOSES” WITH DYNAMIC CORRESPONDENCE TO A CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE


Throughout the succeeding centuries [this song] was to serve as an easily memorized teaching aid to educate the Israelite people about spiritual priorities and to communicate God’s warning message to successive generations. In biblical times God’s people frequently used songs to give vocal expression to their faith. ... So, anticipating [Israel’s] apostasy after their settlement in Canaan, this song was to be taught to the people and their children, then passed on from generation to generation. By the novel means of a popular song, Israel would always have access to a constantly renewed warning about the tragic effects of their recurrent spiritual disloyalty.

As noted in the analysis above, Moses’ emotional reminder to the people in ch. 32 is not only about warning of the devastating punishments that will deservedly befall all the unfaithful. The last half of the text also reassures collective Israel of Yahweh’s undeserved mercy (v. 36), his constant desire to deliver all penitent “servants” (v. 39), and his determination to make atonement on their behalf as

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60. “As the book of Romans does for the NT, Deuteronomy provides an important theological foundation for the OT. It graphically delineates the character of God and various fundamental aspects of his relationship with his chosen nation. The book provides the theological foundation on which later biblical writers base their teaching” (Grisanti 2012, 55).
well as inflicting just retribution upon their enemies (v. 43). But Brown’s point is well taken with regard to the original nature and purpose of this song, and it applies also to the panegyric benedictions of ch. 33.

So that was then, but what about now—“today”? To what extent do these two songs, when translated in your language, accomplish their diverse, didactic, cautionary, commemorative, and laudatory communicative aims? There is no space here for a comparative, usage-based study, but I would venture to guess that most modern individual and corporate worshipers do not fully grasp the point of these songs as rendered in their language, nor are they able to appreciate their original artistic impact, emotive appeal, and contemporary relevance. Although they may be neatly formatted as “poetry” in publication, the texts of virtually all translations do not sound very poetical in the consumer language, and they are not really amenable to a dynamic oral public delivery, let alone a creative musical expression.

The following pair of short renditions are experimental examples—to see what might be accomplished by an oral-aural mode of transmitting the concluding portions of the two Mosaic songs today in a manner that more closely approximates their initial delivery to Israel several thousand years ago. The communication event could never be the same, of course, since different persons, languages, cultural environments, and situational settings are involved. But the performative goal is hopefully similar enough to justify the effort—namely, to revert to the initial audio medium of transmission and to express these two passages with a corresponding degree of verbal naturalness, affective intensity and aesthetic appeal, while at the same time accurately conveying the basic content and intent of the Hebrew source text. First of all, then, Deuteronomy 32:39–43 is rendered “oratorically” in English, that is, featuring a more visual format in natural “utterance units” intended to facilitate a more natural oral recitation of the text.

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61 For a fuller exploration of the various issues that pertain to the crucial “orality” of the Scriptures in terms of their initial textual composition and subsequent translational transmission, see Wendland 2013.

62 I would welcome being informed about exceptions that are recorded in other languages of the world.

63 For details of the methodology underlying this oral-centered approach, see ch. 7 in Wendland 2013. The primary audience in both cases is church-going youth groups, in particular those engaged in choir singing and public recitals of Christian poetry.

64 My line demarcation in Hebrew poetry would appear to correspond with that determined in a recent dissertation on the subject (Grosser 2013:330): “The longest lines in the corpus of this study are 14–15 syllables long, a finding which corresponds to the upper limit of line lengths in a number of metrical poetries across cultures. This upper limit may correspond to a cognitive or anatomical (i.e., breath) constraint... A second line limit constraint seems to correspond to the limitations of immediate memory. Such a constraint accounts for why, for BH lines that require mental organization of phonetic surface structure, the upper limit in the corpus of this study is about 11 syllables. This limit likewise corresponds with cross-cultural findings.”
Additional footnotes are added to clarify or explain my translation of the original Hebrew.

Now look, I alone am the LORD!
No, there is not another god but me!\(^{65}\)
I am the one who takes and gives life;
I am the one who bruises and heals;
nobody can escape my power to punish!\(^{66}\)
I hereby swear with right hand raised,
“What I am about to say is forever true;\(^{67}\)
I have sharpened my flashing sword,
I will most surely carry out true justice.\(^{68}\)
I will exert vengeance upon my enemies,
punishing those who have rejected me.\(^{69}\)
My arrows will be reddened with blood,
slaying also the captives among them;\(^{70}\)
my sword will slash to eat them alive—\(^{71}\)
severing the heads that lead my foes.”\(^{72}\)

“Rejoice with him in the heavens above;\(^{73}\)
yes, let all of God’s angels worship him!”\(^{74}\)

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\(^{65}\) It is difficult in English to reproduce the first-person prominence generated by the thrice repeated pronoun אֲנִי in these initial two lines; I have attempted to do this by emphasizing the negative, no one else!

\(^{66}\) Literally, the Hebrew says: “There is not a person who delivers (ְלָֽֽחַמְּ לָֽֽהַ) from my hand.”

\(^{67}\) Yahweh here swears by himself, the eternal Truth, that what he is about to say concerning the judgment of all his adversaries (vv. 41–42) will most surely happen; it is, in effect, an incontrovertible divine prediction. Moses includes the enemies of his people under this divine injunction in the final verse (43).

\(^{68}\) In this vivid declaration, the LORD figuratively depicts the sharpened, flashing “sword” (חרָב) as his instrument of certain, swift, and righteous “judgment” (מִשְׁפְּט).

\(^{69}\) Here “rejected me” is literally “my haters” (מְשִׁנְּאֵי); in the context of Covenant justice, “haters” refers to people who disobey or disregard its stipulations and principles.

\(^{70}\) I understand the enemies’ “captives” (שְׁבַיֵּי) to be their mercenary forces or slave armies.

\(^{71}\) Literally, “my sword will eat flesh.”

\(^{72}\) My translation rearranges the poetic lines of v. 42 so that those with associated meaning are conjoined—thus, line 3 in Hebrew with line 1 and 4 with line 2. “Head[s]” refers to their leaders.

\(^{73}\) Another imperative (cf. v. 39a, structural “aperture”) initiates this final strophe in which Moses effectively summarizes the content of the Song’s final segment (vv. 26–43), but now remarkably including “all nations” (גּוֹיִם) along with “[Yahweh’s] people” (עֹבְרֵי)!
Rejoice with his people, you Gentiles too, for he will avenge the blood of his servants. The LORD will indeed punish his enemies. 75 Thus, he will carry out the atonement that cleanses the land and redeems his people.”

For the next illustration, we turn to a contextually paraphrased rendition that is a much closer functional correspondent of the second Song of Moses—namely, a hymned, musical expression of Deuteronomy 33:26–29 in Chichewa. 76 The repeated “chorus” stanza is adapted from 32:7, which again recalls the serious word of warning that characterizes Moses’ first Song, thus conceptually interlocking the two. 77 The Chichewa text below is accompanied by my English back-translation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Palibe Mulungu, ngati wa Yakobo.</th>
<th>There is no God like the one of Jacob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amatsika m’mwamba, kudzatiteteza,</td>
<td>He descends from heaven to come protect us,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M’kati mwa mitambo, kudzatithandiza,</td>
<td>Among the clouds to come assist us,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muulemerero, kudzatizambola.</td>
<td>In splendor to redeem us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ich</em> mukumbuke, <em>chilango cha Ambuye!</em></td>
<td>Remember this—the Lord's punishment!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Funsani akula, za masiku aja</em></td>
<td>Ask the elders of those days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Zomwe anachita, kwa Falao m’Ejipto.</em></td>
<td>What he did to Pharaoh in Egypt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Kwa ife makono, likhale chenjezo!</em></td>
<td>Let that be a lesson for us today!  [chorus]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M’dziko likudzalo, bwino ‘dzasungawwe,</td>
<td>In the land to come, he’ll keep you well,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulibeko njala, uku kuKananani.</td>
<td>There’s no famine at all there in Canaan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mtendere ndi bata, sizidzatha konse,</td>
<td>Peace and calm will never end again,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madalitso akewo, adzatigwer’a fe.</td>
<td>His blessings will befall us.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

74 The translation follows a somewhat longer Hebrew text, as supported by the Septuagint and one of the Dead Sea scrolls; this amended text is what is cited subsequently by the author of Hebrews 1:6.

