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Theology in Translation

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**Abstract:** Translation Studies as an academic discipline has been around for close to half a century, yet the theological dimension of translation has remained an under-explored territory, partly owning to the long-established secular-sacred divide that has turned the study of translation into a primarily secular enterprise. Yet, hidden underneath the most fundamental concepts of translation are theological presumptions that have too often gone on unnoticed and unchallenged. This paper thus offers a critical review of the current state of Translation Studies on this matter and especially of the secular-sacred divide, and then offers an introductory exploration of the theological dimension of translation in the cases of ideology and equivalence. It then particularly focuses on the theological dimension of Bible translation and its theories, taking Eugene Nida’s theory as a case study. Overall, it argues that theology plays an important role in translation and particularly in Bible translation, affecting not only its practice but also its theories. It hopes to draw more research efforts on this topic and thereby lead to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of translation.

**Keywords:** Theology, Translation, Nida, Ideology, Equivalence

Although translation has been practiced and theorized among human civilizations for thousands of years, the study of translation as an independent academic discipline known as Translation Studies (henceforth, TS) has emerged only since the late 1970s. Along with this emergence came an unprecedented surge of publications on a wide range of topics related to translation, and the study of translation went through at least three “turns,” from the “linguistic turn” in the 1970s to the “cultural turn” since the 1980s and to the “social and psychological turn” over the last decade (Gentzler 2008, 180). The interdisciplinary nature of translation has allowed the field of TS to expand continually beyond its traditional borders of linguistics and literary studies into the fields of anthropology, cultural studies, sociology, psychology, philosophy, computer science, political science, neuroscience, and more. As every human sphere of knowledge relies on translation in our globalized world, it is hard to imagine any academic discipline that cannot (or should not) collaborate with TS for mutual benefits. As Susan Bassnett and David Johnston observed:
What makes TS as an increasingly open discipline is that it both offers and traffics in key concepts rooted in the discourse of difference, simultaneity, contingency, mobility and hospitality, concepts whose continuous interplay serves to deepen, no less than expand, the scope of its enquiry and the value of its insights. If TS functions in any meaningful way, it is as the enriched palimpsest of the ideas and methods of writers and philosophers, of theorists and practitioners—from a range of disciplines—across time and space (2019, 181).

Such a description of TS as an open-minded, open-ended, all-embracing, and ever-expanding discipline is all the more significant when considered in the light of an apparent yet hitherto largely unaddressed phenomenon in TS scholarship. That is, since its birth in the late 1970s until now, TS has mostly developed as a secular discipline with secular theories, ideologies, and methodologies. In other words, TS, in both of its theoretical and practical aspects, apart from some interactions with the theories of Eugene Nida and Ernst-August Gutt, has mostly been separated from the religious realm, including the disciplines of theology, biblical studies, and religious studies.¹ To illustrate this separation, we may survey the three editions of Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies (RETS) (Baker 1998; Baker and Saldanha 2009; 2020), The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies (RHTS) (Millan and Bartrina 2013), the three editions of The Translation Studies Readers (TSR) (Venuti 2000, 2004, 2012), and the four volumes of Handbook of Translation Studies (HTS) (Gambier and Doorslaer 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). Table 1 below, based on the article titles and index entries of these authoritative works, shows the marginal status of theology and related subjects such as religion and sacred text in TS scholarship.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Publications</th>
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<td>Theology/-gical/-gians</td>
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<td>RETS (1998)</td>
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¹ Even though many religious scholars have argued that these religious disciplines have also been secularized in our modern time (D’Costa, 2005).
Table 1. Number of occurrences of certain key words in major publications of TS

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<tr>
<td>RHTS (2013)</td>
<td>No occurrence</td>
<td>No occurrence</td>
<td>One article title called ‘The Translation of Sacred Text’, and one index entry called ‘Sacred text’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSR (2000)</td>
<td>No occurrence</td>
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<td>TSR (2012)</td>
<td>No occurrence</td>
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<td>No occurrence</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTS Vol. 1 (2010)</td>
<td>No occurrence</td>
<td>One article titled “Religious translation”</td>
<td>One index entry titled “Sacred text(s) see Religious translation”</td>
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<td>HTS Vol. 2 (2011)</td>
<td>No occurrence</td>
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<td>HTS Vol. 3 (2012)</td>
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Admittedly, this divide between the secular and the religious seems perfectly normal when TS is compared with other secular disciplines of humanities such as linguistics, history, literature, or philosophy. But this divide is striking when considered in the context of the history of translation over the last two millennia, in the light of the fact that the religious realm was, for the most part, the fertile soil where both the practice and theory of translation had historically grown their roots, thrived, and produced their most influential fruits. For examples, one may consider the unparalleled influences of the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Tyndale Bible, the Luther Bible, the King James Version, and the Chinese Union Bible—the last three of these having profoundly changed the German, English, and Chinese languages, respectively. It is also worth pondering that the Bible is

² There is one index entry called “Sacred text(s),” but it refers to the same article in vol. 1 called “Religious translation.” There is also one index entry called “Religious translation,” but it also refers to the same article in vol. 1. The same applies to vol. 3 and 4.
the most translated book in the world, with at least portions having been translated into 3,495 languages as of 2021,\(^3\) not to mention the translation of numerous other kinds of religious texts throughout the ages and across human civilizations. Indeed, the history of translation is a testament to the fact that the study of religion and the study of translation belong together, for much of the theory and practice of translation has developed in religious contexts (DeJong and Tietz 2017, 1). Moreover, linguistically, philosophically, phenomenologically, and perhaps in other senses as well, translation and theology “are one in hermeneutic” (Robinson 1964, 518), as both involve interpretation as their core activity. Fundamental questions in translation such as equivalence and translatability are not only linguistic, cultural, or philosophical issues, but theological ones. Both secular and religious scholars have shown in their works that translation and theology have a much closer relationship than commonly understood (Steiner, 1989; Vanhoozer, 1998 and 2002). The Nobel laureate T.S. Eliot, who spent his whole life working in the secular realm of literature, once offered this critique to the state of literature in 1935:

> Literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint... What I do wish to affirm is that the whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call Secularism, that it is simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of, the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life (Eliot 1964, 343; 352).

In light of the above, this paper intends to present a critical review of the current divide between the secular and the non-secular in Translation Studies and explore the role of theology first in translation in general and secondly in Bible translation in particular. Let us begin with a closer look at this secular-and-non-secular divide.

**ON THE DIVIDE BETWEEN THE SECULAR AND NON-SECULAR**

As mentioned above, since its birth in the 1970s, TS has largely developed as a secular discipline separated from the discipline of theology and the field of Bible translation.\(^4\) This divide between the secular and the religious is characteristic of modernity, by which a secular realm was created in Western academia and society where a supposedly value-neutral, objective inquiry of knowledge

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\(^3\) According to Wycliffe Global Alliance: https://www.wycliffe.net/resources/statistics.

\(^4\) Ernst Wendland has been using the term "biblical translation studies" in reference to the field of Bible translation (2012a) in order to alert the scholars in the secular field of TS that there have been many others doing theoretical and practical work besides Eugene Nida and Ernst-August Gutt.
could be pursued, freed from religious interference.\textsuperscript{5} While the belief in such a purely “objective” inquiry of knowledge has been greatly weakened by post-modernism and other schools of thoughts especially in the second half of the twentieth century, the wall built up for centuries between the secular and the religious still remain in the secularized world and academy today. This conceptual and actual divide, however, is far from unproblematic and has been challenged by both theologians and non-theologians throughout the centuries, as briefly surveyed below.\textsuperscript{6}

For Augustine of Hippo, according to his classic \textit{The City of God}, the course of human history is a struggle between two communities: the earthly city of Man and the heavenly city of God. Thus, all human culture is to be interpreted as either aiding or hindering the progress of the city of God and there is no “neutral ground” in between. This reflects the biblical account that man can either serve God or idols, not both, for “No one can serve two masters” (Matt 6:24). Moreover, in a world divided by two opposing communities, “No one can serve \textit{no} masters” either.\textsuperscript{7} This dichotomous worldview, though radical as it may seem, has been widely shared by orthodox Jews and Christians throughout the ages as the traditional biblical worldview. Thus, when literary scholar C. S. Lewis wrote: “There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square inch, every split second is claimed by God, and counterclaimed by Satan” (1967, 33), he was not being dramatic but simply reiterating the traditional worldview of Judaism and Christianity. The concept of a secular “neutral ground” where all religious elements can be excluded is a product of the Enlightenment, foreign to both traditions.

For Abraham Kuyper, an influential theologian and Prime Minister of the Netherlands between 1901 and 1905, the dichotomy between sacred and secular is illegitimate, for no human activity is religiously neutral. To him, culture is not viewed as something neutral and non-theological but inherently religious. Moreover, he maintained that “it is the interpretation of our relation to God which dominates every general life system” (1931, 24). For Herman Dooyeweerd, a professor of law and a Christian philosopher, the roots of culture are always religious and every culture is animated by a religious “ground motive,” which is either God-affirming or God-denying. For this reason, he believed that these ground motives are the “hermeneutic keys of understanding and interpreting periods and patterns of history and culture” (1979, x). For the Nobel laureate T. S.

\textsuperscript{5} For an account of this history, see Frame 2015 and Milbank 1990.

\textsuperscript{6} Even in natural sciences, “objectivity” has been called into question (Frame 2015, 480–487). Thomas Kuhn has argued that all scientific observations are theory-laden and are not value-neutral: “An apparently arbitrary element, compounded of personal and historical accident, is always a formative ingredient of the beliefs espoused by a given scientific community at a given time” (1970, 4).

\textsuperscript{7} All Bible verses in this article are quoted from the English Standard Version (2001) unless otherwise noted.
Eliot, culture and religion are nearly synonymous. In his *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, he suggested that culture and religion are “different aspects of the same thing: the culture being, essentially, the incarnation (so to speak) of the religion of a people” (1948, 28). To him, culture is lived religion, for “behavior is also belief” (32). For Paul Tillich, the theologian who produced perhaps the most comprehensive theology of culture in the twentieth century, culture is essentially religious, and being human is fundamentally a religious enterprise because human beings cannot escape the anxieties of death, guilt, and meaninglessness, all of which provoke religious questions. Consequently, to Tillich, “religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion... He who can read the style of a culture can discover its ultimate concern, its religious substance” (1959, 7).

For John Milbank, the founding theologian of the theological movement known as Radical Orthodoxy, “once, there was no ‘secular,’” and “the secular as a domain had to be instituted or imagined, both in theory and in practice” (1990, 9). In no uncertain terms, Milbank critiqued the secular *episteme* as “a post-Christian paganism,” as “a refusal of Christianity and the invention of an ‘Anti-Christianity’” (280). Thus, instead of being a value-neutral sphere based on pure, unbiased reason, the secular world is depicted as “a very prejudiced way of organizing our world and our thinking,” a way that is “full of undisclosed value judgements,” seeking to “impose its will upon us, and exclude all other ways of being in and valuing the world” (Shakespeare 2007, 9). Thus, to Milbank, secularization is not a neutral process in which the religious is simply replaced by science and reason; rather, it is a political movement “based on a leap of faith” (9) and driven by “the authoritative pronouncements of worldly powers who find it convenient to relegate religious claims to the private realm” (9). Secularism is said to have been defining and constructing the world for centuries and is “a world in which the theological is either discredited or turned into harmless leisure-time activity of private commitment” (Milbank, Pickstock and Ward 1999, 1). Likewise, secular liberalism is regarded not as a scientifically based, objective view of the world but “an alternative religion,” a religion which “cannot exist peacefully with Christianity, because it offers a fundamentally different vision of the world” (Shakespeare 2007, 9).

Similar to Milbank, Kevin Vanhoozer, a theologian known for his works on theology and hermeneutics, contends that secular literary theories are “bound up with the modification or the rejection of orthodox Christian positions” and are “theologies or antitheologies in disguise” (2002, 209). Extending this view to culture, he, like all the writers mentioned above, sees culture as “the fruit of a theology or a worldview” and as “a ‘religious’ text that calls for theological interpretation” (326). In fact, he devoted his seminal work *Is There a Meaning in This
Text? (1998) just to answer one seemingly simple question (“Is there a meaning in this text?”) and shows that this question is a “thoroughly theological question” because behind it “lurks philosophical and theological issues that are all too often overlooked” (1998, 29). In both Is There a Meaning and First Theology (2002), he extensively demonstrates that just as theology has an interpretive dimension, interpretation also has a theological dimension. Surprisingly, even a non-theologian, the eminent literary scholar George Steiner, came to a similar conclusion and proposed “that any coherent understanding of what language is and how languages performs, any coherent account of the capacity of human speech to communicate meaning and feeling is, in the final analysis, underwritten by the assumption of God’s presence” (1989, 3). Steiner asserted, “The questions: ‘What is poetry, music, art?’ [and] ‘How can they act upon us and how do we interpret their action?’ are, ultimately, theological questions” (227).

Common to all the thinkers surveyed above is the belief that there is no such thing as a purely secular realm, for no one is without certain religious or theological concepts and completely free from the influences of those concepts. While the extent of this influence is yet to be fully explored, a considerable amount of work has been done by scholars such as Milbank, Vanhoozer, and Gavin D’Costa (2005) to uncover the hidden theological dimension of the secular realm and its secular theories. This idea has tremendous implications for TS. For if these scholars are right, even only to a certain extent, this means that there is a theological dimension of translation that has remained mostly unexplored by TS scholars. If literature and literary theory, society and social theory, and culture and cultural theory all have a theological dimension, as many scholars have argued (see e.g., Frame 2015, 512–561), translation and its theories certainly cannot be an exception, especially because much of translation theory has been influenced not only by linguistic, literary, and philosophical theories but also by social and cultural theories (Munday 2016, 197–273), especially since TS’s “cultural turn” and “social turn.” While a full study of the theological dimension of translation is beyond the scope of the present study, two aspects of this dimension will be briefly explored next.

IDEOLOGY IN THE THEOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF TRANSLATION

Through the “cultural turn” in the 1980s and the “social and psychological turn” in recent decades, TS scholars have increasingly realized that translation could

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9 It is partly based on Vanhoozer’s works that the present study proposes to explore the theological dimension of translation. If Vanhoozer is right that to inquire about meaning in a text is a thoroughly theological task, translation, an activity that inextricably involves the interpretation of the meaning of a text, must be a thoroughly theological task as well. Yet, this theological dimension has not been explored in TS so far.
not be fully understood without considering the larger social and psychological dimension of translation, including ideology. TS scholars now commonly acknowledge that no translator is ideology-free, and every translation is bound to be influenced by certain ideology (Pérez 2014, 7). In this light, the concept of norms (Toury 1985/2012; Chesterman 2016) and narrative (Baker 2006) in TS can all be considered as conceptual tools for exploring the ideological dimension of translation (Lee 2020). This ideological dimension, certainly, appears in many different forms, as described by María Calzada Pérez:

In sum, translators translate according to the ideological setting in which they learn and perform their tasks... Feminists, functionalists, descriptive and polysystemic scholars, sociolinguistic researchers, postcolonial exegetes, corpus studies propounders, critical linguistic theorists, gay and lesbian academics, semioticians, contrastive linguists embody some of the very many “ideologies” that make up TS (Pérez 2014, 7).

This ideological dimension of translation is related to theology in at least two ways. First, just as no one is ideology-free, it can certainly be argued that no one is theology-free. If theology is characterized broadly as certain concepts about God, everyone has a theology, i.e., everyone has certain concepts about God, including atheistic or agnostic concepts. Even with people who do not have explicit concept about God, they still have a certain worldview, i.e., an interpretation of the world and humanity that involves questions about the origin of the world, the meaning of life, afterlife, and so on that implicitly presupposes the existence or non-existence of God. For example, Buddhism is essentially atheistic or non-theistic, for it denies the existence of a creator God (Keown 1996, 5). Thus, it can be said that Buddhism holds an atheistic concept or espouses an atheistic theology. In contrast, although Confucianism is commonly characterized as a social and ethical philosophy rather than a religion, Confucius did believe in the existence of heaven and gods and can be said to hold a certain theistic theology. This inevitable theological dimension of human worldview is widely recognized by religious scholars, as education scholar David W. Anderson wrote, “Whether consciously or unconsciously formed, good or bad, theistic or humanistic, everyone has a theology or worldview which shapes their lives. Even an atheist or agnostic can be said to have a theology, or an attitude or perspective on God” (2012, 47).

Second, theology characterized as certain concepts about God can be argued as one of, if not the most influential meta-ideology that informs all other concepts

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10 For example, see Pérez 2014. The term ideology in translation studies is more often defined as “a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class” (Eagleton 1991, 1) with an emphasis on normativity (Lee 2020, 252).

11 This view is similarly expressed by John H. Walton (2017, 44) and David S. Dockery (2000, 5).
of a person. For whether one believes in a God who created all things and to whom he needs to answer, that belief will to a certain extent inform all his other beliefs. This phenomenon is reflected in a quote often attributed to Fyodor Dostoyevsky: “If there is no God, then everything is permitted” (Vanhoozer 1998, 368). Mike Huckabee and John Perry put it this way: “If there is a God, there are absolutes. If there is no God and no absolutes, then nothing is always right and nothing is always wrong” (2007, 122). While many would challenge the notion that a moral standard depends on belief in God, the above sentiments do point to the pervasive influence certain beliefs about God can have on a person’s overall thinking and actions, even as Roy A. Clouser wrote:

As a result of investigating religious belief and its influences for almost fifty years, I have become convinced that...religious belief is the most powerful and influential belief in the world...religious belief has the single most decisive influence on everyone's understanding of the major issues of life ranging across the entire spectrum of human experience (Clouser 2005, 1).

Similarly, Charles H. H. Scobie wrote that “religion deals with the deepest and most basic questions of human existence: the meaning and purpose of life, relations with a divine presence and power, inter-personal relations, and ultimate human destiny” (Storm 1996, 144). This may be illustrated by two figures below:

![Figure 1: The Scopes of Concepts/Ideologies](image)

In these figures the word concept is used, but it can also be replaced by stronger words such as belief or ideology.
While there are certainly limitations and exceptions, these two figures show how in terms of scope (Figure 1) and foundational significance (Figure 2), one’s concept of God may be considered as the most encompassing and foundational concept of a person, as stated by A. W. Tozer: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion” (1978, 1). Whether one agrees with this statement or not, it is clear that when theology is simply characterized as certain concepts about God, no one is without a theology, and one’s theology inevitably influences one’s worldview, ideologies, and actions.