75 The crucial notion of divine “vengeance” upon enemies, being contrastively at the same time a “vindication” of God’s servants, is accentuated by a reiteration of the verb נ ק ם.

76 This hymn in a local melody was composed at my request by Mr. David Kalima Nkhoma, a third-year student at Lusaka Lutheran Seminary (December 2019). Mr. Nkhoma, a Malawian national, has produced several songs in Chichewa based on biblical texts. Chichewa is spoken as a first- or second-language by some 15 million people in the SE African countries of Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia. Note that the final (occasionally the penultimate) syllable vowel of the word occurring medially before the comma as well as the last one in the line is elongated and modulated in tone.

77 This chorus verse was interpreted by the composer as a divine warning in view of the preceding passages 32:5–6, also with allusive reference to Exodus 10:2.
M’dzanja la Chauta, titonthozedwamo, In Chauta’s hand we are comforted.78
Kothawira ndiiye, ndi chishango chathu, He is our refuge and our shield,
Lupanga lamphamvu, lotithangatira. A powerful sword to sustain us.
Osankhidwa akewo, sadzakhumudwadi. His chosen ones will never be ashamed.

Adani athuwo, adzagonjetsedwa, Those enemies of ours will be defeated,
Chifundo nadzapempha, kuchoka kwa ife, They will pray for mercy from us,
Kotheratu ataa-, ponderezedwadi. After being completely trampled down.
Ndi chimwemwe imba, Hosana Bwam'mwamba! Sing with joy—Hosanna in the heavens!

Mphambe wamakamu, mulemekezeke! Almighty God of hosts,79 may you be praised!
Tasanduka odala, mwa chifundo chanu. We become blessed in your mercy.
Paulendo wathu, mukhale thandizo, On our journey be our help
Mpaka tikalowe, m’dziko la lonjezo! Until we enter the land of promise!

The actual musical version as performed by Mr. Nkhoma in Chichewa may be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLiMeN3brQo.

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE OF MOSES FOR GOD’S PEOPLE “TODAY”—AND WHY “REMEMBER” IT?

In summary, we have seen that the two book-concluding Songs of Moses are not merely instances of authorial embellishment—artistic or editorial “add-ons,” as it were. On the contrary, each poetic pericope in its own way (genre) provides a suggestive reflection, reprise, and reminder with regard to the fundamental Covenant-based content and purpose of the book of Deuteronomy.80 On the one hand, the need for faithful obedience in response to Yahweh’s many blessings is re-emphasized, at lyrical length, and these divine benefits are coupled with solemn threats of severe consequences for potential future failures in the people’s avowed fidelity to their holy God (ch. 32). On the other hand, it is important to

78 “Chauta,” revered name of the traditional Creator-God and Defender of the Chewa people, is the term used to designate the Tetragrammaton, YHWH, in the new Chichewa Bible (for an explanation, see Wendland 1998, 115–121).
79 Mention of the familiar divine praise name “Lord of Hosts” (first occurring in 1 Sam 1:3) is here reiterated from a similar reference to God’s “myriads of holy one[s]” (מְרָבֹתֵי בֵּית קָדֶשׁ) in 33:2–3.
80 Some scholars have noted this thematic-theological reflection also in the Psalter: “Pss 90–92 recall Moses’ song and prayer in Deut 32–32” (Ho 2019: 145).
note that the book essentially closes with an optimistic vision and a renewed promise of the most amazing gift that Israel could have—a “land” to take possession of as their national “inheritance” (ch. 33).

The question that some might raise having reached this point of closure is this: Why did Yahweh not simply give to the Israelite immigrants the entire territory of Canaan “ready-made,” more or less, to enter and do enterprise in? Why allow all the vicious ethnic opposition and warfare that became an integral part of the nation’s history until Solomon—and then only for a brief respite? The answer, in part I think, lies in the prudent purpose and omniscient plan of Yahweh, their Covenant-making God. Among the many blessings that the LORD lovingly bestowed on Israel, both before and after they entered Canaan, was their covenantal constitution—the Law (תֹּור הָעַצְיָם), including all of the divine moral, civil, and ceremonial instructions that are included in the Five Books of Moses (33:3–4).

Now every covenant implies a vital partnership of some sort—in this case, a very unequal one that united a holy, almighty God and a frail, rebellious people. Yahweh graciously granted everything that Israel needed to exist, persist, and even prosper as a nation. He required only one thing in return—their faithful obedience to his covenantal rules and regulations, both to preserve them as a distinct, unified people, and also to keep them totally devoted to him alone as their sovereign God. But historically what happened? As Moses so eloquently, yet poignantly puts it: “Jeshurun grew fat and...abandoned the God who made him; he rejected the Rock who made him,” in particular, by worshiping false deities and by sacrificing to demonic spirits (32:15–17). It is this sad, but necessary story that Moses lyrically implores Israel to recall in his Song of ch. 32, which serves then as a profound caveat that prefaces all the land-related benedictions promised in his Song of ch. 33. This textually-paired, memorable, indeed memorable, godly warning-cum-blessing arguably acts as the veritable peak point of Deuteronomy, and perhaps even the grand climax of the whole Pentateuch—the poetic “twin towers” of providential justice coupled with lavish grace. Thus, the expressive combination constitutes an inspired summary of the history and destiny of Israel as a divinely called and established nation—its past, present, and sadly, as events turned out, also its future.

So, we might ask, all Israel had to do is remain faithful—was that so difficult? How could they fail, and why so often? Now we, living very differently, many years later, are in no position to credibly answer that question since we were not there on the scene. But the message of Moses’ Songs encourages us to make the crucial trans-Testamental personal and communal application. Therefore, we can rightly ask that same question of all of God’s people—now called “Christians”—today: How faithful are we to the New Covenant, which has subsumed the Old Covenant through the life and death of Israel’s promised Messiah—he being a uniquely divine-human Person instead of a symbolic physical landmass
to focus our faith upon? And we need consider here only the core issue of “idolatry”: Could we, like ancient Israel, also be guilty of this heinous crime against God, who delivered us too from slavery (Exod 20:22; Deut 5:6), and the transgression of his very first commandment (Exod 20:3–6; Deut 5:7–10)? In other words, as the popular contemporary Christian song by Dion puts it: Have we truly “put away all our idols”?81

Of course, we already know from experience the largely negative answer to this non-rhetorical question, whether we happen to live in the historically Christian country of the United States of America, or in the constitutionally “Christian” nation of Zambia in Africa.82 As for America, distinguished theologian Dr. Albert Mohler observes:83

The biblical warnings against idolatry and against sorcery are abundantly clear. It’s very tempting for us to think in the modern age, that’s something that can be dismissed in the ancient past, separated from us by miles and miles and centuries, but as it turns out, it’s not so separate from us after all. First of all in time, it comes racing at us in a single edition of the New York Times and then it comes racing at us when we recognize how many of our neighbors evidently are paying money to soothsayers and to psychics in order to hear what they want to hear. We are living in an increasingly secular age, but that doesn’t mean it’s not an age marked by spirituality. It’s just an age that continually now celebrates a false spirituality. The biblical worldview underlines the fact that we are made in God’s image and we will worship something. If we do not worship the one, true and living God, then we will worship something. That’s the testimony that comes from the ancient temple to Baal that made the headlines of the New York Times just in recent days. It’s a headline that comes to us in the same newspaper about the psychic who could be operating right down the street, and those who were paying that psychic money in order to hear the future they want to know. A generation ago, Bob Dylan wrote a song “Gotta serve somebody.” That’s true. You’ve got to serve somebody. You’ve got to worship somebody too. That comes to us fresh in the headlines.