However, largely because of the divide between the secular and non-secular mentioned in the beginning, theology as one important “ideology” has so far been almost entirely omitted in TS scholarship. This has had at least four consequences. First, this omission of the consideration of theology in TS has perpetuated the appearance and conception that TS is somehow without religious or theological presuppositions, which, to many scholars today, is merely modernity’s illusion, i.e., that there is such a thing as a “purely secular realm” or a religious “neutral ground.” Second, as the next section will demonstrate, this omission has allowed hidden theological presuppositions embedded in translation theories to go on undetected and unquestioned, one of the most conspicuous examples being the rising trend of deconstructionist theory in TS in recent years, which essentially espouses an anti-theology ideology. Third, this omission has rendered the study of ideology in TS inadequate and sometimes misleading, for it is missing an important portion of people’s actual worldview, and when the religious or theological dimension of translation does receive some attention, it is often examined not through the lens of theology itself but through the lenses of secular ideologies such as feminism and post-colonialism, which often result in a slanted portrayal of the theological dimension. Fourth, even though a tremendous amount of
scholarship on hermeneutics or interpretation has been done in the field of theology and its related fields, and even though hermeneutics or interpretation is arguably the most central subject to both the theory and practice of translation, TS has generally not availed itself of such a rich scholarly resource so far.

**Equivalence in the Theological Dimension of Translation**

Another area which has a great potential for theological exploration and is also influenced by ideology is the concept of equivalence. Equivalence is arguably the most foundational concept in the theory and practice of translation. However, to many TS scholars influenced by various modern and postmodern ideologies, equivalence is now often spoken of as an “illusion” (Pym 2010, 165; Snell-Hornby 1995), and meaning is often construed as “fleeting and inherently unstable...not amenable to replication, whether in the same or another language” (Kenny 2009, 96).

While it is easily understandable that the degree of equivalence of meaning between words in different languages always varies and perfect equivalence in the sense of completely identical semantic domain is probably rare, calling equivalence an “illusion” reflects more of an ideological belief than a scientifically and empirically-proven reality. For one, to arrive at such a universal conclusion of the nature of equivalence, logically, one has to have studied all the words in all the languages in the world and compared all their meanings in all possible usages, which obviously is an impossible task. Moreover, to make such a universal claim is to make a metaphysical and theological statement about the nature of meaning. What is meaning? Who or what has the authority to decide the meaning of a text—authorial intention, interpretative communities, extra-textual morality, or something else? As Vanhoozer has argued (1998), all of these are eventually theological questions because they deal with the question whether or not there is an ultimate interpretative authority in this universe.

However, under the influence of this ideological concept of equivalence, it has become increasingly difficult for TS scholars to define what “translation” is, for if equivalence is but an illusion, translation must also be no more than an illusion, and as such, it can be defined in any way one chooses to, as exemplified by a recent view on translation promoted as a “new paradigm”:

[T]ranslation has become a fecund and frequent metaphor for our intercultural world... We welcome new concepts that speak about translation and hope to reshape translation discourse within these new terms and ideas. To

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13 Dorothy Kenny identified two particular influences as post-structuralism and the philosophy of Willard V. Quine (1960) and Donald Davidson (1973/2001). See Kenny 2009, 96.

14 Or, in the word of Anthony Pym, a “drunken boat” (2010, 159), “that is driven to and fro on the seas of meaning by the winds of personal opinion, caprice, or concerns that may have nothing at all to do with the original [source text]” (Wendland 2012a, 98).
achieve this goal, we must go beyond the traditional borders of the discipline, and even beyond interdisciplinary studies... In an epistemological sphere it becomes less important to distinguish and define clearly what translation is and what it is not, what stands inside the borders of translation and what stands outside (Arduini and Nergaard 2011, 8–10).

One may ask, as did Bible translation scholar Ernst Wendland, if this notion of translation within this “new paradigm” actually means anything “other than some sort of general sociocultural transformation as viewed from the perspective of a certain individual’s (or group’s) ‘rhizomatic’ reconceptualization” (2012, 449). This postmodern, poststructuralist, deconstructionist trend among TS theories—where there is no fixed meaning in text, but only a variety of meanings created by the readers—is not surprising because TS theorists have for decades imported ideas from philosophical ideologies. As the previous section has shown, underlying these ideologies are often certain theological presuppositions, so far unexplored by TS scholars. As Vanhoozer has argued that the question of meaning in a text is a thoroughly theological question, the question of equivalence (of meaning) in translation certainly can be seen in the same way. In fact, one can argue that language has a theological dimension because questions about its universal origin, nature, essence, rules, functions, and purposes all presuppose a certain view of the world, reality, mankind, and God, and therefore are not only metaphysical but also theological questions.

This view of language is fully demonstrated by the mathematician-turned-theologian Vern Poythress, who in his book In the Beginning Was the Word (2009) comprehensively lays out what he considers a biblical approach to language, which is to view it as a reflection of God’s own being (cf. John 1:1), as a major way of his working, and as God’s gift to mankind (as part of the Imago Dei) for humans to understand and communicate with God and with one another. As such, human language is a mirror not only of God’s own language but also of his own being and action; is one necessary means for fulfilling God’s purpose in creating man; embodies God’s attributes; and has inbuilt rules designed by God for its various functions. According to Poythress, non-biblical views of language are those that assume that “language and communication are purely human, that is, that God either does not exist or that he can be factored out of the picture” (38). As such, they offer different explanations of language and formulate different rules about its use that are often antithetical to biblical views (303–390). Without a God who has the ultimate authority to decide its meaning and without a God-given purpose for its existence, language can be defined, theorized, deconstructed, and appropriated in many different ways. Among these, deconstructionists’ views of language are perhaps the best examples of non-biblical views, for many of the deconstructionist beliefs such as “there is nothing outside the
text,” “the author is dead,” and “there can be no final signified, even God as a final Signified” (370–382) are overtly metaphysical-theological beliefs that presuppose a world where God either does not exist or has no involvement with language.15 Wendland, as one who has spent his academic career in the field of Bible translation, highlighted the antithesis between biblical and non-biblical approaches to translation when he wrote:

I must admit that I had to scratch my head in the search for relevance as I read [about]...“modern philosophical approaches to translation that have sought out the essence of (general literary) translation”... I found little of significance that I could either apply or meaningfully relate to the specific field of Bible translation (Wendland 2012b, 444).

The non-biblical views of translation are incompatible to biblical ones because essentially they come from two different kinds of theologies. This illustrates the theological dimension of translation that awaits further exploration.

THEOLOGY IN BIBLE TRANSLATION

Theology influences Bible translation from beginning to end (Ogden 2002, 312). Since this phenomenon has been firmly acknowledged by the 2002 July issue of The Bible Translator and elsewhere (Arichea 1990), this section will just give a brief introduction to this subject and then focus on the influence of theology on Bible translation theories.

The Theological Nature of Bible Translation

First, theology influences Bible translation because translation always involves certain amount of interpretation, and in the case of Bible translation, interpretation inevitably becomes theological interpretation because the Bible is a theological book in the sense that it is a book that explicitly proclaims itself to be the Word of God (2 Tim 3:16). For example, as Vanhoozer wrote, one’s view of God will influence “which biblical statements about God one considers literal and which statements one takes as figurative” (2005, 21). Thus, even before one takes up the task of translating the Bible, one already needs to decide on his view toward the Bible: is it merely a human book, or truly a book inspired by God? There is no escape to this question. This question certainly also leads to the more fundamental question of whether God exists or not. As the previous section has shown, however one answers these two questions, even unconsciously, one’s views will inevitably become the theological foundation or meta-ideology

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15 For a detailed analysis of this interpretation, see Vanhoozer 1998 and 2002 and Poythress 2009.
(see Figures 1 and 2 above) that informs all one’s other thinking about Bible translation. In this sense, an atheistic view of the Bible will become as much a *theological* foundation to all his other thinking as a theistic view will.

Following the question of whether the Bible is inspired by God, there are many more *theological* questions that need to be answered that are related to the inspiration and authority of the Bible. For example, what does it mean to say that the Bible is inspired by God? Does divine inspiration apply to just the message or to every word? Does divine inspiration mean that the Bible is inerrant? What does biblical inerrancy mean? What role do the human authors play? Are all the words in the Bible equally inspired or are some more than others? The questions go on and on. Bible scholar D. A. Carson rightly commented that “few topics touch more issues than the topic of biblical authority” and, as an illustration, listed twenty-two related issues, each of which has its own hotly debated “conceptual minefield” (2016, xv). These are just some of the questions about the nature of the Bible that a Bible translator will inevitably face, and all of these will likely influence how one translates. Moreover, all of these questions are not easy to answer because they are *theological* questions which inevitably lead to many other questions about God himself. However one answers or views these questions, whether consciously or unconsciously, the result will become the ideological foundation or conceptual framework of one’s translation work.

Besides the nature of the Bible, there are also questions about the Bible’s intended function. How is the Bible supposed to be used? Is it supposed to be used as a book for historical inquiries, moral teachings, doctrinal formulations, personal devotions, or other purposes? Historically, there are at least two contrasting views on the Bible as either an indispensable witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, or as a symbol of sacred authority able to settle all theological, legal, and ethical disputes (Peng 2019, 805). Early Christians believed that both the Jewish Scriptures and the New Testament books were indispensable witnesses to Jesus. Therefore, even long before the New Testament was officially canonized in AD 397, it had been translated from Greek along with the Hebrew Scriptures into different languages such as Latin, Syriac, and Coptic. This stands in sharp contrast with Muslim views of the Koran and the Medieval Catholic view of the Bible. When the Bible was viewed less as an indispensable witness to the gospel but more as a symbol of authority during the Middle Ages, this new role of the Bible demanded a standard text (the Latin Vulgate) accessible only to ecclesiastical authorities. Thus, for hundreds of years, Bible translation was prohibited, and William Tyndale was infamously burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English. This illustrates how different views about the Bible’s function can lead to very different attitudes about Bible translation.
Bible Translation Theories

Besides answering theological questions about the authorship, the nature, and the function of the Bible, Bible translators also need to decide how the Bible should be translated, which concerns Bible translation theories. This is fundamentally a question about how the Bible should be communicated, which involves a theology of divine-human communication. On this point Eugene Nida rightly said that “the arguments about literal or free translations reflected theological presuppositions more than linguistic concerns” (2001, 108). The choice of a more literal or freer style in translating the Bible reflects not only linguistic preference but also theological beliefs about divine-human communication. Nida explains this in his book Message and Mission by comparing the relationship between religion (religious communication) and theology to the relationship between language and grammar: theology is “the grammar of religion” or “the grammar of religious communication” because theology provides the basic rules for religious communication, just as grammar provides the basic rules for linguistic communication (1975, 19). Thus, according to Nida, theology defines the presuppositions of religious communication “in terms of (1) the nature and role of the participants, (2) the historical basis of communication, (3) the techniques of communication, and (4) the validated content of communication” (19).

Nida’s observation above is significant, for it confirms that both Bible translation and its theories are inevitably shaped by theology. Nida’s own dynamic/functional equivalence theory (henceforth, DE theory) provides a good case study. Although Nida talked relatively little about theology in his three most well-known books on DE theory (1964, 1969, 1986), a survey of his God’s Word in Man’s Language (1952), Message and Mission (1960/1975), and Fascinated by Languages (2003) reveals many of his theological presuppositions about Bible translation, which constituted his “theology of Bible translation.” For example, in a section called “A Biblical View of Communication” in his Message and Mission, Nida revealed many of his theological beliefs for what a “biblical view of communication” is. One of these is:

Verbal symbols are only “labels” and are of human origin. The meaning of the account of Adam giving names to all the [animals]...is primarily that language is a human convention and that the words used are essentially labels, not divine epithets (Nida 1975, 224, italics original).

This view of language is a theological position that differs from Poythress’

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16 The importance of studying the “theology of Bible translation” was called forth by Heber F. Peacock and Barclay M. Newman in the 1981 issue of Current Trends in Scripture Translation (Newman 1981; Peacock 1981). Also see Pattemore 2011, 236–237. This subject, however, has not been sufficiently taken up since (Blumczynski 2006, 23–24).
view of language mentioned earlier. According to Poythress, God, not Adam, was the first one who spoke in Genesis 1, for the first recorded act of speech was God’s calling things into being. Therefore, language is of divine origin, and man’s ability to speak is actually a reflection of God’s image, in which man was created (2009, 29). Moreover, according to Poythress, language was not only God’s act but God’s being, for “in the beginning was the Word…and the Word was God” (John 1.1). Thus, the trinitarian character of God is closely related to language and is “the deepest starting point for understanding language” (17). Poythress explained:

The eternal Word in John 1.1 is analogically related to the creational words that God spoke in calling the world into existence in Genesis 1, and to the words of Scripture, which are the word of God (2 Tim 3.16). All three of these—eternal Word, creational words, and the Bible—are forms of the word of God. The latter two both make manifest the wisdom of God that has its source in the eternal Word (Col 2.3; 1 Cor 1.30)... Calling [Christ] “the Word” indicates a relation between the Trinitarian character of God and language... God the Father is the speaker, God the Son is the speech, and God the Spirit is the breath carrying the speech to its destination [and] also the power who brings about its effects (Poythress 2009, 20–21).

Without further examining these two positions, it suffices our purpose here to point out that Nida and Poythress have expressed two very different theological views concerning the origin and nature of language and how religious communication works, which inevitably result in two very different views on how the Bible should be translated, as seen in Poythress’ articles on translation where he clearly disagreed with certain aspects of the dynamic or functional equivalence translation theory developed by Nida (2005, 2012).

Another theological view of Nida on language is that

Language symbols reflect a meaningful relationship between symbol and behavior... There is no attempt made in the Scriptures to distinguish between the symbolic form and the referent for which it stands... The focus of the Biblical revelation is the event. God is revealed as one who acts, speaks, and performs miracles, but He does not describe His essence... Language is thus a set of symbols to describe behavior, not a mystical code to the eternal essence (Nida 1975, 224).

A number of contestable theological positions are found here also. It is certainly a theological interpretation that there is no attempt made in the Scriptures to distinguish between the symbolic form and the referent for which it stands. One can certainly argue that this interpretation is contrary to the myriad cases of types, symbols, figures, and parables in the Bible, all of which clearly distinguish between the symbolic forms and their referents. Furthermore, Jesus
clearly drew a distinction between the Scriptures and himself, as what may be called the “ultimate symbolic form” (the Scriptures) and the “ultimate referent” (himself). Thus Jesus rebuked the Pharisees: “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life” (John 5:39–40)—here Jesus made a clear distinction between the Bible as the symbolic form that refers to him, and himself as the referent. Accompanying his two confused disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus similarly, “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets...interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27), and later said, “everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (v. 44). Although the name of Jesus was never explicitly mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, here he interpreted the Hebrew Bible to show his disciples how the entire Hebrew Bible actually spoke concerning himself—which is another example showing a clear distinction between the symbolic form and the referent. Similarly, Nida’s statement that the Bible does not reveal or describe God’s essence and that “language is thus a set of symbols to describe behavior, not a mystical code to the eternal essence” is another example of his theological position, which may be challenged by biblical proclamations such as “God is Spirit” (John 4:24), “God is light” (1 John 1:5), “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16), and many passages that show that God is holy, righteous, kind, etc., all of which point to God’s nature or essence, not just behavior.

Perhaps the most controversial theological position of Nida was revealed in this statement:

Men have been confused about the issue of the authority of revelation. For one thing, they seemed to think that some doctrine of infallibility confirms the authority of the Bible, rather than realizing that God as the author of revelation is its real authority. Our faith, then, does not rest in any system of exegesis, but in God, who has chosen to reveal Himself in the imperfections of human language (Nida 1975, 228).

In his most influential work The Theory and Practice of Translation (1969, 101), he put forth his position more strongly under the heading “Wrong theological presuppositions”:

17 Jesus’ words that “[t]he words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63) and Paul’s words that “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor 3:6) can be interpreted as other examples highlighting this distinction.

18 Nida went on to say, “In this sense the Biblical view of epistemology is striking contemporary, for symbols are being more and more viewed in terms of their functional relationships, rather than on the basis of any hidden conceptual reality” (224). This seems to be Nida’s effort to downplay the referents and exalt “functions,” thus paving the way for his DE theory. A “functional” theory includes the “referential function” which designates semantic content; but the biblical, or any literary, text conveys more than content per se.
Some Christians, both national and foreign, tend to adopt a view of the Scriptures which is more in keeping with the tenets of Islam than with the Biblical view of translation, for they regard the Bible as being essentially a dictated document, rather than one in which the distinct stylistic features and viewpoints of the individual writers are preserved. This in no way minimizes the doctrine of inspiration, but it does mean that one must look at the words of the Bible as instruments by which the message is communicated and not as ends in themselves. It is essentially for this reason that we can emphasize the basic principle that...in order to preserve the content it is necessary to make certain changes in form.

Not to get unnecessarily entangled here with the complex theological issues surrounding the topics of infallibility and inspiration of the Scriptures and the question of what Nida exactly meant by the above statements, we can at least conclude from them that he opposed the theological position of viewing the Bible as “essentially a dictated document” and seemed to suggest that the authority of the Bible (as the Word of God) and the doctrine of infallibility can and should be treated as separate issues, and that more importantly, the words and the message of the Bible can and should be regarded separately to assign (more) authority and inspiration to the latter instead of the former. Suffice it to say that these are controversial theological issues on which Nida has taken a stand, and he clearly stated that it is “for this reason” that he emphasized “the basic principle that...in order to preserve the content it is necessary to make certain changes in form,” which idea certainly was developed into his dynamic or functional equivalent translation theory later on. Noteworthy to point out is that Nida’s view might have been influenced by the theological trend of his time, for the inerrancy debate that started in the US in the early twentieth century reached a new peak in the 1970s (Lindsell, 1976), which timeframe roughly corresponded to the formative years of Nida’s theory. In any case, here is another example of how one’s translation philosophy is inevitably shaped by one’s theological views.

Nida’s most revolutionary idea that a translation should evoke in the modern reader a “response”—later changed to “understanding”—identical or similar to that of the original receptor (Nida and Taber 1969, 24, 28) is also built upon many unspoken theological presuppositions. First, it presupposes that it is possible for modern translators to know how the original receptors “responded” or “understood” the Bible. Second, it presupposes that there was only one group of original receptors, and there was only one, uniform “response” or “understanding” among them. Third, most importantly, it presupposes that God desires modern readers to read his words with the same kind of response or understanding as its original

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9 For the complex issues of the inerrancy, inspiration, and authority of the Bible, see Carson 2016 and Farnell 2016.
receptors. As potentially problematic as these presuppositions are, it should be noted that all these are theological presuppositions, because they all presuppose knowing how God wanted the Bible to be received in a certain way. They presuppose knowing the answers to questions such as: Who are God’s intended receptors: the Jews, the Greeks, Christians, non-Christians, people in the first century, in the second century, or at a later time? Does God want all people at all times in all places to understand the same passage in the same way? Does each passage have only one meaning, or multiple meanings? Can God speak different things to different peoples in different ages through the same biblical passage? All these questions, again, are theological questions.23 This illustrates how a seemingly simple idea or principle set out in a translation theory, when applied to the Bible, can instantly become a complex theological doctrine. This shows that linguists and theologians, Bible translation and theology, truly ought not to be separated.