81 Dion DiMucci 1983 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrRoJdW_q5); cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dion_DiMucci. The potential “idols” in my life are:


83 A transcripted excerpt from of his radio broadcast, “The Briefing” on 09/01/2015: (https://albertmohler.com/2015/09/01/the-briefing-09-01-15). Richard Albert Mohler Jr. is an American historical theologian and the ninth president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He has been described on his Wikipedia page as “one of America’s most influential evangelicals.”
As for Africa, more Christians now live in this continent than in any other (well over 600 million).\textsuperscript{84} But that does not necessarily make the quality of professed and applied Christianity any better, according to the testimony of Deuteronomy and the rest of Scripture, or the levels of insidious idolatry any less. To give one example:\textsuperscript{85} in a careful, contextualized exegetical study, Bungishabaku Katho\textsuperscript{86} clearly documents how the condemnation of Israel’s idolatry in Jeremiah 2 may be applied also in large measure to the current state of Christianity in Africa.\textsuperscript{87} He discerns a similar pervasive and deadly spiritual manifestation as Mohler describes above.\textsuperscript{88}

Though throughout its history, Israel had flirted with idolatry (Jer 3:23; 11:12; 44:17–25, and so on), this specific passage does not tell us how exactly the people of Judah went after idols. These details will come in the following pages of the prophetic book. Therefore, Jeremiah 2 functions here as a hypothesis, that is, a text that serves as the source or the summary from which the entire book of Jeremiah will be built. However, we know that idolatry can take several forms: it can be open in the sense of seeking help from other supernatural forces through magic, witchcraft, or divination (1 Sam 28:1–25), or hidden in the sense of replacing God in our life and desire with other things (materialism, power, and so on). For Uchenna B. Okeja, the dominant forms of this idolatry in Africa are clearly witchcraft and magic. He paints a horrifying picture of these modern idolatrous practices by African people, Christians and


\textsuperscript{86} “Bungishabaku Katho is professor of Old Testament at Shalom University of Bunia in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where he was also previously the university president. He recently completed a commentary on the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations in the Africa Bible Commentary series (to be published by Zondervan). His PhD is from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Arica. Katho is a minister of the Church of the Brethren of the DRC and president of the denomination” (Katho 2017, 713).

\textsuperscript{87} “Jeremiah 2 belongs to the ‘the foe from the north’ unit (chapters 2–6) of the book. The general theme that runs through these five chapters is Judah’s unfaithfulness and Yahweh’s judgment to punish his people through an enemy coming from the north. ... The study of Jeremiah 2 is very important for us in Africa, for it shows how Israel started well with Yahweh only to end in apostasy” (Katho 2017, 714).

non-Christians alike: “The manifestation of the phenomena of magic and witchcraft in contemporary Africa is so endemic that one can, without risking any ambivalence, say that it is pathological. . . ."

Along with an initial abstract for this paper, I included a listing of topical “keywords”; we might close then with another catalogue of metonymic core terms that reference, or frame, some central themes from Deuteronomy 32–33 which Moses would want God’s people, the contemporary Church, to “remember”—also “today”: LORD-GOD, COVENANT, COMMUNITY, HOLINESS, UNITY, FIDELITY, INFIDELITY, GRACE, REBELLION, PUNISHMENT, FORGIVENESS, DELIVERANCE, VENGEANCE, VINDICATION, PROMISE, and BLESSING.

Or better, in conclusion, let us hear once more a stirring reminder—a passionate cue that is cautionary yet comforting—adopting the words of Moses himself, that great prophet and man of God (32:6, 7a; 33:26, 27a–c):

Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people?
Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?
Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past...

Rejoice, O nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people.

There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides on the heavens to help you...
the eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.
He will drive out your enemy before you...

REFERENCES


Book Reviews


Terry L. Cross’s latest work, Serving the People of God’s Presence: A Theology of Ministry, is a follow-up to his 2019 The People of God’s Presence: An Introduction to Ecclesiology in which he clearly articulates the doctrine of Christian ministry from a Pentecostal perspective. Cross acknowledges the difficulties in extrapolating a model of ministry from the Bible and gives a refreshingly humble disclaimer on p. 7: “To be sure, I am not suggesting that there is one biblically sanctioned model for church government and leadership.... I remain unconvinced that any particular governmental model is mandated biblically.” Cross’s primary modus operandi is closing the gap between the clergy-laity divide which has “misunderstood the nature of leading the people of God’s presence as well as the nature of ministry itself” and championing the New Testament paradigm of the entirety of God’s people doing the work of ministry. He qualifies this by adding, “To be clear, I will not propose doing away with traditional ministry itself but will rather propose retooling how it could be done.” Cross’s pleasantly short treatise is divided into six chapters which flesh out his pneumatic ecclesiology and corresponding doctrine of ministry.

Chapter 1 begins with a series of word studies on some of the major New Testament terms used for ministry and their derivatives. His general conclusion is that we cannot claim a definitive comprehension of the functional tasks associated with each of these ministry terms; rather, we must lean on the commendation to all believers that we have been entrusted with the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:18) and that all are commissioned by God the Father and enabled by God the Spirit through the impartation of spiritual gifts to share “the word of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:19). The chapter concludes by analyzing the role of priests in the old covenant, what changed in the priesthood with the Christ event and the pouring out of the Spirit, and the role of “priests” under the new covenant. Cross emphasizes that the NT places the emphasis on functions (through gifts) rather than named offices.

1 Cross’ earlier work is not essential to read before reading the book under review (I did not). He summarizes his earlier thesis in the introduction: “[T]he church is the people of God’s direct presence, who have been transformed by an encounter with God at a core level of their being — perhaps even a precognitive level.” Further, “Due to the central role that the presence of God the Spirit plays in connecting and communicating with God’s people, as well as establishing and maintaining the church, I have called this a pneumatic ecclesiology.”
Chapter 2 is a straightforward and accessible review of the development of the doctrine (and to a lesser extent, praxis) of ministry beginning with Clement of Rome and ending in the present day. Cross focuses on issues related to the clergy-laity divide discussed in chapter 1. He does not stray from his thesis with superfluous illustrations or incongruous parallels to marginal issues.

Chapter 3 firms up Cross’s foundation for his pneumatic ecclesiology. Cross reiterates that the clergy-laity divide is a constructed anthropocentric and un-biblical model of ministry and requalifies it by demonstrating the need for clearly defined leadership in the Church. Leadership’s primary responsibility is to lead through service, thereby avoiding derogating the priesthood of all believers. Cross bases his idea of ministry on the idea that it “is birthed out of the regenerative operation of the Spirit... and out of the gifts of the Spirit planted in us.” (p. 92). Because ministry is not an activity limited to some class of theological elites but is the work of all who have been regenerated and empowered by/in the Spirit, ministry is essentially an extension of the Christian life.

Chapter 4 shifts from the “what” and the “why” to the “how.” The Church must live with the tension of charismata and organizational structures existing side by side, in order to give ourselves fully to the ministry of the missio Dei in the world. Cross admonishes leaders not to be priests on behalf of their congregation but rather to train their congregation to be priests themselves. To this end, he discusses the significance (and validity) of ordination and authority in such a model as well as various models of servant leadership. Holistic ministry is the emphasis: praxis is necessary because “theology will forever remain amorphous and detached until it engages the challenges to the faith in all the variations of human existence” (p. 142).

Chapter 5 on women in ministry is predictably egalitarian. After a summary of the various positions on this divisive issue, Cross asks three questions: (1) Are there women in ministry and leadership in the NT? (2) Is there a created order of male headship and female submission? (3) How are we to understand the difficult passages in the NT on women’s roles? Cross’s sound inductive study through the Scriptures derives the egalitarian conclusion that women and men have equal value before God and appointment of women to leadership roles should be pragmatic. “Gifts, not gender, are the calling cards of the Spirit” (p. 186).

Finally, Chapter 6 draws out an implication of his thesis, discussing sacramentalism and the role of such practices within a Church that practices pneumatic ecclesiology.

Cross’s work is clear, concise, and a joy to read. His arguments are well-reasoned and easily followed. He does not spend too much time on tangential issues but sticks to his point. The book is carefully and cleverly structured to read almost like a series of lectures. Cross’s voice is clearly discernible and pleasant to “listen” to. Serving the People of God’s Presence also includes several helpful
charts and graphics for the visual learner or skimmer among us. There are several interesting excurses scattered throughout the work that examine less salient issues such as “The Origins of Christian Elders,” “The Laying on of Hands in the NT,” “Zwingli on Luther’s Doctrine of the Ubiquity of Christ’s Body,” and more.

This work would be most helpful and enjoyed by pastors, elders, and ministers. Indeed, if we are convinced by Cross, the book ought to be a refreshing and enlightening read for all those who have been encountered by the Spirit of God. I was raised in restoration movement churches and educated in a restoration movement Bible college; I am not a Pentecostal. However, in an era marked by division and tribalism in the world and the church we need a timely admonishment like Cross’s work now more than ever. Perhaps the unity that Cross proposes is exactly that unity prayed for by Jesus in the garden, the unity that exists for the purpose of showing the world that Jesus is sent and loved by the Father as we are loved by the Father.

Charles M. Davidson
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The author of this compact, but useful handbook, is Professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary. He focuses on commentary series rather than one-volume commentaries, preferring series with multiple authors. Gupta readily admits that this publication is not a comprehensive list. For that, he refers his readers to www.bestcommentaries.com. (p. 122, n. 1) Most of his endnotes are websites for the commentaries he discusses.

The first main section is Gupta’s opinion about 20 commentary series. For each series, he lists the series title, publisher, series editor(s), a brief description, its technical level, theological orientation, exegetical methods, and pricing. The three technical levels are: Technical, geared toward scholars, requiring training in Greek; Semi-Technical, academic discussion geared toward students and pastors with appeal to the Greek text; and Non-Technical, written for laypeople without seminary or theological education. Gupta modified the descriptors used by the Union Presbyterian Seminary Library for his description of the theological orientation of each series (p. 121, n. 1).

Section two is the heart of the handbook, containing Gupta’s commentary recommendations for each New Testament book. Given that the volumes within any series are hit and miss in terms of their quality, he recommends individual volumes for each book. He does not recommend any series for all of the New Testament books, though The New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT) and The New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC)
both make a pretty good showing. He groups his recommendations for each book under Technical, Semi-Technical, and Non-Technical. Within those recommendations, he highlights 1-3 commentaries that he suggests should be owned. He has also added *Hidden Gems*, commentaries that are not part of major commentary series.

Gupta’s listing for Romans, for example, gives five technical commentaries, four semi-technical ones, and three non-technical. He suggests one purchase geared toward scholars (Robert Jewett in *Hermeneia*) and two purchases for pastors (James Dunn in the *Word Biblical Commentary* [WBC] series and Douglas Moo in *NICNT*). The Hidden Gem for Romans is J. P. Burns, *Romans: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators*.

Unless a person is particularly nerdy, or preparing to write a review, they would look at Gupta’s list for a particular New Testament text to see what he recommends, rather than reading the whole list. My initial reaction was being somewhat underwhelmed, but the more I explore this handbook the more I have come to appreciate it as a resource. Fortunately for translators, three of the series from which he frequently makes recommendations are available in *Translator’s Workplace* (NICNT, NIGTC, and WBC). A bonus that I appreciated is a list of commentaries by women and people of color for each New Testament text, several of which also appear in section two. I would not overlook the appendices. Appendix 1 is “A Quick List of Recommended Commentaries,” and Appendix 2 is “German and French Commentary Series.” Since this is Gupta’s work, he deserves to have Appendix 3, “Nijay K. Gupta’s Commentaries and Reference Works.” All told, this is a handy little publication.

Arden G. Sanders
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This book contains 283 proverbs from the Tetela people of the southwestern part of the Peoples Democratic Republic of the Congo. A comparison of this collection of 283 proverbs with the 100 Tetela proverbs collected by Elysee Meta Okubo (on line) shows only four that are similar in both. This new collection of proverbs is welcomed for several reasons. First, it is a collection of proverbs chosen by people from the Tetela community, not by outsiders. This assures the reader that these are proverbs that the community feels are representative of their culture and their proverb traditions.

Secondly, the proverbs are presented in a much richer format than so many other collections. That is, each proverb is given first in its Tetela form, then a
fairly literal translation in English and in French. Then follows an explanation of the proverb in Tetela, English, and French. This amount of trilingual explanation is almost unknown in proverb studies. The usefulness of the explanations is illustrated by the following example. The literal translation is “The millet between two fields,” which is helpfully explained as “A child comes from a father and a mother” (p. 85).

A third reason to welcome this collection is that it is from the Peoples’ Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Belgian Congo, then Zaire). The scholarly world has very little published material available on proverbs of PDR Congo. Wolfgang Mieder’s 2011 *International Bibliography of Paremiography* lists no collections of proverbs from the PDR Congo. This is partially explained by the general lack of Belgian scholarly interest in their colony, in contrast to the greater scholarly interests of the French, British, and Italian in their African colonies, where the colonial scholars showed an interest that has been picked up by local scholars.

A fourth reason to welcome this book, and a growing tide of similar books, is that community members are collecting proverbs on their own and producing their own books. In the past, publishing collections of proverbs has been difficult, publishers sometimes requiring a subvention to cover costs. But now, a growing number of community scholars are taking the initiative to produce their own content and sell them on the web. They are using publishers that the academic world does not recognize as prestigious, but their works are being disseminated. There are now a variety of channels for ordinary people to advertise and sell their books on the web through print-on-demand businesses. This easy access to the book market greatly increases the number of proverb collections available, pleasing both the members of the language communities whose proverbs are made available, and also pleasing scholars.

A fifth reason to welcome this book is that it contains many wonderful and delightful proverbs. Anybody, whether they are familiar with Tetela culture or are a scholar, can enjoy many gems. Some of my favorites include:

“You do not eat your own meat with a dirty hand.” (p. 35)

“If someone gives you a hen, does he have to give you the means to protect it from the eagle?” (p. 40)

“The snoring of a sleeping lion frightens dogs.” (p. 48)

A sixth reason to rejoice at this book is that it is a contribution to the documentation of this rich genre of wisdom in Tetela. As many language communities lose some of the vitality of their oral traditions, community scholars compiling books like this should be welcomed and encouraged.