All the examples above show that Nida’s translation theory can be considered the fruit of his theological presuppositions about language and the Bible.24 This is not so surprising if one considers the fact that thought-for-thought translation had been known to Bible translators for thousands of years before Nida. However, before Nida, the overwhelming majority of Bible translators had always chosen a more literal approach in translating the Bible rather than a freer style (Ryken 2009, 35–66). Therefore, the main difference between pre-Nida Bible translators and Nida is not that those pre-Nida translators did not know that thought-for-thought translation is a choice; the difference, or at least one factor contributing to their different translation approaches, might well be that they had different theological views on Bible translation than Nida’s. This is confirmed by Philip C. Stine’s account of how in the early days, conservative Christian translators had to experience a theological “conversion” in order to accept Nida’s theory:

[Nida’s approach challenged] the view of Scripture that many translators from conservative theological backgrounds had always held... Most Bible translators and church leaders would affirm that in some way God provides the ultimate source of the Bible [and] many also hold...a view that connects the divine source with actual words and forms. They see God directing in some way the writing and canonization process. For translators who believe

20 Leland Ryken listed twenty “fallacies” in DE theory about the Bible, translation, and Bible readers (2002, 67–19). While it is debatable whether these “fallacies” are fair descriptions of DE theory or not, there is no doubt that many of these twenty concepts are theological assumptions about the Bible, Bible translation, and Bible readers, and reveal certain theological presuppositions underlying DE theory.

21 Nida later modified his earlier DE theory in From One Language to Another. An examination of the theological presuppositions of this later version of his theory will be a worthwhile future study.
that not only were the thoughts of the Bible inspired by God through the Holy Spirit but also the words themselves, a translation approach such as Nida’s contradicts their theology... Inevitably, because of their theological stances, some translators, church leaders, and even Bible Societies did not accept Nida’s theory and practice (Stine 2004, 59–60).

In the quote above, the theological nature of Nida’s theory is clearly seen. It is not an exaggeration to say that Nida’s theology of Bible translation has not only changed the landscape of Bible translation but also influenced the theological landscape of the world through DE Bible translations over the last half a century. David Daniell, the Oxford scholar known for his works on Shakespeare and Tyndale, made the following observations as he commented on the Good News Bible (GNB), the Bible translation that fully followed Nida’s DE theory and was highly regarded by Nida himself:

The strengths of GNB, described as “the shifting from traditional theological language to language as common as that used in the newspaper”, are also its weaknesses. Ditching “traditional theological language” can easily slide into ditching theology... It could possibly be mistakenly thought that the Word of God is best expressed in the tones of the New York Times: but the Word of God is crammed with both colour and mystery (otherwise it is hardly “of God”). It is surely unfortunate to lose the sense of otherness in slicing away Hebrew and Greek vividness (Daniell 2003, 759–760, italics added).

After surveying through many Bible translations in English especially in the second half of the twentieth century, Daniell made this conclusion under the heading “Loss of Theology”:

An observable loss in the later chapters in this book has been theology. English Bibles now must, as noted above, speak the language of the New York Times... The place of theology has been taken by abstract theory... Until the 1930s, one usually spoke of the user of a Bible as “believer”... Thereafter, as with western national economies, the important figure is “the consumer”. The result, over decades, has been a tendency to water down, to avoid words or theology that might disturb (Daniell 2003, 772, italics added).

Since the Bible remains a theological book or a book about God no matter how it is translated, it would be more accurate to say that under the influences of DE theory, a different kind of theology has been conveyed through many of these DE translations. Whether this theology is the theology intended by its human authors or divine author is certainly subject to debates and different opinions.

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22 GNB was so highly regarded by Nida that he wrote a book for its promotion (1977).
In any case, this demonstrates the important role theology plays not only in shaping Bible translation but even in shaping theology or the religious beliefs of readers through Bible translation.

The above exploration of the theological presuppositions of Bible translation theories can also be applied to other theories, such as Ernst-August Gutt’s Relevance Theory (1992) and Christiane Nord’s application of the Skopos theory (2018). Both of these theories, whether consciously or unconsciously, are also built upon certain theological presuppositions, which are yet to be explored by scholars. For example, Gutt’s Relevance Theory for Bible translation presupposes that every portion of the Bible was always written with the original audience in view, but this becomes problematic in light of the prophetic nature of many portions of the Bible, which were often a mystery to the original receptors but became fully meaningful to the later receptors (who saw the fulfillment of those prophecies). It also somehow goes against the idea of an omnipotent and omniscient God who, if he truly is the author of the Bible, certainly would not allow the problems of relevance caused by different contexts of receptors to hinder the full communication of his messages. Similarly, Skopos theory, applied to Bible translation, presupposes that God agrees to modify his words according to the purpose set by the translators or the sponsors of translation. In this light, Skopos theory applied to Bible translation can be seen as a theological position that seeks to exalt the human interpreters over the divine author and thus is at variance with the conservative theological tradition on biblical translation and interpretation.

**Summary**

This article first examined how Translation Studies as a discipline has been mostly separated from theology and then offered a critical review of this secular-sacred divide. Then it proposed that translation has a theological dimension because theological presuppositions lie at the foundation of all human ideologies, and it discussed what this theological dimension means to translation practically as illustrated in the cases of ideology and equivalence. Afterward, it examined the theological nature of Bible translation, particularly focusing on the role of theology in Bible translation theories, taking Eugene Nida’s theory as a case study. All in all, it argues that theology plays an important role in translation and particularly in Bible translation, affecting not only its practice but also its theories, and suggests that a study of the theological dimension of Bible translation or even translation in general should reveal valuable insights and contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of translation.
REFERENCES


God’s Scheme: Exploring the Meaning of “Jesus, I Will Take Your Soul Back” in Al Imran (3):55

Al Harrison
Contact through the Managing Editor

Abstract: In the Qur’anic verse Al-Imran (3):55, God tells Jesus, “I will take your soul back,” but there is no consensus as to what action or event is referred to by that phrase. This is evident from the variety of renderings in non-Arabic language versions of the Qur’an and in commentaries on this verse. This paper will explore the action or event referred to in verse 3:55 from a survey of fifty English versions, a lexical analysis of the Arabic term *mutawaffīka*, interpretations of some leading Qur’anic commentators, and input from other texts. It will be shown that despite widespread belief that Jesus was taken directly to heaven, thus escaping death, there is considerable reason to understand “take your soul back” in a different way: that God will have Jesus experience literal physical death before raising him up to heaven.

Keywords: Al-Imran, *mutawaffīka*, Soul, Jesus, Qur’anic Interpretation

INTRODUCTION

“The [disbelievers] schemed but God also schemed; God is the Best of Schemers (Abdel Haleem 2016).” So says Al-Imran (3):54 of the Noble Qur’an. Then the next verse, 3:55, goes on to reveal what God’s scheme is:

God said, ‘Jesus, I
will *take your soul back* [italics added]
and raise you up to Me:
I will purify you of the disbelievers.
I will make those who followed you
superior to those who disbelieved
to the Day of Resurrection.’

All English quotations of the Qur’an are from this version, unless otherwise noted.

The order of these three lines has been altered from Haleem (2016) to correspond with the original Arabic. Haleem starts the sentence with the third line: “To the Day of Resurrection I will make those who followed you superior to those who disbelieved.”
Then you will all return to Me thumma ilayya marjiʿukum and I will judge between you regarding fa-ahkumu baynakum fīmā kuntum your differences. fihi takhtalifūn

From these verses we see that God has not been caught off guard by the scheming of the disbelievers. In fact, God has a scheme of his own, and declares to Jesus what he is going to do to him. However, the phrase “take your soul back,” a rendering of the Arabic word mutawaffika, fails to deliver an unambiguous understanding of God’s scheme. This paper explores what is meant by this phrase, what God is going to do to Jesus, what God’s scheme is. Various possibilities will be looked at based on renderings from other versions, lexical data, Qur’anic commentators, and other texts. I conclude by stating my view on this subject, backed by a summary of everything presented in each section.

“TAKE YOUR SOUL BACK” IN FIFTY ENGLISH VERSIONS

In surveying Al-Imran (3):55 in fifty English versions, God’s scheme, i.e., what God said he will do to Jesus, is expressed in a broad variety of ways, most of which reflect one of two major interpretations. There are also a small number of cases in which there is considerable ambiguity. The prevalent interpretation is reflected in at least twenty-eight of the fifty English versions surveyed, that God is taking Jesus straight to heaven. This is communicated by several renderings as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rendering</th>
<th>Translator(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>GOD IS TAKING JESUS STRAIGHT TO HEAVEN</td>
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<tr>
<td>“take you”</td>
<td>Abdullah Yusuf Ali; The Study Qur’an; Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan; Syed Vickar Ahamed, Sahih International, Hamid S. Aziz; The Clear Qur’an; Abdul Hye; A.L. Bilal Muhammad et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“take you to me/Mysel”</td>
<td>A. J. Arberry; Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (2nd ed.); Ahmed Ali</td>
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<tr>
<td>“taking you up to Me”</td>
<td>Muhammad Mahmoud Ghali</td>
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<tr>
<td>“take you back”</td>
<td>Haleem (2005); Aisha Bewley; Ali Ünal</td>
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<tr>
<td>“claim you back”</td>
<td>N. J. Dawood</td>
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<tr>
<td>“recall/recalling you”</td>
<td>Munir Munshey; Mawdudi; Farook Malik; Bijan Moeinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“receive you”</td>
<td>Musharraf Hussain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“gathering/gathers thee”</td>
<td>M. M. Pickthall; Laleh Bakhtiar</td>
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In stark contrast, the idea that God is causing Jesus to experience physical death is communicated in reasonably unambiguous renderings in eighteen of the fifty English versions, also shown in Table 1. The unique rendering, “Behold! Allah said: ‘O Iesa! Certainly I am the Giver of death to you’ [italics added] and the Raiser of you towards Me…” (Kamal Omar) would seem to imply that Jesus was going to die, though not explicitly stating such.

This leaves four of the fifty English versions whose renderings of “take your soul back” are ambiguous. The first is “terminate you” (Edip Yuksel 2007). Unlike “terminate the period of your stay on earth” referenced above, which points to

3 This phrase probably implies Jesus being taken to heaven since it is stated that his time on earth is ending.

4 This phrase likely implies Jesus being taken directly to heaven as the method of his being rescued. This lines up with a common belief known as the substitution theory, that as Jesus was about to be crucified, God caused another person to take on his physical appearance and be crucified instead, while Jesus was taken directly to heaven.
Jesus being taken directly to heaven, or “terminate your life” referenced above, which points to Jesus experiencing physical death, “terminate you,” absent further specifics, could probably carry either sense. Another rendering that could easily reflect either major interpretation is “cause you to reach your full life” (Ahmed Raza Khan [Barelvi]) because just what transpires once Jesus’ full life is reached is left entirely unstated. Being taken straight to heaven by God or physical death would both seem equally plausible. Finally, there are the renderings “take you[r soul]” (Ali Quli Qari) and “take your soul back.” They would automatically join the twenty-eight English versions carrying the sense of Jesus being taken straight to heaven were it not for the presence of the word “soul” in the phrase. I will show in the following section that the idea of one’s soul being taken is found elsewhere in the Qur’an referring to something that occurs simultaneously with physical death. Thus, the intended meaning here remains uncertain. One is led to wonder if the use of such highly ambiguous renderings was intended to allow for more than one possible interpretation.

Though these observations do not constitute a technical linguistic analysis of the phrase “take your soul back,” they do point out the interpretive dilemma that is evidenced by the colorful variety of ways in which the English versions render the phrase. Next, I will present a lexical analysis of the phrase “take your soul back.”

**LEXICAL ANALYSIS OF “TAKE YOUR SOUL BACK”**

The phrase “take your soul back” in verse 3:55 renders the Arabic word *mutawaffika* (مَتْوَفِّيَكَ), which is made up of two morphological segments, an active participle, and a possessive pronoun. The form V active participle is masculine and is in the nominative case (مَرْفُوعٌ). The active participle's triliteral root is *wāw fā yā* (وَفَيَّ). The attached possessive pronoun is second person masculine singular. *An Arabic-English Lexicon* provides as examples of *tawaffa*: “God took his soul, [either at death or in sleep]; or caused him to die” (Edward William Lane 1862, 3057). Working with these two examples from Lane, the Form V active participle *mutawaffika* could therefore mean that God is “taking your (Jesus’) soul” [either at death, or in sleep], or “causing you (Jesus) to die.”

The twenty-four occurrences of *tawaffa* in the Noble Qur’an almost all refer to physical death. In many of these verses such as Al-Baqara (2):234, 240, there is zero ambiguity about it referring to physical death. These two verses speak hypothetically of persons who die. The fact that these verses say that they “leave widows” confirms that physical death is what is meant by *tawaffa*:

Al-Baqara (2):234: If any of you die (*yutawaffawna*) and leave widows, the widows should wait for four months and ten nights before remarrying...

Al-Baqara (2):240: If any of you die (*yutawaffawna*) and leave widows...
Three more of the verses in which tawaffa occurs refer to various stages of life beginning with being created by God. In Al-Hajj (22):5, God reminds people that, in direct contrast with those who live on to old age (an age in which they even forget all they once knew), others die young. The contrast with what happens to those who live long lives clearly confirms that physical death is indicated in the other case:

Al-Hajj (22):5: People, [remember,] if you doubt the Resurrection, that We created you from dust, then a drop of fluid, then a clinging form, then a lump of flesh, both shaped and unshaped: We mean to make [Our power] clear to you. Whatever We choose We cause to remain in the womb for an appointed time, then We bring you forth as infants and then you grow and reach maturity. Some die (yutawaffa) young and some are left to live on to such an age that they forget all they once knew...

Similarly, Ghafir (40):67 states that people reach maturity and grow old, but in contrast, others experience death (yutawaffa) sooner. Al-Nahl (16):70 is also similar to verse 22:5 above, but in a different way than verse 40:67. It focuses in on the deteriorated condition of the memory (“after having knowledge, they will know nothing at all”) in the case of some who live to old age before eventually dying (yatawaffākum).

At least eight verses use tawaffa in the sense of angels taking the soul out of the body of a person at the time of their death. This is in keeping with Islamic angelology which holds that the Angel of Death is responsible for removing spirits from bodies at the moment of death, and is said to have other angels assisting in these duties (Nasr et al. 2015). Other wording in some of these verses confirms that physical death is what is occurring, such as, “and then you will be brought back to your Lord” (32:11); “Enter the Garden as a reward for what you have done” (16:32); “These people will have Hell as their refuge” (4:97); and “Taste the punishment of the Fire” (8:50).

Al-Sajda (32):11: Say, “The Angel of Death put in charge of you will reclaim you (yatawaffākum), and then you will be brought back to your Lord.”

Al-Nahl (16):32: those whose lives the angels take (tatawaffāhumu) in a state of goodness. They will say to them, “Peace be upon you. Enter the Garden as a reward for what you have done.”

Al-Nisa (4):97: When the angels take the souls (tawaffathumu) of those who have wronged themselves... These people will have Hell as their refuge, an evil destination,

Al-Anfal (8):50: If only you [Prophet] could see, when the angels take the souls (yattawaffa) of the disbelievers, how they strike their faces and backs: it will be said, “Taste the punishment of the Fire.”
Muhammad (47):27: How will they feel when the angels take them in death (tawaffathumu)...

Al-Araf (7):37: Who is more wrong than the person who invents lies against God or rejects His revelations?...when Our angels arrive to take them back (yatawaffawnahum)...

Al-Nahl (16):28: Those whose lives the angels take (tatawaffāhumu)...

Al-Anam (6):61: He is the Supreme Master over His subjects. He sends out recorders to watch over you until, when death overtakes any of you, those sent by Us take his soul (tawaffathu)...

In Al-Araf (7):126, Pharaoh’s sorcerers who have witnessed the signs of Moses and Aaron, have confessed faith in the God of Moses and Aaron. Greatly displeased by this, Pharaoh says he will cut off the alternate hands and feet of the sorcerers, and then crucify them. The sorcerers’ response to this threat of death is their statement that they know “they will be returning to their Lord,” and their prayer to God for steadfastness, indicating that they truly expect and are fully willing to physically die:

Al-Araf (7):126: ...Our Lord, pour steadfastness upon us and let us die (watawaffana) in devotion to You.

Two other verses also use tawaffa as part of a similar sort of prayer. In Yusuf (12):101, Joseph, using wording similar to that of the sorcerers, declares that he wants to die (tawaffanī) in true devotion to God. Al-Imran (3):193, “one of the most famous Islamic prayers and . . . oft-repeated by pious Muslims” (Nasr et al.), speaks of being joined with the righteous at the point of death:

Al-Imran (3):193: Our Lord! We have heard someone calling us to faith—“Believe in your Lord”—and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, wipe out our bad deeds, and grant that we join the righteous when we die (watawaffana).

Three verses that read almost like parallel passages use tawaffa in the 1st person plural (form V) imperfect verb, emphatic suffix nūn, 2nd person masculine singular object pronoun: natawaffayannaka. In Yunus (10):46, Al-Rad (13):40, and Ghafir (40):77, God has been talking to the Prophet about the punishment that awaits people who refuse to believe in the message, the Scriptures, and the messenger(s). In all three of these verses, God assures the Prophet that the ultimate punishment of disbelievers is certain, as is evident by terms such as “returned to God” (40:77), “return to God” (10:46), and “the Reckoning” (13:40). Concerning the Prophet’s relationship to these events, all three of these verses say that there are two possibilities: God may allow him to see some or a part of that punishment
in his lifetime, or, God may take the prophet's soul, i.e., cause him to die, before that punishment occurs.

Al-Rad (13:40): Whether We let you [Prophet] see part of what We threaten them with, or cause you to die (natawaffâyannaka) [before that], your duty is only to deliver the message: the Reckoning is Ours.

Al-Nisa (4:15) spells out the punishment for a woman found guilty of sexual immorality. She is to be kept at home until death:

Al-Nisa (4:15): If any of your women commit a lewd act, call four witnesses from among you, then, if they testify to their guilt, keep the women at home until death comes to them (yatawaffâhunna) or until God shows them another way.

In Yunus (10:104), the Prophet, in speaking to persons who may be agnostic with regard to the message he brings, asserts that the God that he speaks of is different from the gods they worship. He is the one who has power over the very lives of people; it is he who will even bring about the deaths of those very persons who are in doubt:

Yunus (10:104): [Prophet] say, “People, if you are in doubt about my religion...I worship God who will cause you to die (yatawaffâkum), and I am commanded to be a believer.”

Two of the twenty-four verses in which tawaffâ occurs are unique in that they both refer to God taking the souls of people while they are sleeping at night. In Al-Zumar (39:42), tawaffâ is used both of God taking the souls of people at the time of death as well as with his taking souls of the living (while they are sleeping). “In Islamic thinking, sleep is regarded as a little death, and death, when compared to the reality of earthly life, can be considered a great sleep” (Hamza Yusuf 2015).

Al-Zumar (39:42): God takes souls (yattawaffâ) at the time of death and the souls of the living while they sleep. He keeps hold of those whose death He has ordained and sends the others back until their appointed time: there truly are signs in this for those who reflect.

Al-Anam (6:60) uses tawaffâ only in reference to sleep, stating that God “calls your souls back by night,” in contrast to “raising you up again in the daytime.” However, the idea of sleep being a little death as mentioned above is echoed by this verse’s use of the phrase “until your fixed term is fulfilled” and the clause “It is to Him that you will return in the end.”

Al-Anam (6:60): It is He who calls your souls back (yatawaffâkum) by night, knowing what you have done by day, then raises you up again in the daytime
until your fixed term is fulfilled. It is to Him that you will return in the end, and He will tell you what you have done.

Al-Maida (5):117 is the final verse, of the twenty-four verses in which *tawaffa* occurs, to be considered in this section. This verse (5:117), and the main verse that is the topic of this paper (3:55), both make direct reference to God and to what He does to Jesus:

3:55: God said, “Jesus, I will *take your soul back* and raise you up to Me” (italics added).

5:117: Ever since You *took my soul* (italics added).

Since it is conceivable that the use of *tawaffa* in verse 5:117 carries the same sense as in verse 3:55, the main verse of this study, it is the final verse to be considered:

Al-Maida (5):117: I told them only what You commanded me to: “Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.” I was a witness over them during my time among them. Ever since You took my soul (*tawaffaytani*), You alone have been the watcher over them: You are witness to all things.

In this verse, Jesus is apparently speaking to God on the Day of Judgement, which verse 5:109 describes as “the Day in which God assembles all the messengers and asks, ‘What response did you receive?’" Jesus would be recounting what had already occurred before the Day of Judgement. For one thing, Jesus has been raised up to God already. In verse 5:117, a definite shift has taken place involving Jesus’ relationship to those he told to “Worship God.” Prior to the occurrence of *tawaffa* in the verse, Jesus is said to be the one who serves as “a witness over them.” However, following the occurrence of *tawaffa* in the verse, God alone is said to have been “the watcher over them.” Jesus is no longer the witness over them, as he was when he was among them, presumably because he is no longer among them, i.e., no longer on the earth. Is Jesus’ being raised to heaven what is referred to by the use of *tawaffa* in verse 5:117? Some would doubtless argue so. However, verse 3:55 seems to distinguish between “take your soul back (*mutawaffika*)" and “raise you up to Me,” so it seems possible that two distinct things are being referred to.

Thus far, we have looked at twenty-three of the verses in the Noble Qur’an in which *tawaffa* occurs. In twenty-one of those verses, physical death is incontrovertibly indicated by the term *tawaffa*. One additional verse (39:42) uses *tawaffa* to refer both to physical death as well as to sleep, which itself is regarded as a little death. Another verse (6:60) uses *tawaffa* only to refer to sleep, yet not without the presence of terms that echo physical death. Given the use of the term in its twenty-three other occurrences in the Noble Qur’an, it seems entirely possible that *tawaffa* in verse 5:117 is used to state that God took Jesus’ soul, *i.e.*, *caused*
him to die physically, and the raising up of Jesus is left unmentioned. However, not everyone understands it this way. Next, I will look at the views of several leading Qur’anic commentators.

**Qur’anic Commentators on “Take Your Soul Back”**

In his article *Did Jesus Die on the Cross? The History of Reflection on the End of His Earthly Life in Sunni Tafsir Literature* (2001), Joseph Cumming gathered the views of “the most influential, mainstream commentaries of the Sunni tradition” (p. 5), including Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Jarir Al-Tabari, Fakhr al-Din Al-Razi, Abu Abd Allah al-Qurtubi, Nasir al-Din Abu Said Abd Allah Al-Baydawi, and Sayyid Qutb. The first four of these commentators presented various interpretive options regarding the meaning of *mutawaffika* in verse 3:55, and each commentator considered the options they presented to all be legitimate options. Some but not all of the commentators stated a specific option that was felt to have the best support. The views that state that God is going to seize Jesus, taking him straight to heaven without dying, were the most commonly presented. A few such views included further detail such as raised without death or sleep; raised in his entirety, i.e., spirit and body; and that “causing you to die” and “raising you” are the same thing. Another common view was that God is going to cause Jesus to experience literal death. Variations in the length of the interval between death and ascension to heaven ranged from the moment of death, three hours, seven hours, or unspecified. A few of the presented views take death as figurative for other things: completion of one’s lifespan; sleep; dying to desires and gratifications of the soul; death of one’s work, i.e., that his work is received in full and raised to heaven; and causing to be like a dead man, i.e., raised to heaven, every trace of him is cut off from the earth. There are also views that are based on a non-chronological ordering of the events described in verse 3:55. In this way, God causing Jesus to die and God raising Jesus to heaven are viewed as occurring in reverse order, which allows for Jesus’ death to happen after he returns to earth. Another view rejects non-chronological ordering but suspends judgement on how and when until there is proof.

The fifth of these commentaries was written by Sayyid Qutb. Cumming (2001, 30) refers to it as “perhaps the most widely-known Sunni commentary of the twentieth century” and “very influential.” Cumming says that in writing about verse 3:55, Qutb takes an “agnostic view on the historical question of when and how Jesus died and rose” (p. 31). “As for how his ‘death’ came about, and how his being raised came about, these are mysterious matters which fall into the category of obscure verses whose exegesis no one knows but God. There is no use in trying to get to the bottom of them, either in doctrine or in law” (p. 31). However, Cumming also says that in commenting on another verse (5:117), “Qutb
again expresses agnosticism, but seems to suggest more clearly that he is inclined to think that Jesus really did die and rise [italics added]. He writes:

The outward, evident meaning of the qur’anic texts indicates that God caused Jesus son of Mary to die, and then raised him to Himself. Some traditions indicate that he is alive with God. As far as I can see, there is no contradiction which would raise any problem between the idea that God caused him to die from the life of the earth and the idea that he is alive with Him. After all, martyrs similarly die on earth and are alive with God. As to what form their life with Him takes, we do not know any “how” about it. Similarly we do not know what form the life of Jesus (upon him peace) takes (p. 34).

Cumming mentions in a footnote that “Sayyid Qutb penned these words about martyrs during an imprisonment which ended in his own execution” (p. 34).

**INPUT FROM OTHER TEXTS**

The main Qur’anic verse that is usually brought up to counter the view that Jesus died is Al-Nisa (4):157 which says,

“We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of God.” (They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, though it was made to appear like that to them; those that disagreed about him are full of doubt, with no knowledge to follow, only supposition: they certainly did not kill him.

From the preceding verses in this passage, the identity of “We,” “they,” and “them” in verse 4:157 becomes evident. “The People of the Book” (4:153), “Moses” (4:153), “they took the calf” (4:153), “the mountain tower high above them at their pledge” (4:154), and “the Sabbath” (4:154) make it unmistakably clear that it is the Jews who are being referred to. Verse 4:157 states that even though the Jews say that they killed the Messiah, they did not kill him. Rather, it only appeared that they killed Jesus. This plain wording of this verse states repeatedly and emphatically who it was who did not kill the Messiah. At the same time, in no way is it an explicit denial that Jesus died. In this regard, Gabriel Reynolds (2014, 51) writes,

the Qur’an never denies (either in al-Nisā’ (4):157 or elsewhere) that Jesus was crucified or that he died. It states only that the Jews did not kill him (wa-mâ qatalûhu wa-mâ ṣalabâhu), and nothing more. It is possible, of course, to assume that in al-Nisā’ (4):157 the Qur’an means to deny the death of Jesus without doing so explicitly. Yet what the Qur’an says elsewhere about Jesus seems to affirm his death, making God – and not the Israelites – responsible for it. In Āl ‘Imrân (3) the Qur’an has God say to Jesus, “O Jesus, I shall make you pass away (inni mutawaffika), and I shall raise you up toward Myself” (Q 3:55). In al-Mā’ida (5), the Qur’an has Jesus (now after his death and ascension
into heaven) declare to God, “But when You made me pass away (lammā ta-waffaytani), You Yourself were watchful over them” (Q 5:117). In the light of these verses al-Nisā’ (4):157 no longer seems to deny the death of Jesus, either explicitly or implicitly.⁵

If the Jews were not the ones who killed Jesus, then who did? The Bible says that it was actually at the hands of the Romans that he was crucified (Mark 15:15; John 19:23), but ultimately it was the will and plan of God (Acts 2:23; Rom 8:32), which lines up with Al-Imran (3):54, “God is the best of Schemers,” at the beginning of this paper.

The plain wording of another verse in the Qur’an seems to allow for the possibility that Jesus could die physically, namely Al-Ma’ida (5):17 where it asks, “If it had been God’s will, could anyone have prevented Him from destroying the Messiah, son of Mary, together with his mother and everyone else on earth? Control of the heavens and earth and all that is between them belongs to God: He creates whatever He will. God has power over everything.” This verse seems to be following the line of reasoning that since God can do anything since he has control and power over everything, if God wanted to do so he could destroy the Messiah, his mother, or any other human being. The Noble Qur’an here seems to open up a possibility regarding whether or not Jesus could experience death. This verse says that if God wanted to destroy the Messiah, no one could have prevented him from doing so. Therefore, hypothetically speaking, Jesus could indeed experience death if God wanted him to.

Besides the Qur’an, the sacred texts of Islam also include the Sirah (biography of Muhammad) and the Hadith, which is a very large corpus. These were compiled in the first three centuries of Islam. The death of Jesus is never denied in this body of early literature, rather, it seems to be a later development in Islamic polemics.

**CONCLUSION**

It is a widespread belief among many that Jesus was taken directly to heaven and thus escaped death. Despite this, I find considerable reason to understand the phrase “take your soul back” to mean that God’s scheme is to have Jesus experience literal physical death, before raising him up to heaven. Everything that I presented in this paper would allow for this position.

From my survey of the phrase “take your soul back” in Al-Imran (3):55 in fifty English versions, the idea that Jesus is going to experience physical death is clearly communicated by a number of the renderings including, “make you die,”

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⁵ Reynolds (2014, 51) noted that he used his own translation of the Qur’anic verses contained in the quote.
“cause you to die,” “let you die,” “terminating your life,” “cause thee to die a natural death,” and “cause you to die of natural causes.” Even the rendering “Giver of death to you” would seem to imply that Jesus was going to die, though not explicitly stating such. I showed that “take you[r soul]” and “take your soul back” could be understood as either causing Jesus to die or raising him directly to God without dying, but that Islamic angelology provides an explanation that favors the former.

I presented a lexical analysis of the Arabic term mutawaffika, including a look at the twenty-four verses in the Noble Qur’an in which tawaffa occurs. By far, almost all of these twenty-four verses use tawaffa in a way that unambiguously refers to physical death. Of the two verses that use tawaffa in reference to the slumber of living persons, one of them also uses tawaffa to refer to physical death in the same verse, and the other one contains terms that clearly echo physical death.

I cited the research of Cumming (2001) containing various interpretations from five leading Qur’anic commentators. The most widely accepted view among Muslims today is that Jesus was seized, i.e., taken directly to heaven without dying. However, these commentators actually presented a variety of interpretive possibilities about the meaning of the term mutawaffika. Included among those is the possibility that it means God is causing Jesus to physically die, and all of these leading commentators considered this to be a legitimate interpretive option.

Finally, I gleaned input from other texts which relate to this subject, namely Al-Nisa (4):157 which emphatically states that the Jews did not kill Jesus, but in no way denies that he did die. Also, Al-Ma’ida (5):17 plainly opens at least the possibility of Jesus dying by asserting that God could destroy the Messiah if he chose to because God has control and power over everything. I also pointed out that nowhere in the very large corpus of early literature which includes the Sirah and the Hadith is the death of Jesus denied.

My view is that “take your soul back” in verse 3:55 means that God is going to cause Jesus to experience literal physical death. Another verse that seems to support this position is Maryam (19):33 in which Jesus says, “Peace was on me the day I was born, and will be on me the day I die and the day I am raised to life again.” Similar words were used before this in verse 19:15 which says, “Peace on him the day he was born, on the day of his death, and on the day he is raised to life again.” In that case, it was spoken concerning John the Baptist, who, in the words of Abdullah Yusuf Ali, “is about to die an unjust death at the hands of a tyrant.” Today, many millions of people hold beliefs that are at odds with what their very own Scriptures say. Jesus pronounced peace upon himself, even on the day that he died. May his peace be upon all who come to the realization of this!


The Church’s Presentation of Christology in Islamic Contexts: An Historical Review

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Abstract: After the resurrection and eventual ascension of Jesus, his followers were convinced that he was truly the incarnate God. Being monotheist Jews, they wanted to hold on to monotheism but accept the divinity of Jesus. They wanted to comprehend how Jesus was the “Son” or “Son of God” and when he became the Son, or how he was begotten from the Father. They had settled with a feasible response from the 4th to the 6th century, but then Islam arose in the 7th century and questioned their fundamental belief on the divinity of Jesus. Apologists such as John of Damascus soon realized that the presentation of Jesus as the Son in a “Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (FSH) Trinity raised ontological questions. They therefore presented Christology and Trinity within the framework of Jesus being the Word of God in a “God, Word, Spirit” (GWS) Trinity. This explanation seemed to be effective especially since the Qur’an presents Jesus as the Word of God but rejects the ontological sense of Jesus being a Son born from God’s sexual relationship with a woman. Against this conceptual background, this paper traces the presentation of Christology in Islamic contexts during different periods of history.

Keywords: Christology, Trinity, Divinity of Jesus, Jesus in the Qur’an, Apologetics

1. Development of the Understanding of Christology and the Divinity of Jesus within Christianity

Centuries before Islam arose, early Christianity was engaged in discussions related to the divinity of Jesus (Dunzl 2007, 21). The Christological titles and claims made by Jesus indicated his self-understanding regarding his Divinity (Craig 2008, 327). His appearances after his resurrection ignited a deepened Christological reflection among the early Christians (Dunzl 2007, 3), which propelled them towards a full-blown Christology within twenty years, proclaiming Jesus as God incarnate (Strobel 1998, 139). The pre-Nicenean theologians were engaged in the task of clarifying the relationship between the divinity of Jesus and monotheism (Carle 2015, 17–18).

The claims of Jesus’ eternal relationship with the Father led the Church to be engaged in theological reflection for centuries (Cumming 2012, 139), adopting a
new language for what it could not understand (Lauderback 2012, 2) and settling on specific terminology for describing the Trinity with a creed at the Council of Nicea in 325 C.E. (Azumah 2011, 62). The central points of the Trinity and the doctrine of Christology are the deity of Jesus Christ and incarnation (Harris 1919, 11). Metaphysical language to describe the Trinity was first employed in the latter part of the second century by Tertullian, who described the “one essence (ousia) in three persons (hypostases), Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit” (Beaumont 2012, 113; Koplitz 2017, 6, 56).

Defining the relationship within the Trinity has been the biggest struggle within Christendom since the apostolic times, yet “to understand God ultimately is an impossibility” (Myers 2014, 24) and “in attempting to define the Trinity, or unveil the essence of Divinity, many men have lost themselves” (Spurgeon 1983, 13). When discussing God, even the best of our analogies breaks down (Cameron and Hoyland 2016, 395).

While much has been written on the presentation of Christology among Christians in the earliest centuries of the church, less has been written on the presentation of Christology in Islamic contexts. This paper will do so by giving a historical review of the presentations of Christology in Islamic contexts.

1.1 Eternal Essence of the Son and “Son of God” in the Bible

The incarnation was the central focus of the theological debates regarding the divinity of Jesus and the Triune God (Azumah 2011, 62). The discussions were prompted by whether the “Son” had the divine nature as God the Father and whether his essence is from eternity (Whidden 2002, 12). The early Christian traditions presented Jesus as the Son sent by God to fulfill the will of the Father (showing inferiority) but also presented him as divine logos who was in the beginning with God (Dunzl 2007, 9). To respond to questions related to sonship and begottenness, theologians such as Novatian claimed that the Father was before the Son, and since the Son proceeds from God, therefore, is begotten (Lamson 1873, 233). Arians alleged that he was created at some point (Whidden 2002, 16), but Ebionites claimed that he became “Son” through “adoptionism” (Dunzl 2007, 7–8). Subordinationism argued, “Father is supreme, and Son is subordinate” (Lamson 1873, 17), and Modalism claimed that “only one God manifested himself as Father, then Son, and finally as Holy Spirit” (Whidden 2002, 17).

Theologians seemed to focus on the ontological sense of the “Son” or “begotten.” Myers (2014, 98) states that “the Greek word ginomai means being ‘brought forth’ or ‘published’ as in Acts 10:37” and Madrigal (2011, 118) concurs that begotten within the concept of “generation” means that “he ‘emanates’ from God, but this generating act is not in the physical sense.” Thomas Aquinas believed “the
procession of the Word of God is called generation ... and the Word himself proceeding is called the Son" but procession remains in God the Father (Aquinas 2015, 10, 15, 18).

The ontological sense of “Son” and “begotten” developed the terms “generation” and “procession,” but to emphasize the eternality of the Son, “eternal generation” was introduced. Most theologians have attempted to justify the ontological and metaphysical sense of the word, whereas Joseph Cumming (2012, 137) believes that the main meaning of “Son of God” is the implied “messianic title” (2 Sam 7 and 1 Chr 17 and 22). This meaning does not imply a literal, carnal begetting nor do the concepts of “children of God” in John 1:12–13 or “God’s offspring” in Acts 17:28–29 or Adam as “the Son of God” (Cumming 2012, 138). Ty Gibson (2020, 33–34; 2018, 256–257) explains the New Testament meaning of “Son of God” in its Old Testament context. God created Adam in his image as “the Son of God” (Gen 1:26; 1 Kgs 3:38), but after the fall, his dominion was transferred to Satan (Gen 1:28; Luke 4:5–6). God promised to redeem humanity through a Second Adam, a new Son of God (Gen 3:15). This promise was passed on to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3) and the Old Testament is the explication of this promise and the fulfillment in Christ is the whole point of the New Testament (2 Cor 1:20). The concept of the covenant was reemphasized (Gen 17) and Isaac became the son of promise (Gen 21:1–7; Gal 4:23). The birthright of the firstborn became an important element of this story (Gen 27:19, 32; 43:33; 48:14–18). The covenant promise was to be passed on by the firstborn son from generation to generation. Jacob was a covenant son, and his sons became a nation whom God called corporately “My Son, My firstborn” (Exod 4:22–23), and to whom God said, “I begot you” (Deut 32:18). David is “begotten” as God’s “Son” as a type of the coming Messiah (Ps 2:7; 89:29) and Solomon is also called by God “My Son” (1 Chr 22:10). At last, the long-awaited Messiah, the King, comes into the world, born of a woman, and the New Testament presents him as the “Son of David,” “Son of Abraham,” and “the Son of God” (Matt 1:1; 2:15; 3:17; 4:3), but this son of God is God himself in flesh (Matt 1:23; John 1:1–5, 14; 1 Tim 3:16). Gibson (2020, 35) concludes that “Jesus is the Son of God in the covenant sense as the fulfillment of the entire Adamic, Abrahamic, Davidic narrative. The story never probes his ontological, metaphysical origins, beyond informing us that he is none other than God, eternal God in flesh” and George Vanderlip (1975, 53) concurs that his earthly ministry is the sonship.