A seventh reason to welcome this book is that these Tetela proverbs, in comparison to many other collections, give the scholarly world examples of both familiar and less familiar patterns. For example, in parallel to the widespread
proverbs carrying the idea that truth comes out when people are drunk, e.g. *In vino veritas*, we find “Alcohol does not lie” (p. 71). Also, following the very common African pattern of a creature being quoted in a proverb, “Eating is good, but licking your fingers is even better,’ says the cockroach” (p. 46). We also find a structure that is very common across Africa (and in African-derived creole languages in the Caribbean), “One finger cannot X,” which in the Tetela form is “One finger cannot take a walnut.” (The species of the nut is not precise.)

In contrast to these familiar patterns, there are some proverbs that are notable for unfamiliar patterns. For example, many African proverbs do not reinforce the husband-wife marriage bond, but here we find “Your wife is more important than your brother or sister” (p. 95). Another point that is notable is the large number of specific plant and animal names that are found, names that the authors wisely simply transliterated rather than trying to explain or give technical names, e.g. “Jonga is strong because of its root,” and “The tree ‘Owala’ does not give fruits to the bush but to the roots” (p. 33).

As with any community, new proverbs are also being formed, such as “Even if you are smart, you have to recognize that mathematics is difficult” (p. 101).

Translating and explaining proverbs accurately but briefly is always a challenge for any proverb compiler. Some of the translations are not completely clear. This could have been improved by engaging a native speaker of English with skill in writing. But no collection of proverbs is ever translated to everyone’s satisfaction.

The authors mention that there are now Tetela community members living in Europe and North America. It is likely that this helped motivate them to produce this collection, passing on part of their heritage in languages that will speak to the next generation. Both Tetela people (in their traditional home area or abroad) and scholars will rejoice that this rich part of their tradition is now broadly available.

I hope that more community scholars from other parts of Africa and beyond take the time and effort—and it requires much of both—to compile such collections. Their bilingual translations and trilingual explanations can serve as a good example to those that follow.

Peter Unseth
Dallas International University


The Tiberian Hebrew accent system has enthralled some Hebrew scholars while perplexing others. Some Hebrew courses and grammars include them, but others omit them. Standalone treatments of the accents exist, but their limited
availability or level of complexity often render them inaccessible or impractical as introductions. In 2020, two books specifically dedicated to the Hebrew accents appeared. Zondervan published Mark Futato’s *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, a helpful handbook accessible to beginners. Sung Jin Park, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies and Dean of Asian Studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, aims *The Fundamentals of Hebrew Accents* at intermediate students, seeking to provide a helpful bridge between learning Hebrew syntax and textual criticism (p. xi). *The Fundamentals of Hebrew Accents* contains eight chapters, exercises, four appendices, a bibliography, a subject index, and a Scripture index. The chapters provide an overview, discussion of rules, and how they work to divide the text and provide clues for exegesis.

Chapter one introduces the Tiberian Hebrew accent system. Although Babylonian and Palestinian traditions exist, the Masoretes of Tiberias developed “the most comprehensive and sophisticated system” for vocalizing and accenting the biblical text (p. 2). The accents are part of a larger framework, including stichography, paragraphs, vowels, and marginal notes. Disjunctive accents “indicate stresses as well as phrasal divisions,” functioning as separators, while a conjunctive accent “normally functions to connect two disjunctives” (p. 2). Park focuses on the distinct graphemes and their accentual positions. For example, some accents fall on or under the stressed syllable, while prepositive accents precede the stress and postpositives appear after the stressed syllable.

Chapter two explores the “hierarchy and dichotomy rules” related to the dividing functions of disjunctives (p. 10). Following a model refined by James D. Price, Park presents a five-level hierarchy in which *Soph Pasuq* governs the largest realm, an entire verse, *Silluq* and *Atnach* govern the last and first sections of the major division within the verse, respectively, and accents of weaker ranks govern increasingly smaller sections (p. 12). The rules of dichotomy result in subdivisions of the text where a larger section is broken up “by other disjunctive accents of a grade below” like “a binary branching system” (p. 14). Park notes that disjunctives appearing in quick succession may create “a delay for a greater finale” rather than hard breaks (p. 20). He presents a method for diagramming the levels of separation indicated by disjunctives, based on M. B. Cohen’s appropriation of Mordecai Breuer’s model (p. 14–20). Chapters three and four discuss the phenomenon of accentual substitution, where certain disjunctive accents displace those normally expected in a given pattern (p. 23).

Chapter five focuses on conjunctives and “their connectivity preferences” (p. 53). Unlike disjunctives, conjunctives join words and “do not exhibit any hierarchical order” (p. 53). A limited number of conjunctives appear in a disjunctive domain (p. 53–54). Multiple conjunctives, while not hierarchical, follow certain sequences, while others can appear as successive duplicates (p. 54). Most accents allow up to three conjunctives, though some allow as many as six (p. 55). Park
also discusses secondary accents such as *Metheg*, which is added to an already accented word “to slow down the reading of the syllable either phonetically or musically” (p. 65).

In chapter six, Park considers several minor rules for accents, especially related to pronunciation. “Simplification” yields conjunctives when the proximity of disjunctives would have overly complicated the reading of the text (p. 74). “Division” replaces a conjunctive with a disjunctive in two-word phrases, particularly “in the domain of major disjunctives,” to guard exact pronunciation (p. 81–88).

Chapters seven and eight present the linguistic and exegetical importance of the accents. Although Park sees that accents often mark stress, he argues that “this cannot be their primary purpose,” given that over 22% of accents do not fall on the stressed syllable (p. 93). Park primarily sees “the divisions by accents” as “governed by prosodic representation” which usually coincides with “syntactic structure” (p. 112). *Silluq, Athnach, Little Zaqeph, and Rebia* are the “major delimiters” of the text, presenting a “performance structure in light of pausal duration in speech,” thus marking “the proper recitation of the text” (p. 115). The “correct reading of the text” serves to “help clarify ambiguous meanings, emphasize certain words or phrases, and create effect in biblical narrative” (p. 116). In Num 25:9, the initial conjunctive clarifies that the tally of people in Num 25:9 is 24,000 and not 20,004: וְּעֶשְּרֶה ֹ֖יםָא ֹֽלֶף ֹֽאֵֽרְבַּעֵ֣ה (p. 117). *Atnach’s* placement in Gen 1:21 conveys the idea that “God created / the sea monsters, GIGANTIC ones!”: ו י בְּרֵ֣אֶם גְּדֹלֵ֣יםָא אֱלֹהֵ֔יםָא תֹּנֵ֣ע (pp. 121–122). Dramatic effect usually portrays “quick actions without interruption” or skips “less important details of the narrative” (p. 125), such as Jonah 1:2–3 with its depiction of “God’s urgent command to go to Nineveh and Jonah’s scurrying escape,” marked with the major *Atnach* and *Silluq* accents (p. 127). The book concludes with four detailed appendices, discussing the development of Tiberian Hebrew, the three systems of accents, the accents of “the Three” (Job, Proverbs, and Psalms), and the functions of *Paseq* and *Maqqeph*.