1.2 Logos in the Bible

Since most Christological presentations start with the Son of God premise, this leads to the question of begotten-ness and subordination. However, John starts with the eternal Word of God (John 1:1), the creator of everything (John 1:3), who
comes into the world as the only “Son of God” (John 1:14). Vanderlip (1975, 51) is convinced that “identifying Jesus with the term logos, ‘the Word,’” is unique to Johannine literature (John 1:1–5; 1 John 1:1 and Rev 19:13). John’s premise is that one of the three “hypostases” (Word of God) within the Divine Unity (God, Word of God, Spirit of God) “became flesh.” Athanasius (2017, 32–33) confirms by stating that “God the Word revealed himself to men through his works,” to “settle man’s account with death.”

Logos was not just introduced in John but first in Genesis as the creator (Bury 1940, 4) and is presented in the OT as the Word of the Lord (Dodd 1935, 273). The Word of God is found in the Jewish Targums (John Ronning 2010, 1) and is observed in the Jewish Wisdom literature (Dodd 1935, 275), such as Wisdom personified as God’s agent in creation (Prov 8:12, 23, 29–30). Vanderlip (1975, 53) concludes that the Hellenistic personification of Wisdom is abstract, but in contrast, John’s incarnate Word as Jesus is personal.

The Targums often equate the Lord with “His Word.” The Word of the Lord (Debar Yehovah, דֵּבָר יְהֹוָה) by whom the heavens were made in Ps 33:6 is also in Gen 1:3 pronouncing, “Let there be light.” Therefore, Philo (Gill, N.D., 85) ascribes the creation of man to the Word because in his image man was made. Gill (N.D., 86) believes “Word intends a divine person” since the Targums and even Philo interpret the Word of the Lord in the Old Testament as Jehovah yet distinguish him from Jehovah as the following examples in Table 1 show.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Text</th>
<th>Targum Translation¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen 1:27: God said, “let us make man in our image.”</td>
<td>“And the Word (Memra מֶמְרָא) of the Lord created man in His likeness, in the likeness of the presence of the Lord, He created him.” (Jerusalem Targum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 3:22: “And the Lord God said, ‘Behold the man has become like one of us’.”</td>
<td>“And the Word of the Lord God said, Behold the man whom I have created, is the only one in the world, as I am the only one in heaven.” (Jerusalem Targum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 17:7: “And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants...”</td>
<td>“And I will establish my covenant between My Word (Memra מֶמְרָא) and between you...” (Targum Onkelos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deut 26:17: “Today you have proclaimed the Lord to be your God.”</td>
<td>“You have chosen the Word (Memra מֶמְרָא) of the Lord to be King over you this day, that He may be your God.” (Jerusalem Targum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 28:20–21: Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and keep Translates the first phrase as “if the Word (Memra מֶמְרָא) of the Lord will be with me” and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Quotations of the Targums are taken from http://www.sefaria.org.
me in this way that I am going... then the Lord shall be my God."
the final phrase as “the Word (Memra) of the Lord shall be my God.” (Targum Onkelos)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exod 14:31: “and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses.”</td>
<td>“and they feared God and believed in His Word (Memra) and His servant Moses.” (Targum Onkelos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps 110:1: “The Lord said unto my Lord.”</td>
<td>“The Lord said to His Word” (Memra). (Targum Aramaic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 48:13: “Indeed my hand has also laid the foundation of the earth.”</td>
<td>“yea, by my Word (Memra) I have found ed the earth.” (Targum Jonathan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hos 1:7: “Have mercy on the house of Judah and save them by the Lord their God.”</td>
<td>“by the Word (Memra) of the Lord their God.” (Targum Jonathan)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The Lord as the Word according to the Targums

The Word or Logos “is derived from the verb *lego,*” which means to “say, speak” and “lay open,” denoting the inner logic of a matter, or “reason” (Dunzl 2007, 22). Justin Martyr (Lamson 1873, 56) explained that the Word being the reason is an attribute and the conversion of this attribute into a real person is the Son’s generation, a process by which the quality became a distinct personal subsistence. Paul Tillich (1968, 30) asserts that whenever God appears outside himself, it is the Logos which appears and “the first time we see God, the first time he makes known, is when he says something,” and that something shows that the “Word is the ‘projected’ or ‘published’ or ‘manifest’ or ‘brought forth’ aspect of God” (Myers 2014, 67). St. Basil explained that “the Son is called the Word” that proceeded from the mind of God (Myers 2014, 78) and Madrigal (2011, xiii) concurs that the Son of God is a term for the Word or logos that proceeds from God’s very essence, and since he proceeds from God and has life in himself, this logos is the “Son” of God, but this term does not denote physical parenthood. For St. Athanasius, the “Word became flesh” represented incarnation, a solution to the Divine dilemma (Singh 2011, 4), and the human Jesus is not only the Son of God but the incarnation of the eternal Logos, the divine Word, which created all things in the beginning (cf. John 1:3, 114) (Dunzl 2007, 5).²

In line with this background, John 1:1 says, “in the beginning was the Word,” and Heb 1:2–3 adds that “in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, through whom he created the worlds,” which shows God’s full revelation in the incarnation of Jesus (Col 2:9). Cumming (2012, 139) points out that the “Word of God’ is God’s self-expression and the visible manifestation of the invisible God,” and John 1 confirms that the “Word of God” was eternal with God (vv. 1–2), created

² All texts are quoted from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless stated otherwise.
all things (v. 3) and was manifested in the flesh (v. 14) to reveal the Father since he was the only one who had seen God (v. 18). Therefore, as we honor the Father, we should honor the Son (John 5:18–26) because he is one with the Father (John 10:30), and seeing the Son is the same as seeing the Father (14:9). These references in the Bible about the relationship of the Word of God and Son of God to the Father is what Cumming (2012, 139) believes led the Church to articulate it in the doctrine of the Trinity.

2. Muslim Objections to the Divinity of Jesus and the Trinity

Muslims reject that God is a Holy Trinity (Vit Machálek 2014, 58), probably based on statements in the Qur’an such as, “do not say three” (Surah 4:171), “do not say God is third of three” (Surah 5:73), and that the other two gods apart from God are Jesus and Mary (Surah 5:116). The incarnation and divinity of Jesus connote the most significant difference between Islam and Christianity (Vit Machálek 2014, 60). Even if a great Muslim scholar like Ghazali never claimed that the Gospels were corrupted (Zwemer 1917, 144–58), mainline Islam has claimed that the verses in the Bible are forged and not original, and therefore, reject the Trinity. They claim that the doctrine is founded upon the decisions of the Christian councils and is incompatible with human logic (Madrigal 2011, xi–xii). Therefore, Muslims deduce that the doctrine of the Trinity is “one of the greatest faults in Christianity” (Tisdall 1904, 145) and that Christ was a mere human being created by God (Kamíl 2019, 129).

Al-Tabari (d. 855), being a Christian convert to Islam, used Christian Scriptures to show the humanity of Jesus and argued that his virgin birth and miracles of resurrecting the dead did not mean that he was divine (Kuhn 2019, 36). Abu Isa (d. 864) alleged that the Trinity was inconsistent with God’s transcendence (Kuhn 2019, 33–34). Al-Baqillani (d. 1013) asserted that the Trinity and incarnation contradicted Islamic Tawhid (unity of God) and rejected the discussion on the substance of God as Aristotelian (Kuhn 2019, 35). Al-Hamadhani (d. 1025) argued that God cannot be begetter and begotten and still be one God; the idea of human and divine natures of Christ mingling is impossible; and the conception of Word and Spirit in the Qur’an differs from Christian conceptions of them (Kuhn 2019, 40).

Ibn Taymiyyah (b. 1263) (N.D., 201–205) believed that Jesus Christ is no different than other human beings, and the title of Father and Son proves that one was before the other. He does admit that Matt 28:19 is a text in the Bible that alludes to the Trinity (albeit, the only text), yet alleges that Christians incorrectly exegeted the text, and argues that if one of God’s attributes (the Word) has become Son, then other attributes can also be called Son to be consistent (Cameron and Hoyland 2016, 376, 397).
3. PRESENTATIONS OF CHRISTOLOGY TO MUSLIMS

The Christian belief in Jesus as God necessitated a theological presentation encompassing that belief within a monotheistic framework (Davie 2016, 172), which culminated in the Trinity centuries before Islam came. Joseph Cumming’s dissertation (2020, 69) proposes that the early Islamic scholars knew that the refutation of Trinity in the Qur’an was not that which mainstream Christianity followed, but rather the unbiblical Trinity of God-Jesus-Mary. Later on, Muslims assumed that Christians associated other beings with God (Volf 2011, 129; Vit Machálek 2014, 58) by hailing Jesus as “the Son of God” (Kung 1987, 114) committing the unforgivable blasphemous sin (shirk). However, Cumming (2020, 400) argues that any interpretation of the Qur’an that accuses mainstream Christians of worshipping three gods “must explain why the Qur’an says Christians worship the same one God as Muslims” and since Surah 29:46 and Surah 42:15 acknowledged that Muslims are to say that they believe in the same God as the Christians, he believes that the burden of proof is on Muslims since they are going against their book by asserting that Christians worship a different god.

Madrigal (2011, xi) concludes that this “criticism against the Trinity (tathlith) stems from a mistaken understanding of the doctrine,” and Grigoryan (2011, 45) concurs that Muslim polemists used Tritheism (three quantifiable items) as a polemical motif, although they clearly understood Christian theology, which nowhere asserts three gods. Cumming (2020, 69), shedding light on the three verses in the Qur’an (4:171; 5:73; 5:116), has exposed that “the Qur’anic polemic is against the popular piety of individual non-theologically trained Christians” instead of “the mainstream Christian doctrine of the Triunity of the one God.” Even Muslim scholars like Ibn Kathir declared that these three verses referred to the God-Jesus-Mary Trinity (Cumming 2020, 86). After analyzing the conclusions of Ibn Kathir and many other early Muslim scholars of Islam, Cumming (2020, 12) concluded that all Muslim commentators are unanimous that these verses are “condemning God-Jesus-Mary tritheism; not mainstream Trinitarianism.” Regarding the possibility of interpreting the term “Son” metaphorically, Elkaisy-Freimuth (2011, 115) reported that the great Islamic scholar Al-Razi (b.1149) believed that since God was transcendent, therefore the Son could only be metaphorical. Cumming (2012, 140) informs us that the Muslim commentators had concluded that, “God’s Word is not identical with God’s Essence, nor is it anything other than God; rather God’s Word eternally and uncreatedly subsists in God’s Essence.”

3.1 The Word of God (Kalimatullah) in the Qur’an

Although Muslim objections are mainly centered around Christological claims of the divinity of Jesus, yet the titles that the Qur’an attributes to Jesus, such as
Kalimatullah (Word of God) in Surah 3:45 and Surah 4:171, require a deeper reflection. To present Jesus as the Word of God is probably the best explanation for Muslims because Dunzl (2007, 30) argues that the Logos (the Word) mediates the will of the creator of the world in salvation history without damaging the creator’s transcendence, and the Son represents the human element in Jesus.

The phrase “God the Word” was used repeatedly by Christian theologians such as Philonexus (Husseini 2011, 41–42) asserting that “God” refers to the nature and “Word” to the hypostasis and God the Word is distinct from Father and the Holy Spirit. The earliest Christian apologist to Muslims, John of Damascus (Husseini 2011, 46) stated, “He is one and not many, and... He has a Son (who is the Word) and a Spirit, whom together form the Trinity” (Husseini 2011, 48).

Some Christian theologians conclude “there is no notion of ‘the Word as a person’” in the Qur’an and since the incarnation is “rejected in Islam,” therefore, “Christology is absent in Islam” (Singh 2011, 7). Other scholars (Woodberry 2011, ix) claim that the Word of God and the Spirit of God in the Qur’an (5:110; 4:171; 66:12) presents the Qur’anic Christology of Jesus. Singh (2011, 8) believes that “a close examination would lead one to believe that the Qur’an and Muhammad were closer to the notion of ‘the Christhood of Jesus’ than has been accepted by both Christians and Muslims.” Cumming (2020, 70) substantiates that the original Muslim audience understood that the verses against the “three gods” (tala-tha) were not intended as a refutation of the mainstream Christian doctrine of the one God. In fact, the early Muslim refugees responded to the Abyssinian king that “Jesus is the servant and messenger of God, the spirit and word of God, whom God entrusted to the Virgin Mary” (Speight 1989, 2).

John of Damascus proposed that Christians should avoid using their own Scriptures for presenting their doctrinal beliefs but explain the Trinity using the language taken from the Qur’an because it sets the tone for the presentation of God as Triune (Beaumont 2012, 113). Parshall (Arredondo 2009, 127) concurs that there are positive references about Jesus in the Qur’an (Surah 4:171; 3:45) which should be used for sharing the gospel. He also asserted that although Jesus had many other titles, the designation of Jesus as “the Word of God” was more helpful for outreach than other references (Arredondo 2009, 159).

3.2 Ontological Son or Son of God Rejected in the Qur’an

Timothy I (781 C.E.) presented to the Caliph of his day by stating: “Muhammad taught about God, his Word, and His Spirit” (Mingana and Harris 1928, 197) as in Surah 4:171, where God, Word of God, and Spirit of God is presented, but the trinity of three is denied, and God having a son is rejected (Ebied and Thomas 2005, 304). This Qur’anic verse sets the framework for presenting the Triune God but denies the false Trinity of God, Mother Mary, and Jesus the Son as also noticed in
Surah 5:116 and 5:72. Therefore, every time the Qur’an denies God having a son (Surah 2:116; 10:68; 18:4; 19:91–92; 23:91; 112:3) or children (Surah 6:100), it presumes God having a wife (Surah 5:72; 5:116; 6:100). Surah 112:3 which says, “he begets not, nor is he begotten” clearly denies the ontological and metaphysical sense of begotten. No wonder the Qur’an in Surah 6:101 argues, “how could he have a son when he has no companion (wife)?” The Qur’an is referring to the ontological sense which the Qur’an repudiates and “what the Qur’an repudiates is what we Christians too repudiate, and not the true doctrine of the Trinity” (Tisdall 1904, 149).

The Trinity model of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (FSH) is not denied in the Qur’an nor is it assertively presented, but the God, Word, and Spirit (GWS) model is expressly mentioned in the Qur’an. The Qur’an presents Jesus as the Word of God (Kalimatullah) from heaven (Surah 3:45 and 4:171) and Jesus as the Spirit (Ruhallah) from God (Surah 21:91 and 4:171). The Qur’an implies the framework of the God, Word, and Spirit (GWS) model, but denies God the Father, Mother Mary, and Son Jesus (FMS) model based on this ontological background. Cumming (2012, 136) explicates that the Arabic word walada means to beget, like the Hebrew word, yalad. Muslim Arabs always seem to use the word walad (son) in the carnal sense, but Christian Arabs use a different word for son, ibn like the Hebrew word ben which can have a metaphorical sense.

3.3 Presentations of Christology in Islamic Contexts

The earliest dialogue between early Islam and the Najran Christians (Guillaume 1955, 657) in the seventh century (Beaumont 2012, 113) was mainly on the issue of Christology, which was not very different than the dialogues in later times (Singh 2011, 7).

After Islamic conquests began, Christians endeavored to defend their belief in the one essence (ousia) and three persons (hypostases) (Beaumont 2012, 112). In the eighth century, John of Damascus (d. 750) authored “the earliest known written defense of Christian beliefs about Christ” (Beaumont 2003, 26), proposing to find links to true beliefs within Muslim Scriptures (Beaumont 2012, 113). He capitalized on the Qur’anic assertions about Christ as “the Word and Spirit of God” and proposed that these titles should be used as a missional approach (Beaumont 2003, 28–29, Surah 3:45, 5:110). He suggested that Christians should make an exposition of their doctrinal beliefs on grounds acceptable to Muslims (Beaumont 2012, 113) by using the Arabic language and the Qur’an (Beaumont, 2003, 27) to draw the two faiths together (Block 2014).

John’s presentation did not use the sonship of Christ but he presented the Qur’anic Christ as the Word and Spirit of God, which put Muslims on the defensive (Beaumont 2003, 29) because he asserted that God’s Word and Spirit are equivalent
to the Son and Holy Spirit. He asserted that if they denied these attributes, it would mean God was without his Word and spirit (Beaumont 2003, 29); thus, they would be mutilating him in the pursuit of avoiding associates with God (Beaumont 2012, 113).

By the end of the 8th Century, Timothy I, in his dialogue with Caliph al-Mahdi (781 C.E.), discussed the Trinity, incarnation, and Christian Scriptures (Kuhn 2019, 42). He showed the distinction between Christ's eternal sonship and his temporal one by emphasizing that “the Messiah was born of the Father as his Word and that he was born of the Virgin Mary as a man” (Beaumont 2005, 23). Like John, Timothy presented arguments for the validity of Christology on principles that Muslims can agree with (Beaumont 2003, 44).

Anonymous *Apology for the Trinity and Incarnation*, also written in the 8th century declares, “We do not distinguish God from His Word and His Spirit, we don’t worship another God alongside God” (Beaumont 2012, 113). He further states that “just as there cannot be heat without fire or rays without sun, or words with a mind, there cannot be the Word of God without God” (Beaumont 2003, 33).

The theological dialogues between Christians and Muslims were at their peak in the ninth century (Goddard 2000, 54–55) but it was also a time when Muslims began writing against the Trinity (Thomas 1992), and their dialogue went much further than those engaged in the eighth Century (Beaumont 2003, 44). Three theologians operated under the pressure of the Islamic rule at this time: Abu Qur-ra, Abu Raita, and Ammar al-Basri (Ebied and Thomas 2005, 306).

Abu Qurra (755–829 C.E.) avoided using the “Word,” two natures of Christ, and the concept of “hypostasis” in Christian-Muslim dialogue but insisted that the eternal Son entered the womb of Mary and “took to himself a human body.”

Abu Raita (810–834 C.E.) on the other hand, presented the eternal Word who united with the human body from Mary. He used language that is sensitive to Muslims in order to defend the incarnation but refrained from using eternal Son, or God as the Father; instead, he used *sifat* (attributes of God) and the verb “take” to prove that the Word of God took a human body (Beaumont 2005, 97–101).

Ammar al-Basri (early to mid-ninth Century) ascribed to God two attributes of Life and Word, which he emphasized are “the very being and structure of God’s essence itself” (Ebied and Thomas 2005, 307–308) and argued that for God to communicate most fully, he decided to speak directly to human beings in the form of a human (Ebied and Thomas 2005, 309–310).