Although the Hebrew accents have a reputation for complexity, Park succeeds in showing that students may profitably grasp the mechanics of the Tiberian Masoretic system and the help they offer for exegesis. *The Fundamentals of Hebrew Accents* is a carefully constructed resource that is well-suited for an intermediate Hebrew course or self-study. The book engages scholarship, argues convincingly, and provides clear examples in a succinct package that repays revisiting. Numerous charts and tables provide helpful summaries and references. Park also illustrates complex linguistic concepts with simple English sentences. The book’s length and features make *Fundamentals* more useful than a single chapter in a grammar, and more accessible than Israel Yeivin’s exhaustive *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*. Students who complete the exercises will gain experience diagramming the levels of division in the text and grow in their
anticipation of sequences and combinations of accents that may occur in the Hebrew text. This practice should produce greater familiarity with the accents and a better understanding of how they function to present the message of the text while also laying a foundation for a deeper study of the accents. If the book receives an update, the reviewer suggests an answer key for the exercises, especially in the interest of those pursuing self-study.

*Fundamentals* will equip students for further scholarly study of the accents and various theories of the Masoretic system. As Bible translators seek harmonious ways to express the text’s meaning and manner of communication in target languages, they should especially welcome a greater understanding of the prosodic and exegetical functions of the accents for clarifying, emphasizing, and creating drama. Park’s presentation of the “performance structure” function of the accents could also have implications for those working in oral Bible translation, as the accents guide the recitation of the text. This guidance could profitably inform the phrasing of a target language’s translation in a congruent manner, as translators consider how they might craft sequences and groupings of words and structures to similarly communicate the text’s meaning. All students of Biblical Hebrew will benefit from a better grasp of the Hebrew accents, and Park deserves thanks for providing a helpful tool to that end. Instructors should seriously consider requiring this book in intermediate to advanced courses.

Douglas Smith
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary


If you are like me, this book may not be what you thought from the title! Rather than a wide-ranging approach to linguistics and biblical studies, it almost exclusively focuses on the Greek New Testament (Hebrew and Aramaic are mentioned briefly in a chapter on ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου), and “linguistics” is predominantly Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). As my interests are Hebrew and Cognitive Linguistics, I found myself rather an outsider, but enjoyed the visit.

The book publishes ten essays presented at a 2016 colloquium on the intersection of linguistics and biblical studies. The first five are categorized as “linguistics,” but focus initially on the digital infrastructure needed to advance linguistic study. I appreciated the passionate plea for a collaborative “triple open” approach in Tan’s paper. First, open scholarship, to easily learn from others. Second, open data, where he focuses on the OpenText.org project to provide an
accessible shared corpus for New Testament Greek analysis. And third, open source software, enabling a worldwide community of scholars to generate their own labels and ask their own questions of the texts.

The following two essays go deeper into the OpenText.org project, with Land and Pang surveying its development, and Stevens giving an example of its use, sharing his experience as he attempts to analyze prominence through transitivity and word order patterns in Philippians. Whilst the tagging and visual displays available from OpenText within Logos have the potential to offer powerful time-saving when investigating grammatical features, he is frustrated by the current limitations of the search engines, requiring manual checking that undermines the overall usefulness.

Wishart’s essay on the future of New Testament lexicography gives a refreshingly wide discussion of semantic analysis, surveying various approaches and their critiques. He distinguishes decompositional approaches (such as componential analysis), which assume there are smaller building blocks creating word meaning; and relational semantics, which primarily sees word meaning arising from paradigmatic contrast. Wishart critiques componential analysis for its reliance on arbitrary metalanguage for its components, and its conflict with the holistic way we seem to actually perceive word meaning. His own proposal for NT lexicography is derived from Natural Language Processing (NLP), based on “distributional corpus analysis” and mathematical “word space models” (typically used on large corpora to determine patterns of similarity by converting words and their syntagmatic relations to multi-dimensional vectors). His particular approach for NT Greek creates a hierarchy of hypernyms and hyponyms to bring together both componential and distributional aspects. However, the proposal is weakened by the absence of any concrete examples, which would have made it easier to follow. Once again, the lack of a freely available large corpus of Hellenistic Greek stymies the overall method.

The first section ends with a very different paper from Fuller (“The Limits of Linguistics”), looking philosophically at linguistic biblical interpretation, and reminding readers that any such activity is “nuanced by the interpreter’s own horizons” (p. 138). He draws on Gadamer, Heidegger and Ricoeur to highlight areas where linguistic interpretation needs to be aware of hermeneutical concerns. First, he notes how the choice of text and the questions asked of it influence the answers that will be found. Second, the entanglement of the researcher with their own world, that is, their historical and temporal embeddedness, means any linguistic study “should be viewed as illuminating the interpreter’s own conceptual structure and existential possibilities, not just the text itself” (p. 134).

The final five essays are categorized as “translation and exegesis,” and open with Scott Berthiaume’s paper on key terms and the lexicon. He explores the
fascinating question as to how and why certain key terms used in Bible translation are adopted into wider society, whereas others remain tied to specific texts, or only within communities of users. I was interested to read his methodology for measuring community adoption of key terms, even in the midst of an active translation project, by comparing with journals written at the same time.

This is followed by Westfall’s paper defending the CEB choice to translate ὁ γιὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου as “the human one” rather than “the Son of Man.” She evaluates this phrase as it occurs in the New Testament and the parallel terms in the Old Testament to argue that these are idioms simply referring to humanity, not some kind of Messianic title. Using the formally equivalent phrase “the son of man” in translation, which is not natural English, is actually like a “false friend” and distorts the meaning. By contrast, “the human one” allows the reader to follow Jesus as he progressively constrains what this term means. Her discussion then introduces various translation theories, particularly Skopos theory, to clarify the purposes of the CEB, which include readability and understandability by those without a church background. This leads her to raise what was for me a new and fascinating wider question: to what extent is it legitimate for a translator to make a translation with a different purpose to the original text?

In the next essay, Porter surveys eight approaches to exegesis and notes both their dependence on traditional approaches to Greek grammar (where it is mentioned) and also that more modern approaches require little understanding of Greek at all. The overall tone is fairly dismissive of anything other than an SFL approach to Greek grammar. First, traditional grammar is weakened by its reliance on classical philology, which means NT Greek is often evaluated negatively by comparison, and by issues foisted onto Greek from the metalanguage, which tends towards prescriptive rather than descriptive grammar. Then he compares two modern approaches: his own (based on SFL) and the cognitive-functional approach typified by Stephen Levinsohn, of which he summarizes “the implications... outweigh the benefits” (p. 205). One of the questions raised for me by this essay is the degree to which cross-linguistic typology should shape analysis of NT Greek. Porter is concerned that cross-linguistic typology ‘generalises language usage to the point of not representing any language’ (p. 206), whereas SFL allows Greek criteria to be described without being “constrained” by categories of other languages. For me, being typologically informed is one of the greatest strengths of “modern” linguistics, helping to steer away from idiosyncratic approaches, especially to biblical languages which have often been treated as a special category.

The final two essays use linguistics to address specific exegetical problems. The first studies ἴνα clauses in Mark, arguing for its use in Mark 4:12 as epexegetical rather than introducing a purpose. Jesus does not speak in parables so that the outsiders might look but never perceive, but rather to “describe their plight aside from his pedagogic assistance” (p. 230). The last essay uses SFL to explore
the ideational meaning of 1 Corinthians 5 through statistical analysis of lexical-semantic and grammatical-semantic patterns.

Overall this collection is a generally interesting selection of papers exploring different aspects of New Testament linguistics and translation, covering infrastructure, specific applications, and some deeper philosophy. For me, the essays by Wishart (lexicography), Fuller (hermeneutics) and Berthiaume (key terms) had the most to contribute to a broader contemporary discussion, alongside the repeated call for open scholarship, open data, and open software to enable the ongoing conversation regarding “Linguistics and the Bible.”