In the tenth century, Yahya Ibn ‘Adi (893–974 C.E.) defended plurality in divinity and emphasized God’s substance being hidden, but asserted that his *sifat* (attributes) is evident through his actions (Kuhn 2019, 49). He presented three principles of the Divinity: his goodness, wisdom, and power, which corresponds to his being, word, and life (Madrigal 2011, 15; Gill 1731, 7).
In the eleventh century, Bishop Illiya of Nisibis (d. 1046 C.E.), in his dialogue with Abu al-Qasim (1027 C.E.), used the term *hikmah* (wisdom), emphasizing that an essential attribute of God, the Eternal Word of God, united with Christ (Kuhn 2017, 193). He presented that both the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit are caused by the essence. This essence is named “a Father,” the Word “a Son,” and Life “a Spirit.” He said, “as the essence of the soul, its speech and its life are but one soul and the essence of the sun, its heat, and its light are but one sun, so also the divine essence, the Word and the Spirit are but one God” (Kuhn 2019, 109).

In the thirteenth century, St. Francis of Assisi tried to reach out to Muslims, hoping to convert many to Christianity. Though he was unsuccessful, he counseled others to be willing to suffer, ready for martyrdom, and serve Muslims with the love of Jesus (Smither 2018, 290). He became an inspiration to Ramon Lull, a Franciscan monk who was probably “the first and greatest missionary to Muslims,” who developed a logical machine in an art form in which he exalted the doctrine of Trinity, which he felt was central to evangelism, and portrayed theological propositions in circles, squares, triangles, and other geometric figures to convince his opponents (Gomez 2018).

In the fourteenth century (1316 C.E.), an anonymous author wrote a letter from Cyprus, which Paul of Antioch had originally written to the Muslim Sheikh, probably in the 11th Century (Ebied and Thomas 2005, 312). Treiger (2019, 33) is convinced that the letter was written in 1200 C.E. and was refuted by Shihab al-Din al-Qarafi (d. 1258). The Christians of Cyprus sent this letter to defend their faith in the early fourteenth century to Muslim scholars, Tāqī al-Dīn Ahmad Ibn-Taymiyya in 1316, and Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī who responded to the letter in 1321. The Cypriot author of this letter was fluent in reading and writing Arabic and had good knowledge of the Qur’ān since he corrects some Qur’ānic quotations of Paul of Antioch but maintains the thrust of Paul’s letter, that the Qur’ān supports Christian beliefs. Instead of using the logical and rational arguments of Paul, he used Qur’ānic scriptural proofs (Ebied and Thomas 2005, 312).

When Spain gained control of the Muslim-held part of Spain in the fifteenth century, Christian polemists suggested restricting Muslims by introducing laws to discourage interaction with Christians but instead “proposed intensifying either missionary efforts or the crusade” (Wiegers 2013, 481).

On the Indian sub-continent, the Jesuits and the Mughal Emperor Akbar (1542–1605 C.E.) held a dialogue on the Trinity and divinity of Jesus in the 16th Century (Maclagan 1932, 29). The emperor encouraged such dialogues to take place in his court as a part of his liberal policies and is known for setting up din-i-ilahi (the religion of God) in 1581, which was a synthesis of several religions (Nagina 2011, 17; Sastri 1941, 221; Frykenberg 2008, 88). Such discussions continued between the Jesuits and the Mughal Emperor Jahangir between 1608 to 1611 on the issues of Trinity and biblical authenticity (Khan 2013, 244).
Discourse on the Trinity and Christology in South Asia in the 19th century was led by missionary theologians such as Valpy French (1825–1891) and Karl G. Pfander (1803–1865), and outstanding Muslim converts to Christianity and Christian apologists, such as Safdar Ali (1830–1899), Imaduddin Lahiz (1830–1900), Abdullah Atham (1828–1896), and Thakur Das (1821–1880) (Becht 2018, 156, 247, 258).

Professional missionaries, tracts, and conversions brought a “religious innovation” in South Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries (Jones 1989, 1) by adopting an aggressive approach of relating with Muslims, but Muslims reciprocated in equal measure (Powell 1976, 43–44). This confrontational approach (Powell 1993, 76; Frykenberg 2008, 272) became common among missionaries and the converts (Gairdner 1909, 330; Smith 1892, 415; Montgomery 1904, 74; Becht 2018, 212). Muslims were not far behind in adopting the same approach (Kamil 2019). The Great Agra Debate (10–11 April 1854) took place between Rahmat Allah al-Khairanwi (1818–1891 C.E.) and Karl Pfander (Powell 1976, 44). For Pfander, the problem of Muslims with the Trinity lay in their misunderstanding of it as cited in As-Şuyūṭī on Surah 5:77, and Baidāwi and Yahya on Surah 4:156 who understood that “the Virgin Mary was a goddess and was one of three separate deities” (Pfander 1896, 177; Kamal 2019, 121). Tensions were intensified when Karl Pfander’s book, The Balance of Truth refuted Muhammad’s claim to prophethood and highlighted his sensuality and violence (Smith 1998, 358). Such views have been expressed by other missionaries too (Zwemer 1916, 197 cited in Smith 1998, 362).

Powell (1976, 53) believes that the Christians lost the Agra debate and the munazara (aggressive public debates) had a negative impact on the Christian mission (Miller 2005, 373). Unlike Muslims who presented a united front, Christians neither offered an effective response nor worked cooperatively (Cox 2002, 3), and the issues selected for the munazara were still being debated towards the end of the 19th and the early 20th centuries (Kamil 2019, 251).

Becht (2018, 212) and Kamil (2019) in their doctoral works highlight the presentation of Imaduddin Lahiz (1822–1900), an important 19th-century Muslim convert who became a renowned Christian apologist of the Trinity. He defended the doctrine of divine sonship based on God’s personal revelation to him (Kamil 2019, 128). Just as Michael Nazir-Ali (1987, 16) points out that the Islamic doctrine of bila kaif means to “accept without asking how,” so the Trinity can be accepted without asking how or through personal revelation as Imaduddin believed. Imaduddin argued that since the apostle John in 1 John 1:1–2 called God the “Father” and referred to Kalima (Word) as the Word of Life, then that proves he is undoubtedly God. Since he existed with God from eternity as in John 1:1, it shows unity, personal identity, and the Sonship of the Word (Kamil 2019, 131). Since Kalima (Word) has in himself “life, light, grace, and truth” (John 1:4, 14, 16–17), which only exists in God, then Christ is Allah (Kamil 2019, 132). He also argued from the Qur’an presenting the divinity of Jesus through the concepts of Maliki yaun al-
The Church's Presentation of Christology in Islamic Contexts

Din (Master of the Day of Judgement), Second Adam, and al-Ruh (Spirit), all of which are attributed to Jesus even by Muslim scholars (Kamil 2019, 141–142). Imaduddin especially presented Jesus as the al-Ruh (the Spirit) because Muslims believe that al-Ruh will judge the earth (Surah 78:38–39) and this al-Ruh after the incarnation was called Jesus Christ (Kamil 2019, 141–142). He wrote (Lahiz 1868, 422, 425) that Muslims refute the Trinity without realizing that Muhammad and the Qur'an rejected a different Trinity (God, Jesus, and Mary as in Surah 5:116).

In the early 20th Century, William Tisdall (1904, 145) explained that in the doctrine of the Trinity “there is but one God; but in this Godhead, the Most High God, the Word of God, and the Spirit of God, these three, are present in a way which man cannot comprehend.” Beaumont (2005, xxi–xxiv) believes that two periods are most important in the history of Christian Muslim dialogue, the 9th and late 20th century. In the 9th century, Middle Eastern apologists presented to Christian audiences and responded to Muslims challenging the Christian faith. In the 20th Century, Western theologians Kenneth Cragg, Hans Kung, and John Hick, were all involved in dialogue with Christology as their central theme (Singh 2011, 7). Cragg emphasized both the incarnation and atonement through Jesus, through whom God is revealed. Hick argued that God was not in Christ, but there was a functional relationship between God and Jesus. Jesus was a man filled with God’s Spirit and, thus, a good example of spirituality. Kung argued that Jesus did not claim to be an incarnation of God in an ontological sense, but these were added later by NT writers and by creeds. He claimed that Jesus’ sonship is adoptive and not substantial (Beaumont 2005, 191–193).

In the 21st Century, Media ministry through Youtube and Internet TV has progressed. Sam Shamoun, David Wood, Christian Prince, and many others have been discussing topics related to the identity of Jesus and the coverage is unprecedented. Jay Smith and others have been using the Speakers’ Corner platform in the United Kingdom to dialogue. Now they are mainly using media ministry since the Covid-19 pandemic, to share the message to millions. After Nabeel Qureshi’s book Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus (2014) became the New York Times bestseller, he wrote another book No God but One (2016) comparing the God of Islam and Christianity. The impact of these recent activities will be noticed in the days to come but the message is reaching a much greater audience than ever before in the history of Christian Muslim relations.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Large-scale conversions to Christianity have been extremely rare throughout much of Islam’s history (Garrison 2014, 15–18), probably due to the difficulty in presenting the divinity of Jesus and the Trinity, which Muslims perceive is the weakest point in the Christian faith (Tisdall 1904, 8). The Christian presentation
of the Trinity is that there is only one God (Astika 2012, 1–15) but “he is one being in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (Qureshi 2016, 56, 58).

Since the presentation of the mainstream Church about Jesus focused on the Son of God concept, it inevitably led to the ontological issues: procession, generation, and eternal generation. Throughout Christian history, the presentations have mainly been on how Jesus, the Son of God, was divine or how Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit is the “divine family” (Gruenler 1986, 23). They used the Son-ship statements in the New Testament to prove the Trinity, but to show that the Trinity was presented in the Old Testament, Christian theologians have relied on the concept of the Word of God as evidence (Davie 2016, 921). As noted in this paper, since the beginning of Islam, it was mainly those reaching out to Muslims who presented Jesus as the Word of God, but mainstream Christianity used the Son of God framework, and it is still the case today.

In response to Surah 5:72–73, John of Damascus “refashions the phraseology to include Christ the Word and Holy Spirit in the definition of One True God,” which leads Beaumont (2012, 114) to allege that “such a language would not have been necessary for a treatise written before the challenge of Islam.” However, my premise is, such language was deemed necessary in the early church when they wanted to find the Trinity in the [Old Testament], presenting the “personification of both Word and Spirit as evidence for this” (Davie 2016, 921).

Madrigal (2011, 18) believes that both Muslims and Christians accept three characteristics of God: his transcendent being, his conscious being, his immanent being. He, therefore, proposes that the Being, Word, and Spirit have been revealed within the terms of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which can be described as follows: The Father, the divine essence, the transcendent God, God is love. The Son, the divine Word, the conscious God, God is light. The Holy Spirit, the divine action, the immanent God, God is Spirit. Presenting the Word who exists in God, Madrigal (2011, 17–18) states that when he is sent in the form of the living book (as Jesus Christ), then the Word is called by the name of the Son by whom we know or encounter God (Myers 2014, 27–28).

Christian authors who present the Trinity in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (FSH) model to Muslims are faced with the issues of ontology. I would like to ask, is it possible that his core identity and name is “Word of God” (Rev 19:13), but his manifestation to humanity is in the framework of the “Son of God?” In line with this concept, Gibson (2018, 124), clarifying Hebrews 1:6 states, “Jesus became God’s ‘begotten’ and ‘firstborn’ Son at the point of His birth” although the declaration was already made in Ps 2:7. The Father said in Heb 1:6, “I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son,” not, “I am to Him a Father and He is to Me a Son.” Dunzl (2007, 5) asserts that Jesus Christ the Son is the incarnation of the Logos, the Divine Word, which proves how the Deity lives in bodily form in him (Col 2:9). Although the Gospel of John introduces the concept of Logos,
yet, Pollard (1970, 67) believes that the Gospel of John is not about the logos, but the Son of God since the Word who already existed in times past was incarnated as the Son (John 1:14). The Eternal Word introduced in the prologue is called the Son in the rest of the Gospel of John (Countryman 1994, 14). As the Word of God, he spoke the worlds into existence (Heb 1:3) but he has spoken to us in these last days by His Son (Heb 1:2).

Cumming (2012, 139–140) believes that “we can have a constructive conversation if we think about the relationship of God’s Word to God’s own being” because there is a relationship of God’s Word to God’s essence since it is eternal and uncreated and “subsists in God’s essence.” Cumming (2020, 427) believes that “God is one” is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, yet “God is love” summarizes the essence of the Christian faith. If God is love, and he is eternal, then his love is not self-love but is a love that gives for the other and is effectively expressed in the Trinity, incarnation, and the cross. It was expressed within the Trinity before God created anything. Gibson (2020, 13) states that “without knowing God as a relational dynamic of more than one person, the premise that ‘God is love’ vanishes up the theological chimney in smoke.”

Aquinas believed the “Word of God is the expression of all that is in the Father” and “Word is the proper name of the Son” (Emery 2010, 191, 195). Therefore, he was eternally the Word with the Father, but at one point, the Father said, “He shall be to Me a Son” (Heb 1:6).

These research questions have led me to the following conclusions. The concept of the “Son” within the FSH model has generally impeded Muslim acceptance due to the connotations of generation, procession, and begottenness, which seem to portray the ontological sense which the Qur’an denies. Gibson (2018, 222) states that “Sonship is a human vocation, not a divine one, but a human vocation that God took up on our behalf. The Sonship of Christ is not His inherently divine identity, but His assumed human identity in solidarity with us.” While the understanding and presentation of mainstream Christianity has been on the Son of God in an FSH model, the Christian Muslim dialogue has been successful when the Word of God framework is presented in the GWS model as noted in the presentations of Christology in Islamic contexts at different periods of history.

The recommendation from this research is that the presentation of Christology in Islamic contexts be done in three steps. First, start with the Qur’an by accepting that the Qur’an denies the “Son” in the ontological sense within the God the Father, Mary the Mother, Jesus the Son (FMS) model (Surah 4:171; 5:116; 5:73) but does not deny nor present the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (FSH) model. Second, present the Word of God in the GWS model (God, Word, and Spirit) from the Qur’an (Surah 3:45; 4:171; 21:91) and the Bible (John 1:1; Gen 1:3; Ps 33:6). Third, use the Bible to present the Son in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (FSH) model.
model, emphasizing the sonship within its covenant sense as portrayed in the Old Testament story, rather than the ontological sense.

Instead of starting with the framework of the Son of God, present the framework of the Word of God, before presenting the Son of God. We need to remember that the “doctrine of the Trinity of persons in the unity of divine essence is, without controversy, a great mystery of godliness” and therefore we, being “the ministers of Christ, are stewards of the mysteries of God, whose business it is to make known the mystery of the gospel to others” (Gill 1731, 2).

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Does James “Show Thee Christ?”: A Comparison of the Content and Communication Styles of Jesus and James (Matthew 7:7–27 vs. James 1:2–27)

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Abstract: James “shows” the reader “Christ” by alluding to and developing many concepts taught by Jesus. In Jas 1:2–27 and Matt 7:7–21, both refer to the same idea: being a hearer of Jesus’ words is not enough; a genuine disciple must also be a doer. The methodology of stylistics is employed to compare in depth these two pericopes: an overview from a literary perspective, verbal vs. nominal styles, verb density, use of pronouns, types of verbs and adjectives, word size, sentence complexity, variety, size and structure, types of adverbial clauses, sentence changes, images, and types of propositions. In comparison to Jesus as a “prophetic preacher,” James is a “leisurely educator.” While both Jesus and James in these passages use much figurative language and many explanatory sentences, their styles of communication have significant differences.

Keywords: Stylistics, James, Jesus, Parable of the Sower, Rhetoric, Figurative Language

Martin Luther is renowned for his comment regarding James’s letter in his 1522 introduction to the first edition of his German New Testament. He writes that Saint James’s epistle is a “right strawy epistle in comparison with” Saint John’s Gospel and Saint Paul’s epistles and Saint Peter’s first epistle because it does not “show thee Christ” and it “has no gospel character to it.” However, in this article, I will show how James echoes many of Jesus’ teachings. James is interested in numerous topics that interest Jesus and his perspective on those topics is similar to Jesus’ perspective. Both James and Jesus were reared in the same home—and not a wealthy one. Furthermore, it is likely that James heard Jesus preach. We are told that Mary and Jesus’ siblings were sometimes present at Jesus’ teaching. James may not have fully accepted Jesus’ claims for himself during Jesus’ earthly lifetime, but he could not keep away from Jesus’ preaching and certainly accepted his half-brother’s claims later.

COMPARING THE TEACHING CONTENTS OF JESUS AND JAMES

James shows the reader Christ by developing many concepts taught by Jesus. For example, James develops an important parable Jesus used: the parable of the sower. The parable illustrates perseverance and the demonstration of understanding by moving from hearing to doing. For James, the “word” that is sown in different soils is central to Jesus’ teachings.

Jesus and James also place priority on applying the Ten Commandments to their disciples’ lives. Both refer to the summary of the Ten Commandments (love your neighbor as yourself) and to the first, sixth, seventh, and tenth commandments (to love God and not to commit adultery, murder, or coveting).

James, like Jesus, employs the analogy of defining a tree by its fruit. Actions provide evidence of what someone believes. Both are teachers who warn their listeners that teachers have to guard the words they say. They both warn against hypocrisy and the danger of demons and hell and falling under God’s judgment.

James and Jesus center on several similar and important concepts, including humility and gentleness; self-identification as a slave; perfection or maturity; reversal of positions; evil coming from within, and, therefore, transformation having to begin with the inside; asking in faith without doubt to a generous God; joy; impartiality; peace; righteousness; purity (Jas 3:17; 4:8; Matt 5:8);

2 For similar comparisons, see McKnight 2011, 25–27; Mayor 1913, bxxv–lci; McCartney 2009, 49–52; Brosend II 2004, 11; Painter and DeSilva 2012, 34–39. Also see Shepherd 1956, 40–51; Harten 1990, 140–217.
12 Jas 4:12; 5:7–9; Matt 10:28; 24:33; 25:46.
13 Jas 1:9–11; 21; 3:1; 4:16, 10; Matt 11:28–30; 18:2–4; 23:12.
14 Jas 1:11; Matt 20:26–28; 23:11–12; Mark 10:43–45.
15 Jas 1:11; 17; 21–5; 32; Matt 5:47–48; 12:35.
20 Jas 2:1; Matt 7:2; Luke 20:21; John 7:24.
grace (Jas 4:6; John 1:14, 17); forgiveness (Jas 5:15–16; Matt 6:14–15; 9:2–8; 12:32); mercy (Jas 2:13; 3:17; Matt 9:13; 12:7); and having a similar attitude to the future (Jas 4:13–15; Matt 6:34) and toward judgment (Jas 2:4, 13; 4:11–12; Matt 7:1–2). James emphasizes in his letter what Jesus considered to be the "weightier matters of the law" (justice and mercy and faith, Matt 23:23), that God is good and generous (Jas 1:5–15; Matt 6:14–15; 9:2–8; 12:32) and that God is the Lord of glory (Jas 2:1; Matt 24:30; 25:31; Luke 9:29–32; John 1:14). Both Jesus and James are very sympathetic to the poor and critical of the rich; neither are sympathetic to anger and swearing.