Phil King
SIL International


This collection addresses the discourse structure of each book of the New Testament. The editor’s helpful introduction explains the history, major concepts, and methodological tools of discourse analysis [DA]. The 23 chapters each begin with a section on methodology and draw on a variety of approaches, such as SFL (e.g. Westfall on Hebrews), Longacre-style DA (e.g. Starwalt on 1 Peter), Relevance Theory (e.g. Pattemore on Revelation), or information structure (e.g. Levinsohn on Galatians). The variety of viewpoints—differing even about the goal of DA—is a strength and a potential weakness. The variation accurately reflects the diversity of opinion in the field, but as a result not every contribution will please each reader. Astute readers, however, may perceive the relative fruitfulness of different approaches.

Each essay is approximately 30 pages long, and thus the shorter NT books receive closer scrutiny. Some essays focus on sentence- or paragraph-level features (e.g. Varner on James). Others concentrate on composition-level questions, such as macrostructure (e.g. I. Allen on the Pastoral Epistles). There are many figures and charts in the text; in fact, Wendland (pp. 651–93) presents most of his observations of the Johannine Epistles in multi-page charts, nearly dispensing with prose.

I cannot detail all the essays, but here are some observations. Terry’s analysis of 1 Corinthians (pp. 225–57) is noteworthy for his discussion of the peak of the epistle in chapters 12–15 and its relationship to the opening thanksgiving in 1:4–9 (pp. 243–48), but he ultimately concludes that there are 10 separate discourses with no overarching macrostructure to unite them (pp. 228–29, 248), in spite of some careful structural devices (pp. 237–39).

Read-Heimerding (pp. 159–92) points out that one of the most important considerations about Acts is recognizing the literary structure of the book—
many commentators deny that there even is one—and analyzing it (pp. 164–65). Acts exists in more than one textual version, and Read-Heimerdinger, relying on her previous work, chooses Codex Bezae (D05) over the Alexandrian text favored by eclectic critical editions. She discusses connective particles (pp. 166–70) and word order (pp. 171–74), finding that only δέ and μὲν οὖν...δέ are used to open new units. She also makes an interesting observation about proper nouns: by default they occur with the article. Anarthrous occurrences draw attention to a character, such as “when he or she is brought into the story for the first time,” returns after an absence, or is highlighted for other contextual reasons (p. 190). Read-Heimerdinger’s structural analysis (pp. 178–82) focuses on dividing Acts into two halves each composed of two sections: the Apostles in Jerusalem and Judea (chs. 1–5) and in Samaria and the rest of Israel (chs. 6–12); Paul and Gentile nations (13:1–18:23) and his journey to Rome (18:24–28:31). The remainder of the essay then examines Acts 12:1–25 in detail (pp. 183–89). Instead of examining Acts 12, I wish that she had said more about choosing 18:24 (the introduction of Apollos) as the key division in the second half of the book.

Sherwood on Romans (pp. 193–223) follows a methodology similar to Semantic Structural Analysis to determine the connections between clauses and how they combine into larger structures. Most of his analysis is quite helpful, but it struck me as odd that he argues that Rom 1:16–11:36 is a sidebar intended only to preclude potential objections to Paul’s letter; Sherwood does not include this substantial section of the letter on the mainline of his analysis of the epistle (see Fig. 6.3, p. 202). The content of the opening verses and closing chapters of the epistle indicates that Paul is writing primarily with a “pragmatic main purpose (1:10, 13–15; 15:14–29); which is in a sense theologically motivated by Paul’s own main interest within the letter of providing his audience pastoral care (1:11–12; 12:1–15:13)” (pp. 222–23). Admittedly many exegetes have exalted 1:16–11:36 to the extent that their analysis has difficulty accommodating 15:14–16:27, but Sherwood may go too far in the opposite direction.

Scacewater on Ephesians (p. 331–60) is a good example of larger-level analysis, proceeding from paragraphs to larger units, culminating in a macrostructure, which is basically a thorough summary of the whole (p. 342). He supports this with a discussion of the linguistic features of each section, focusing on coherence as well as the general semantics and pragmatics of the text—so far as they can be determined. I particularly appreciated the observation that 5:21 “Submitting to one another...” belongs with the preceding section (not with 5:22–6:9) but simultaneously functions as a hinge to introduce the new material (pp. 353–55). I also liked the examination of 6:10–20 as a rhetorical peroratio for the letter, with “paratactic, punchy phrasing,” recapitulating “facts especially from chs. 1–3 but also some from chs. 4–6,” making an “urgent call to spiritual warfare, capping off the hortatory concerns” (p. 360).
This helpful volume will be indispensable for those interested in Greek discourse analysis, and most students of the New Testament will find at least parts of it quite useful.

Joshua L. Harper
Dallas International University


Jemar Tisby is an American author who specializes in studying history through the lens of race and religion. He is a current History PhD candidate at the University of Mississippi and he has his Master of Divinity from Reformed Theological Seminary. In *The Color of Compromise* (2019), Tisby has written about the shocking and perhaps largely unknown history of the American Church’s complicity in racism. He uses his background in Christian theology as well as his knowledge of history and patterns of racial relations to analyze historical decisions made by church leaders to compromise theology or to remain silent about racism and how this has shaped American race relations. Tisby's aim is to identify and clarify patterns from the past in order to break the mold and urge the American church to make different choices that will repair relationships in the multi-ethnic church and multi-ethnic America. He writes, "American history could have happened another way" (34). This book is a sobering look at mistakes made and the empowering choices that Christians have moving forward.

Tisby first introduces the purpose of the book and describes what it is and is not. He begins with the idea that race is a social construct and was therefore “made” (p. 26) and proceeds in the bulk of the work to give a multifaceted look into the history and evolution of the American church’s view on slavery, racism, and integration from before the Revolutionary War to the 21st century. Finally, he ends with a plea for change along with practical next steps and a word of encouragement and hope.

Tisby begins by informing his readers that he will take them through a historical survey of the American corporate Church's complicity and partnership with racism. He points out that as it is just a survey and only one book, he will by no means cover every facet of American history or perspective on this topic, but he is hoping to get the conversation started about how the American church can break ties with racism. Tisby presents evidence of the church’s complicity in the mistreatment of black people in America through colonization, through the Revolution, the Antebellum period and the Great Awakening, emancipation and the Reconstruction, and the Civil Rights movement as well as more recent events.
Tisby suggests that the first reconstruction after the Civil War was not supported enough by the church, which remained on the sidelines during the second reconstruction, the Civil Rights Movement. According to Tisby, we are in the third reconstruction now and he urges modern Christians to participate in Civil Rights activities. Tisby’s last chapter, titled “The Urgency of Now” (192), suggests many practical ways to participate now in Civil Rights.

One critique of the book could be Tisby’s lack of historical representation of events when the church did take a stand against slavery and racism. Tisby does not mention these instances often, perhaps because he assumes this history is already well-known. For example, many Christians participated in the underground railroad. Billy Graham personally took down stanchions dividing black and white people at one of his revivals. However, Tisby’s goal is to suggest that there is a side of history that we do not know. The American church did participate in anti-slavery and anti-racism movements, but not enough. Tisby highlights the church’s silence perhaps more often than it actually occurred, but his overarching point is that each time there was silence from the church, it communicated something: compliance. Tisby urges his readers to take a break from romanticizing the brief moments of anti-racism from the church and to carefully analyze the whole history of racism in America and the church’s role in it.

Tisby’s intended audience is anyone seeking to learn more about the complicated dichotomy of race relations in America today. As a white evangelical, I found this book to be an excellent resource as I try to figure out what my role is in racial reconciliation in the era of Black Lives Matter. Tisby provides suggestions for future actions as well as a long bibliography of potential resources and acknowledgements for anyone wanting to learn more about the history of the church and anti-racism movements. Written from a historical and specifically Christian perspective, this book would be excellent as a textbook in a classroom or used for church small group curriculum.

One idea that I took away from Tisby’s book is that erasing the past helps no one. As a Christian, I read the Bible in an attempt to learn from the mistakes of those who came before me in the faith. Lecrae, in the book’s foreword, points out that the Bible never hides the shameful or ugly actions of the people of God. In the same way, we cannot celebrate all aspects of America without addressing the shameful and ugly parts of our history as well. Everything that happened is what made America; we do not get to pick and choose which events make it into our history books and which events will affect our socio-political systems.

Tisby’s work could be supplemented profitably by a more holistic approach to Evangelicalism and race, as in Michael Emerson’s and Christian Smith’s Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America (Oxford University Press, 2000). Be the Bridge: Pursuing God’s Heart for Racial Reconciliation by Latasha Morrison (WaterBrook, 2019) is also an excellent resource that has a
similar perspective to Tisby but with a separate goal of advocating for reconciliation and forgiveness between white and black Americans. An organization based out of Dallas, Texas called We Are Threaded (2021) is also a tremendous resource for Christians who wonder what their role is in all of this. The founders of We Are Threaded are dedicated to helping Christians walk through racial reconciliation in a feasible way that is inspired by biblical truths. Researching this organization has provided me with countless more resources on the subject including small group curriculum to help me talk about race and the gospel with my peers. Among the many resources for thinking about this topic, Jemar Tisby adds unique insight to be valued.

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Religious liberty is today considered a natural right of individuals. Many attribute this consideration to Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke, who championed the idea of natural rights, and did so without explicit reliance on Christian tradition, even if the Scriptures made sparse appearances. Robert Louis Wilken is interested in demonstrating that, while Locke and others such as Philip Furneaux and James Madison “drew on a common fund of ideas circulating in eighteenth-century England and colonial America,” these ideas “were a part of an older inheritance….the provenance of their thinking is unmistakeable” (p. 187). Indeed, Wilken narrates masterfully how the idea of religious freedom originated among early Christians in the Roman empire, was developed by medieval thinkers, and matured within the tumultuous waters of the Reformation.

Under Roman persecution, Tertullian championed freedom of religion as a community privilege (not as individual belief) (pp. 12–13). He emphasized that no one can coerce belief. The lesser-known but eloquent Latin rhetorician Lactantius promoted and advanced these ideas (pp. 19–21). Both he and Tertullian provided the foundational ideas of religious freedom from which later writers constantly drew.

Constantine made Christianity a legal religion, thereby ending persecution, and mostly tolerated other religions. Emperor Theodosius I then decreed that all should practice Christianity, thereby marginalizing other religions. Thus, the persecuted became the intolerant. Church and state became bedfellows and had to define their relationship, especially in terms of power. Gelasius, fifth century bishop of Rome, declared the “two powers” doctrine, or as it was known during the Reformation, the “two swords.” Each power was sovereign in its own sphere (civil versus spiritual), but which sphere was superior became a theme throughout
the Middle Ages. Within these debates, an array of voices harmonized to develop several themes: (1) human beings are endowed with freedom; (2) religious freedom cannot be coerced; (3) conscience is a versatile and flexible concept; (4) the *corpus christianum* is ruled by two swords (p. 44).

Wilken opens chapter 3 with an observation that is programmatic for chapters 3–8, which focus on the struggle for religious freedom during the Reformation period in Germany, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, and in England. He observes, “In the sixteenth century, the fault line on religious liberty ran not between Catholics and Protestants but between those who ruled and those who were ruled” (p. 44). Power, then, was the main issue.

Wilken’s narrative thread runs mainly through the dissidents, whose consciences were being legislated against. Varying political situations provide the matrix through which one sees a multitude of responses. In Germany, the Lutherans and Catholics took turns persecuting each other, while the Anabaptists never had any power to persecute anyone. Luther had advocated two separate spheres of sovereignty, although his followers were more heavy-handed in compelling non-Protestants to practice the “right” religion.

In Switzerland, Ulrich Zwingli tied the church inseparably to the state: “The Christian city is none other than a Christian church” (p. 64). Since European cities had their own magistrates and, often, councils, each city could establish its own accepted religion, which would then be tolerant of or persecute other religions (that is, types of Christianity). Over and over, the story goes that, as a certain council or magistrate gained power, despite any previous pleas for religious toleration, they then expected everyone to fall in line.

The struggle between Reformed and Catholic was especially bloody in France as the Huguenots struggled for freedom of religious practice. Similarly, Reformed believers were executed in the Netherlands, where the Catholic Philip II was especially zealous to maintain only one religion in the nation. Dutch thinkers were prominent in defending not only individual conscience, but the rights of religious communities, and in defending liberty of conscience as a natural right (p. 117).

England’s situation was unique because of the rise of the Church of England. As the monarchy shifted between Catholicism and Protestantism, each had its turn in persecuting the other. In this context arose the separatists, who were especially adamant about their freedom to exercise their religion apart from the pope and the national church.

The final chapter explores the mid-seventeenth century, when the “world in which the Reformation was born lived only in memory” (p. 155). Distinct churches now co-existed within the same cities. Wilken devotes this chapter to the works of John Owen, William Penn, and John Locke, who accept that these distinct forms of Christianity must co-exist peaceably, although they still see a role for the magistrates to forbid certain forms of public worship, e.g., Catholic rites. Of
these great thinkers, only John Helwys stands out as arguing for universal freedom of conscience and religious exercise (p. 180–181).

Wilken’s book is wonderfully narrated. Zooming out to map the historical context and then zooming in on significant tracts, books, and events, he covers an impossibly large swath of history with adroit skill. Repeatedly, he demonstrates that later thinkers relied on early Christian ideas of religious freedom, such as that of Tertullian and Lactantius, even as those ideas were being transformed from being community-oriented to individually-oriented. His book in this regard is a success.

Wilken’s narrative does raise a few questions, though. First, were ideas about religious freedom being developed outside of Europe? He begins with the Roman empire and then telescopes to Europe in the Reformation. But what about the eastern empire and beyond? How did the Edict of Milan, the marriage between church and state, and the developing ideas of religious freedom effect these other regions outside of Europe?

Second, the author does well not to paint a “winner’s history,” but at the same time he focuses solely on influential thinkers or on those with city or state power. Sometimes these thinkers are “outliers”—Wilken’s term for Roger Williams, on whom he spends eleven pages, which is almost six percent of the book. But what about the average Christian—of any persuasion—and their thoughts of being caught in the middle? Wilken’s portrait could be enhanced by more social history, which could give a better idea of whether the major thinkers were outliers whose ideas just happened to catch on, or whether their ideas were representative of large groups of common folk, and how those common folk lived out their convictions.

Finally, the history told by Wilken seems rather Hegelian. Westerners are prone to agree and approve of the steady progress toward increasing freedom of expression for all religions, and indeed Wilken concludes the book by pointing especially to John Helwys who argued for such freedom. But is today’s Western pluralistic society the best relationship between church and state? Wilken certainly seems to believe so, but makes no normative argument other than presenting the calamities of using state power to persecute other Christians. If today’s pluralism is indeed the best situation for the church, Wilken’s book does not prove it. He does not aim to do so, but the narrative seems to imply it.

He does exceedingly well at what he aims to do: to demonstrate that today’s Western notions of religious freedom arise from a rich and long Christian tradition, forged under the trials of persecution, hammered out by the scholastics, and hardened by an array of intellectuals in the Reformation and beyond.

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