Both enjoy using a variety of images from nature in their teaching: sowing seeds, sunlight, rain, birds, the wavering sea as a symbol for doubt (Jas 1:6–8; Matt 8:23–27; 14:24–31), the temporary nature of wild flowers (Jas 1:11; Matt 6:28–30), vineyards (Jas 3:12; Matt 20:1–8; 21:28–41), fig trees (Jas 3:12; Matt 21:19–21), salt (Jas 3:11–12; Matt 5:13), laughing and mourning (Jas 4:9; 5:1; Matt 5:4; Luke 6:21, 25), moth and rust, and "above" as a synecdoche for God's presence (Jas 1:17; John 8:23). They both use the terms "brother" and "sister" (Bryan 2019, 312–313) and "twelve tribes" (Jas 1:1; Matt 19:28). In illustrations, both employ the masculine for the concrete and the generic for the abstract (Jas 1:6–8; Matt 7:24–26) and use many rhetorical questions to engage their listeners. Like other Jews, they consider Abraham and Elijah to be model believers and esteem being friends of God.

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21 Jas 2:16; 3:17–18; Matt 5:9; 10:12–13, 34–38; Mark 5:34.
28 Jas 1:4–15; Matt 12:49–50. The only time Jesus includes himself as one of the "brothers" is after the resurrection when commanding the women and Mary Magdalene to go to "my brothers" (Matt 28:10; John 20:17), other than his defining of his genuine "brother and sister and mother" as someone who does the will of his Father (Matt 12:48–50; Mark 3:33–35; Luke 8:21). Steven M. Bryan (2019, 312–313) concludes that Matthew's narrative indicates that Jesus' death will secure the forgiveness of sins and the formation of a new covenant. The original constitution of Israel as the Twelve comprised "Judah and his brothers" (Matt 12), so now Israel's reconstitution as the messianic people is represented by "Jesus and his brothers."
29 In Matt 7:7–27, Jesus uses four rhetorical questions out of 19 sentences (21%). James has no rhetorical questions in chapter 1, but in ch. 2 he uses 8 rhetorical questions.
Both of them treat synagogues as important\(^{31}\) and are called to minister to the “lost sheep of Israel” (Jas 1:1; Matt 10:5–6; 15:24). Not only were James and Jesus both teachers, they also furthered healing, prayer, and transformation. But, for James, healing was done in Jesus’ name.\(^{32}\)

Thus, James shows Christ by alluding to and developing Jesus’ teachings. Jesus preached, “Repent, for God’s reign has come near,” proclaiming good news to the poor, healing for the needy, and freedom to the oppressed. So also James taught God’s royal law, which frees.\(^{33}\) What Jesus taught was “gospel,” and James applies that gospel to his own context.

### COMPARING THE TEACHING STYLES OF JESUS AND JAMES

What about style or manner of communication? James 1:22 appears to be a rephrasing of the climax of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:24a. Jesus summarizes his teachings: “Everyone who hears my words and does them,” while James’s main point of his letter is encapsulated as: “Become doers of the word and not only hearers” (1:22a). Both emphasize the same word families: “hear,” “word,” and “do” (ἀκούω, ἀκροατής; λόγος; ποιέω, ποιητής). Each word use then follows with a positive and negative illustration. Jesus has an illustration about a man building his house on the rock or the sand, while James’s illustration is about a man observing his face in a mirror and another person stooping to look. In each illustration, they both use the masculine noun “man” (ἀνήρ) to make the story concrete but then employ generic pronouns to generalize to “everyone” (πᾶς, Matt 7:24, 26) and “any one” (τις, Jas 1:23) and “the one having stooped” (ὁ παρακύψας; Spencer et al. 2010, 99).\(^{34}\)

To make this comparison, I chose to compare two passages of more than 300 Greek words each: Matthew 7:7–27 (380 words) and James 1:2–27 (391 words). Three hundred words are the minimum for a Greek stylistic study (more words are needed in English) (Leaska 1977).\(^{35}\) James’s pericope is part of a letter sent to Jewish Christians; while Jesus’ words are delivered to a crowd including his disciples, quoted by Matthew in his narrative.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{33}\) Jas 1:25; 2:5, 8, 12; Matt 11:5; Luke 4:38, 43; John 8:32, 36.

\(^{34}\) Peter also uses ἀνήρ to describe himself as a Jewish male in contrast to the more general and generic ἄνθρωπος for gentiles and Jews.

\(^{35}\) Professor Mitchell A. Leaska (1977) recommends 500 up to 1,000 English words, each of comparable genre. The TEV has 461 words for Matt 7:7–27 and 593 for Jas 1:2–27.

Is Matthew 7:7–27 Matthew’s rendition or his recollection of Jesus’ words? If one thinks these are Matthew’s “rendition,” one may still appreciate my style study as an exploration of Matthew’s rendition of Jesus’ selection of words as compared to James’s in his first chapter. Nevertheless, I have concluded these are indeed Matthew’s accurate recollections of Jesus’ words. At the very least, we can conclude that these words attributed to Jesus were delivered by powerful preaching advocating for truth from a basis of great authority!

The overall messages of Matthew 7 and James 1 are similar. Both passages include extended similes (unusual in Greek). According to Aristotle and Demetrius, came down to a level place and then “stood” (6:12, 17). This latter crowd was more diverse with people from as far away as Tyre and Sidon. I think that the Sermon on the Mountain and the Sermon on the Plain are two different discourses before Jesus entered into Capernaum that have some similar elements, which is not unusual since preachers and teachers repeat messages with some changes depending on the crowd. I picked the discourse in Matthew since it is more developed. Also, some might agree with Nolland (2005, 343) that Matthew’s form “is generally judged to be closer to an original oral form.” In Matthew, a storm brings “battering winds along with heavy autumnal rains and associated flooding” (Nolland 2005, 343). The “sand” might be a dry river bed in a wadi (Trites 2006, 116). In Luke, a river overflows its banks in flood time (Nolland 2005, 343). In Luke, a “human” digs deep to lay a foundation upon a rock versus one who simply builds on the ground/earth/soil γῆ, 6:49) without a foundation; while in Matthew, a “man” builds his house upon rock versus upon “sand” (ἀμμος, 7:26). This “sand” is most likely the sand on a seashore, which is the common use in the Bible (e.g., Gen 22:17; Rom 9:27; Heb 11:12; Rev 13:1; 20:8). It is true that Matthew may group events together (e.g., Trites, 105), but this discourse is presented as a unit with a beginning (Matt 5:1) and an end (Matt 7:28–29). For a variety of hypotheses about the sermons, see Plummer 1922, 176–78.

Here are several reasons:

1. Jesus promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would bring his words to the recollection of his disciples (John 14:25–26; 15:26–27; 16:12–14; Luke 22:61). What would be more natural than that Matthew, one of Jesus’ original twelve apostles, should hear and write Jesus’ own words? As a tax collector, he was accustomed to being accurate. The early church overwhelmingly supported Matthew as the first writer of Jesus’ life (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.24, 39; 5.8; 6.25).

2. The Bible claims to be accurate on the grounds that it was revealed by God, as Jesus confirmed: “God is true. For whom God has sent speaks God’s words” (John 3:33–34). See further, Spencer 2009, 32–33.

3. Jesus most likely spoke Greek in public settings. Galilee was known as bilingual. By the end of the second century B.C., Greek was firmly entrenched in Israel. Aramaic was the language of intimacy (Robertson 1934, 26–29; Millard 2001; Fitzmeyer 1970).

4. Ancient historians were much more accurate than we may think (Spencer 2009; Hemer 1990, 75; Quintilian, *Inst.* XI.2.25; XI.2.2; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* I.5). The speeches in Acts show the style and vocabulary of the speakers (e.g., Mayor 1913, iii–iv).

5. Word-for-word memorization was practiced by the ancient Jews, Greeks, and early Christians (Gerhardsson 1961; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.20; Keener 2012, 288–297; Schürer 1979, 333).
similes are more poetical than metaphors (Rhetoric III.4.2; On Style 89). Both use metaphors and similes (images) from nature and human experiences, such as “from their fruits, you will know them” (Matt 7:16) and “we may be a kind of firstfruit of his creations” (Jas 1:18).

I have so far observed similar content and some style similarities between James and Jesus. My goal now is to analyze further the rhetoric of these two brothers (from a human perspective) by using the methodologies from stylistics for an in-depth analysis: an overview from a literary perspective, verbal vs. nominal style, verb density, use of pronouns, types of verbs and adjectives, word size, sentence complexity, variety, size and structure, types of adverbial clauses, sentence changes, images, and types of propositions.

The methodology I used is comparative stylistics. “Stylistics” is the use of linguistics as a tool of literary criticism by which to investigate the aesthetic effects of language. Literary criticism is the study or analysis of the meaning of a text by means of the study of style, or how something is communicated by author/speaker to reader/listener. Stylistics focuses on the style of a text. It is comparative. It derives from the quantitative aspects of linguistics and rhetorical aspects of literary studies.

As in rhetorical criticism, stylistics includes an analysis of how the structural parts and rhetorical devices of a text make the sequence and shift of a whole text. Biblical rhetorical criticism tends to study the larger aspects of style (genre/form) rather than the smaller aspects of style (a sentence and its component parts). The bases for many of the stylistic features I used come from Greek and Roman rhetoricians such as Aristotle, The Art of Rhetoric & Poetics, Demetrius, On Style, and Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria.

Discourse analysis, as stylistics, is rooted in linguistics and literary studies. Literary criticism does not share the same goals as form or source criticism, which aim to be historical, often seeking hypothetical sources. In contrast, genuine literary criticism concentrates on the final form of the text regardless of its prehistory (Spencer 1991, 235–240).

Before I began this study, I thought James’s style of writing was direct and prophetic, but after completing the study I have concluded that, in comparison to Jesus, James is indirect and explanatory. We may summarize by saying Jesus’ style of speaking is that of a prophetic preacher—no wonder he engendered much criticism—while James’s style is more like the didactic educator—who even now is not always understood. But, in the end, both were martyred.

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38 A metaphor is an implied or implicit comparison between two things of unlike nature that yet have something in common so that one or more properties of the first are attributed to the second. A simile is an explicit comparison. See Spencer 1998, 195–97, 207.
39 Matt 7:16–18 is very similar to Jas 3:12, but the main point of Jas 1 is closer to Matt 7.
40 For descriptions, see Spencer 1998, 17–38.
Matthew 7:7–27

Matthew ends the discourse called the Sermon on the Mount noting that when Jesus “finished these words,” “the crowd was amazed upon his teaching; for [Jesus] was teaching them as having authority and not as their scribes” (7:28–29). Ἑκπλήσσω, according to Thayer (1889, 199), signifies literally “to strike out, expel by a blow.” The crowd was “blown away” by Jesus’ teaching; they were astonished and panicky. Of course, one reason would be that Jesus did not get his authority from other rabbis. But the crowd’s reaction pointed to more than that! Jesus powerfully and prophetically communicated.42

In this discourse, Jesus uses much figurative language. He begins this section with simple but pleonastic43 metaphors: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you; for all the one asking receives, and the one seeking finds and to the one knocking, it will be opened” (7:7–8, sentence 1). His metaphors are active and positive: seek, find, knock, open. He continues with three extended metaphors or parables. Parable one is in verses 9–11 (sentences 2–4): “Or, which human is there from you, whom his son will ask for bread, a stone instead he will give to him? Or, also, he will ask for a fish, a snake instead he will give to him? Therefore, if you being evil, know good gifts to give to your children, how much more your Father, the One in the heavens, will give good things to the ones asking him?” (7:9–11).44 Why should they ask God, which was Jesus’ exhortation in vv.7–8? Not only because God will respond to the asking, seeking, and knocking, but because of God’s character. Jesus uses a qal wahomer:45 if in the case of evil human beings the son receives the appropriate gift, how much more from the completely good and loving Parent in heaven will an heir receive. Jesus concludes in v. 12: “Therefore, all which you might wish that humans might do to you, in the same way also you yourselves do to them; for such is the law and the prophets” (sentence 5). If you want a good gift, give one yourself!46

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41 The verb literally is they “were struck out of themselves” (Robertson 1930, 63) or “stricked out of” their “senses” (BDAG, 308).
42 John Nolland (2005, 345) notes that Matthew will “identify Jesus’ authority as given him by God.”
43 Pleonasm is repetition of words and clauses of similar content (Spencer 1998, 203–204).
44 My translations are literal to facilitate the stylistic analysis of the Koine Greek, for example, to indicate sentence order and participles in Greek. They are not intended to be dynamic equivalents appropriate to the English-speaking reader.
45 Qal wahomer in Hebrew means “lightness and heaviness.”
46 John Nolland (2005, 330) suggests the Golden Rule is a call to be “radically geared to the well-being of the neighbor.”
Humans are to seek God, but how? Jesus explains with the second parable, another extended pleonastic metaphor (sentence 6): "Enter through the narrow gate; since the gate is wide and the way is broad, the one leading into destruction, and many are the ones entering through it; for the gate is narrow and the way is hard, the one leading into life, and few are the ones finding it" (7:13–14). The way is difficult to find God.

One such obstacle might be false prophets because they do not appear to be what they are in reality (sentence 7): “Be on guard from the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but within are ravenous wolves” (7:15). How then do you recognize a true versus a false prophet? It is by their “fruits” or actions (7:16, sentence 8): “Surely they do not gather from thorn-plants grapes or from thistles fig trees? Thus, every good tree good fruits makes, but the rotten tree bad fruits makes. A good tree is not able bad fruits to make nor a rotten tree good fruits to make. Every tree not making good fruit is cut down and into a fire is thrown. Consequently, from their fruits you will yourself know them completely”47 (7:16b–20, sentences 9–13). In this third extended metaphor or parable, Jesus provides the general principle in vv. 17–18 and the consequences for the false prophets are presented in v. 19. In v. 20, he repeats the point from v. 16: actions define the real person.

In vv. 21–22, Jesus initiates a related point, speaking both to the believer and to the false prophet. Verbal declarations are not enough (sentences 14–15): ‘Not everyone saying to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but the one doing the will of my Father, the one in the heavens. Many will ask me in that day: ‘Lord, Lord, did not in your name we prophesied, and in your name we cast out demons, and in your name we did many miracles?’” Jesus uses pleonasm and some parallel terms48 to show the similarities between the prophet, exorcist, and miracle workers (three dynamic gifts), but, because of their “lawless deeds” (v. 7:23), they will not find God (v. 7) nor lead anyone to God. They each repeat “in your name,” placing the prepositional phrase before the verb each modifies (“we prophesied,” “we cast out demons,” “we did”). Even though they repeat the endearing words, “Lord, Lord,” Jesus was not their lord and he did not know them: “And then I will declare to them that: ‘Never I knew you. Depart from me, the ones working lawless deeds” (7:23, sentences 16–17).

Jesus repeats his main principle in v. 24 (sentence 18): “Therefore, everyone who hears these my words and does them.” This is the same principle that James will develop in his letter.

He now moves from extended metaphors to two extended and related similes. These antithetic similes are developed in 7:24–25 and 7:26–27 (“will be like a wise man, who built his house upon a rock…” and “will be like a foolish man,

47 Ἐπιγινώσκω signifies “know exactly, completely, through and through” (BDAG, 369).
48 Parallelism is the repetition of a syntactical or structural pattern (Spencer 1998, 197–98).
who built his house upon the sand.” These two parables are mostly parallel. The introductory sentences also are almost parallel:

“Therefore, everyone who hears these my words and does them” (7:24a)
“and everyone hearing these my words and not doing them” (7:26a).

The parallel style mirrors parallel disasters that occur: rain, flooding, and blowing wind (“and the rain came down and the flooding rivers\(^{49}\) came and the winds blew and beat upon that house”). But the difference in result is caused by the antithetic parallelism in verses 24 and 26. What is the foundation of each house: rock or sand? The foundation of the faith is symbolized by the foundation of the construction. Doing Jesus’ words is comparable to construction on rock. That foundation is repeated at the end of v. 25 (“founded upon the rock”). The concluding clauses of each simile are totally not parallel, though dependent on the earlier clauses:

(v. 25b) “and it did not fall, for it was founded upon the rock” (sentence 18)
or
(v. 27b) “and it fell and its fall was great” (sentence 19).

Jesus leaves the crowd with this sudden end, a negative end, which indeed would make his hearers feel like a great blow had been thrust at them.

Jesus’ powerful message begins with more neutral or positive images (seeking, finding, knocking, opening) to more extended metaphors (a child’s requests for gifts; a wide or narrow way; fruits of trees) to more developed similes (such a person “is like”…).

\textit{James 1:2–27}

In the first chapter of his letter, James introduces three themes he will discuss throughout: how to meet trials, how to be wise, and how to view riches. His uniting theme is the need to become doers of the word. After a brief introduction, James begins immediately with his topic in verse 1 (“All joy consider for yourselves, my brothers and sisters, whenever you might fall upon various trials” and then gives them the reason for his command (“knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance,” sentence 1). He further explains that endurance brings about maturity (“But let endurance bring about a mature work in order that you may be mature and complete in nothing lacking,” sentence 2). Then,
like Jesus, he reminds the readers of the character of God—generosity (“But, if any of you is lacking in wisdom, let him/her ask from the One giving—God—to all generously and without reproaching and it will be given to him/her” [1:5, sentence 3]). Because of God’s character, the reader must make requests “in faith, in no way wavering” (1:6a, sentence 4).

While Jesus concludes his discourse with two similes, James uses similes at intervals interspersed with metaphors. James uses his first simile to explain the way not to ask in light of God’s character: “the one wavering resembles a wave of the sea, being blown by the wind and being tossed here and there” (1:6b, sentence 4). James uses a more negative metaphor to describe such a person (sentence 5): “For let not such a person suppose for him/herself that he/she will receive anything from the Lord, a two-willed man, restless in all his ways” (1:7–8).

James now uses both antithetic terms and antithetic illustrations in 1:9 to contrast the lowly with the rich brother (“But let the lowly brother boast in his high position, but the rich one in his low position”), concluding with his second extended simile, also from nature: “since as a flower in wild grass he will pass away. For the sun rose with the heat and dried up the grass, and its flower fell off, and the beauty of its face was ruined; in the same way also the rich in his journey will wither” (1:10–11, sentences 6–7).

James moves to another concept, which was introduced in v. 2, the trial or test, and its reward: a crown of life (v. 12) (“Blessed is a man who endures trial, since having become approved will receive for him/herself the crown of life which is promised to the ones loving him”). James reiterates his earlier point from v. 5, the attractive character of God. God tempts no one (v. 13): “Let no one being tempted say that from God I am being tempted; for God is untemptable by means of evils, and himself tempts no one” (sentence 9). He presents now an extended metaphor about personified Desire (vv. 14–15): “But each is tempted by his/her own desire, dragging away and seducing; then the Desire having conceived bears Sin, and the Sin having been fully formed gives birth to Death” (sentence 10). He contrasts the negative human desire with again the positive character of God (vv. 17–18): “Every good gift and every perfect present is from above coming down from the Father of Lights, from whom there is no change, the one of a turning shadow”50 (sentence 12). In an abrupt asyndeton and literally stated, he concludes in v. 19: “Understand, my beloved brothers and sisters. And let every human be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (sentences 14–15).

This raises a new topic: anger (an aspect of wisdom): “For a man’s anger does not work God’s righteousness” (v. 20, sentence 16). James summarizes his basic principle in vv. 21–22: “For this reason having laid aside all filth and abundance of evil in humility receive the implanted word, the one being able to save your

50 The earliest Greek manuscript (𝔓50) and the most important fourth-century uncials (codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus) support this reading. See also Spencer 2020, 50.
lives. And become doers of the word and not only hearers deceiving yourselves” (sentences 17–18). Like his own teacher Jesus, James agrees that the true believer shows his faith in his actions. To explain, he uses his third simile:

“since, if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, that person resembles a man observing well his natural face in a mirror. For he observed himself well and has gone away and immediately forgot of what sort he was. But the one having stooped to look into the perfect law, the one of freedom, and having remained not having become a forgetful hearer but a doer of action, this one will be blessed in his doing” (1:23–25, sentences 18–20).

James concludes this chapter with a negative example (“If anyone considers him/herself to be religious not bridling his/her tongue but deceiving his/her heart, this religious worship is useless”) and then a positive example of true religion: “Pure religious and undefiled worship in the presence of God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their difficulties, to guard oneself spotless from the world” (vv. 26–27, sentences 21–22). True religion affects both external and internal actions. James’s style goes back and forth between antithetic terms and illustrations to hammer home his points. Unlike Jesus, he ends with a positive example. This makes his exhortations more comforting and encouraging, while Jesus ends with a negative example, which makes his final exhortations more terrifying.

**Summary of Stylistics Studies**

What specific differences and similarities do we find in these two passages proposing one similar idea (that one’s actions reflect what one truly believes)? Jesus uses many more finite verbs than James (Table 1). Although both Jesus and James have primarily a nominal style, Jesus has a more verbal style than does James. A nominal construction consists of nouns and adjectives, while a verbal construction consists of finite verbs, verbals, and adverbs. Fifty-three per cent of Jesus’ words are nominal, in comparison to 61 per cent of James’s words. Forty-seven per cent of Jesus’ words are verbal, compared to 39 per cent of James’s words. Jesus’ style is even more verbal than is Paul’s in Romans and Philippians.51 This finding correlates with verb density (Table 2). In verb density, the number of verbals is divided by the number of finite verbs (Spencer 1998, 103). Jesus’ passage has a verb density of 31 per cent, while James’s passage is 65 per cent. As verb density decreases, the language tends to be more structured and clearer to read. The ratio of finite verbs to participles is greater in Jesus’ speech (79% vs. 21%) than in James’s writing (65% vs. 35%) (Table 1).

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51 61–62% nominal, (Spencer 1998, 103).
The directness of Jesus’ speech is augmented by his use of pronouns (Table 3). He uses many more second person singulars and plurals (“you”) than does James: 21 (33% total) vs. 5 (10%). The percentages of the first person singular and plural pronouns and verbs are similar (Jesus: 8 [12%]; James 4 [8%]), while James uses more third person singulars and plurals (Jesus: 35 [55%]; James: 41 [82%]). Of interest is that Jesus uses many more verbs in the future tense (16 vs. 6), almost three times more than James does (Table 4). As God-incarnate, Jesus can speak more definitively about what will happen, for example, “ask, and it will be given to you” (7:7).

Jesus’ adjectives (Table 5) center on what is good versus what is bad and value is clearly indicated 62 per cent of the time (e.g., “good,” “narrow,” “wise,” “ravenous,” “rotten,” “evil,” “foolish”). Both use “all” (παντί) almost the same number of times (Jesus: 5; James: 6). James has more variety in his use of adjectives, but they express less values (52%) (examples are: “all,” “various,” “of sea,” “that,” “wild,” “of face,” “own,” “light,” “turning,” “some,” “implanted,” “natural”).

Jesus uses slightly more monosyllables than does James (Table 6), making his words crisp and more direct (37% monosyllables vs. 32% monosyllables by James). James uses even more polysyllables than Paul does (68% vs. 62% Paul) (Spencer 1998, 183).

The average length of sentences is identical (41.7, Table 7), but James has longer average clause lengths (17.65 vs. 12 with Jesus). Jesus’ clause length is 68% shorter than James’s in this regard. Jesus’ sentences are much more varied than James’s (62%, Table 8). James has more sentences with subordination than does Jesus (64% James vs. 53% Jesus, Table 9). Forty-seven percent of Jesus’ sentences have no subordination, while James’s sentences are 36 per cent without subordination.

Although, in these samples, Jesus and James have the same number of adverbial clauses (13, Table 9), Jesus has many more adjectival clauses (17 vs. 5, 30% more) and more noun clauses (7 vs. 3, 43% more). Thus, although Jesus uses less subordination, his descriptions of humans are more qualified than are James’s. For example, Jesus qualifies about which human he is speaking. It is not the one “who his son will ask for bread, instead a stone he will give him” (7:9). About which false prophets does he speak? He specifies, they are the ones “who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but within are ravenous wolves” (7:15). And Jesus uses extensive stories to describe the wise man and the foolish man (7:24–27).

Although Jesus and James have the identical number of adverbial clauses (13, Table 10) and the same percentage of adverbs (5% of the total words), Jesus’ adverbial clauses are more direct, inviting response, while James’s are more explanatory and unhurried. James’s adverbial clauses are also a larger percentage

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52 Pronoun calculation includes personal pronouns and finite verbs.
of his clauses (25% vs. 20%). Jesus' direct message is encapsulated in these clauses, as is James's message in his. Jesus exhorts:

“for all the one asking receives,” “and the one seeking finds,” “and to the one knocking, it will be opened” (sentence 1),
“if you being evil, know good gifts to give to your children” (sentence 4),
“in the same way also you yourselves do to them,” “for such is the law and the prophets” (sentence 5),
“since the gate is wide,” “and the way is broad, the one leading into destruction,” “and many are the ones entering through it,” “for the gate is narrow” “and the way is hard, the one leading into life,” “and few are the ones finding it” (sentence 6),
and “for it was founded upon the rock” (sentence 18).

James in his evenly-spaced adverbial clauses explains:

“whenever you might fall upon various trials,” “knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance” (sentence 1),
“in order that you may be mature and complete in nothing lacking” (sentence 2),
“if any of you is lacking in wisdom” (sentence 3),
“for the one wavering resembles a wave of the sea being blown by the wind and being tossed here and there” (sentence 4),
“since as a flower in wild grass he will pass away” (sentence 6),
“in the same way also the rich in his/her journey will wither” (sentence 7),
“since have become approved will receive for him/herself the crown of life” (sentence 8),
“for God is untemptable by means of evils,” “and himself tempts no one” (sentence 9),
“in order that we may be a kind of firstfruit of his creations” (sentence 13),
“since if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer” “that person resembles a man observing well his natural face in a mirror” (sentence 18),
and “if anyone considers him/herself to be religious not bridling his/her tongue but deceiving his/her heart” (sentence 21).

When one reads James's letter, one sees that James appears to use many transpositions of phrases and clauses (Table 1), many less than Jesus (41.5% of all Jesus' sentence changes vs. James's who uses transpositions in 28% of his sentence changes). It is a difference of 67%. For example, in Matthew 7:9, the

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53 A sentence can have four kinds of changes: addition, subtraction or omission, transposition, and substitution. Demetrius gives an example of the natural order of a Greek sentence.
prepositional phrase “from you” precedes the noun it modifies (“human”) and, in this way, Jesus makes it very clear whom he is addressing. He accentuates the wrong gift which a father might give a son: “a stone,” “fish,” “snake” (7:9–10). Then, he adds the pronoun “you” to draw in his listeners and emphasize what they are: “evil” (7:11). In contrast, he accentuates the types of gifts humans can give: “good gifts” (7:1). In 7:12 he underscores the actions (“might do”) and repeats “you.”

In the second parable, Jesus accentuates the type of gates and roads: “narrow,” “wide,” “broad” (7:13–14). In the next parable he emphasizes the prepositional phrases to show first the important source of knowledge (“from their fruits”) and then the contrasting unlikely sources “from thorn-plants” and “from thistles” (7:16). He contrasts “every good tree” with its produce “good fruits” and “rotten tree” with its produce: “bad fruits” (7:17). Then he highlights the verb “not able” and the direct object “bad fruits” by placing them before their subjects (7:18). Indeed, a good tree cannot produce bad fruits. In contrast, he highlights “good fruits,” what a bad tree cannot produce (7:18).

Where are trees not producing good fruit thrown? “Into a fire” is accentuated (7:19). He repeats and emphasizes the source of knowledge: “from their fruits” (7:20). “That” day is emphasized when Jesus’ false miracle workers will repeat and emphasize “in your name” (3 times, 7:22). What they cast out and what they did are also emphasized (“demons,” “many miracles” 7:22). Jesus surprises his hearers with these possibilities.

Consequently, Jesus will declare and emphasize “never” did he know these people (7:23). He contrasts the one who follows and the one who does not follow “my” words in the final set of parables (7:24), the wise person’s house and the foolish person’s house (7:26). The construction of these houses was under their control. The action verbs “came down,” “blew” (7:25, 27) are in focus here. Thus, the persistent actions against each house are emphasized. Jesus then repeats and emphasizes “my” words again (7:26). He ends with the simple clause “and it fell” and the final clause, by transposing the more common word order, highlights the verb “it was.” What was? The subject is “the fall.” And what kind of fall was it? It was “great!”

Jesus’ transpositions make his sermon direct and hard-hitting. He does not mince words. He speaks truth with authority.

Both Jesus and James use many addition and substitution sentence changes (Table 1), but James uses many more (25 vs. 16 or 70% more addition changes and 47 vs. 38 or 85% more substitution changes). James begins with his favorite

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Addition changes include pleonasm, anaphora, parallelism, and polysyndeton. Omission changes include asyndeton and ellipsis. Transposition changes, where the elements of a sentence are rearranged in different order, include word inversion. Substitution changes, where one element of a sentence is chosen over another, may be figurative, such as personification, simile, metaphor, synecdoche, and hyperbole (Spencer 1998, 21–28).
metaphor for his readers: “brothers and sisters” (1:2, 9, 19), which Jesus does not use. Then, he strives to connect thoughts (“endurance” ends 1:3 and begins 1:4 [which is anadiplosis, a type of pleonasm]). “Mature” occurs in the main clause and in the subordinate clause (1:4). He pairs together synonyms, such as “mature and complete” (1:4) and “generously and without reproaching” (1:5) to describe “the giving” God (1:5). “In faith” is contrasted with “in no way waver[ing]” (1:6) and then “waver[ing]” is repeated in the subordinate clause (1:6). Another pleonasm describes a wave “being blown by the wind and being tossed here and there” (1:6). In contrast to Jesus’ use of transpositions, James’s extensive use of pleonasm gives a more leisurely pace to his writing while he paints a broad picture for his readers.

In his extended parable, James uses polysyndeton to develop a sequence of events with a final negative result: “For the sun rose with the heat and dried up the grass and its flower fell off and the beauty of the face was ruined” (1:11). Jesus also used polysyndeton to develop a sequence of events in his final two contrasting parables (Matt 7:25–27).

James returns to his use of pleonasm, repeating key words: “trial” and “being tempted” (1:12–14, the verb repeated 4 times). He creates another chain (anadiplosis) of “sin” ending the first clause and beginning the second clause in 1:15. His pleonasm in 1:17 joins two synonyms (“every good gift” and “every perfect present”) emphasizing how very good these gifts from God are. In 1:19 he repeats “slow” twice and conjoins two antithetic parallel phrases: “quick to hear” and “slow to speak” (adjective-preposition-article-infinite). In 1:21 he combines two synonyms (“all filth and abundance of evil”) to emphasize the totality of evil. What one must do is described in a set of antithetic synonyms (“doers of word and not only hearers” as opposed to “a hearer of word and not a doer”).

In the next extended parable, James again uses polysyndeton to describe a sequence of events for the man observing himself in a mirror: “For he observed himself well and has gone away and immediately forgot of what sort he was” (1:24). In the positive picture, he plays on similar sound: παρασκεύαζες and παρασκεύασας (”having stooped...and having remained,” 1:25), two qualities which the first man lacked—humility and perseverance. He closes with a final set of antithetic terms: “a forgetful hearer but a doer of action” (1:25). James then continues with another antithetic pleonasm (“not bridling his/her tongue but deceiving his/her heart”) describing a negative model. He closes the chapter with another anadiplosis, at the end of 1:26 and beginning of 1:27: “religious worship.”

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54 James uses ἄδελφος a total of 19 times in his letter (15 as an address), while Jesus includes himself as a “brother” only 4 times in the entire Gospel of Matthew (12:48–50; 28:10).

55 Polysyndeton here repeats “and” between the clauses (Spencer 1998, 204–205).

56 Anadiplosis is the repetition of the last word of one line or clause to begin the next (Lanham 1991, 10).
He has explained what it is not, and now what it is. Two synonymous adjectives (“pure and undefiled”) describe what it is. His final description is positive. The external actions are described by a synecdoche (“to visit orphans and widows in their difficulties”) and several concrete metaphors: “to guard oneself spotless” (1:27).

In this chapter, James has used 25 addition changes, including 22 pleonasms. Jesus used 16 addition changes, 12 pleonasms, but with different effects. James’s first chapter is a tightly connected repeating tapestry of contrasting colors. He, like Jesus, exhorts his readers to act in a godly manner by his use of extended images, but he does so more as illustrations (Table 12). For James, nature especially provides spiritual lessons: wave of the sea, flower in wild grass, desire seducing, coming down, firstfruit, observation, stooping, bridling, spotless. Almost all of Jesus’ words are imagery. Spiritual, invisible qualities are depicted by experiences common to all. But the images are more active and thus create a greater urgency, such as seek, enter, be on guard, and producing fruits.

In conclusion, although James teaches a content following Jesus’ teachings, which, in these passages, is to be doers of the word, and both use much figurative language, including extended metaphors and similes, and many explanatory sentences (Table 13), yet their styles of communicating their messages are quite different. Jesus is the prophetic preacher, while James is the didactic educator. Jesus leaves his audience “blown away” by using more finite verbs, a verbal style, varied sentence lengths, clearer language, second person pronouns (“you”), the future tense, value-laden adjectives, more monosyllables, shorter clause lengths, less subordination, more descriptions of humans, more direct adverbial clauses, more transpositions directed to his audience to create a bombardment of urgent messages for spiritual decisions. Matthew communicates to the reader in 7:7–27 that Jesus is our greatest Prophet, God-incarnate, calling us to follow.57

James, in contrast, uses many participles, more of a nominal style, less variety in sentence lengths, less clear language, more third person pronouns (“he, she, it”), less value adjectives, more polysyllables, longer clause lengths, more subordination, explanatory adverbial clauses, more addition and substitution changes to create a tapestry of thoughts for spiritual lessons. No wonder the early Christians lauded James for “the heights he had reached in philosophy and religion” (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical history 2.23).

James does show thee Christ, but in his own educator’s style.

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APPENDICES

Matthew: Translation and Grammatical Analysis

s. 1 7:7–8 [Ask,] [and it will be given to you,] [seek,] [and you will find;] [knock,] [and it will be opened to you;] [for all the one asking receives,] [and the one seeking finds][and to the one knocking, it will be opened.] (initial sentence, 6 main and 3 adverbial clauses)

s. 2 7:9 [Or, which human is there from you, [who his son will ask for bread] [a stone instead he will give to him?] (explanatory sentence, 1 main and 2 adjectival clauses)

s. 3 7:10 [Or, also, he will ask for a fish,] [a snake instead he will give to him?] (addition sentence)

s. 4 7:11 [Therefore, if you being evil, know good gifts to give to your children,] [how much more your Father, the One in the heavens, will give good things to the ones asking him?] (illative sentence, 1 adverbial, 1 main clause)

s. 5 7:12 [Therefore, all which you might wish [that humans might do to you,] [in the same way also you yourselves do to them;] [for such is the law and the prophets.] (illative sentence, 1 main, 1 noun, 2 adverbial clauses)

s. 6 7:13–14 [Enter through the narrow gate;] [since the gate (is) wide][and the way (is) broad, the one leading into destruction][and many are the ones entering through it;] [for the gate (is) narrow] [and the way (is) hard, the one leading into life,[and few are the ones finding it.] (initial sentence, 1 main, 6 adverbial clauses)

s. 7 7:15 [Be on guard from the false prophets, [who come to you in sheep’s clothing,] but within are ravenous wolves.] (illustrative sentence, 1 main, 2 adjectival clauses)

s. 8 7:16a [From their fruits, you will know them.] (explanatory sentence, 1 main clause)

s. 9 7:16b [Surely they do not gather from thorn-plants—grapes or from thistles—fig trees?] (illustrative sentence, 1 main clause)

s. 10 7:17 [Thus, every good tree good fruits makes,] [but the rotten tree bad fruits makes.] (explanatory sentence, 2 main clauses)

s. 11 7:18 [A good tree is not able bad fruits to make] [nor a rotten tree good fruits to make.] (explanatory sentence, 2 main clauses)

s. 12 7:19 [Every tree not making good fruit is cut down] [and into a fire is thrown.] (explanatory sentence, 2 main clauses)

s. 13 7:20 [Consequently, from their fruits you will yourself know them completely.] (illative sentence, 1 main clause)

s. 14 7:21 [Not everyone saying to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter into the kingdom of the heavens,] [but the one doing the will of my Father, the one in the heavens (will enter).] (initial sentence, 2 main clauses)

s. 15 7:22 [Many will ask me in that day, “[Lord, Lord, did not in your name we prophesied,] [and in your name we cast out demons,][and in your name we did many miracles?”] (causal sentence, 1 main, 3 noun clauses)

s. 16 7:23a [And then I will declare to them [that “Never I knew you.”] (explanatory sentence, 1 main, 1 noun clause)
s. 17 7:23b [“Depart from me, the ones working lawless deeds.”] (explanatory sentence, 1 main clause)
s. 18 7:24–25 [Therefore, everyone who hears these my words] [and does them,] [will be like a wise man, [who built his house upon the rock;] [and the rain came down] [and the flooding rivers came] [and the winds blew] [and beat upon that house,] [and it did not fall,] [for it was founded upon the rock.] (illative sentence, 2 noun, 1 main, 6 adjec-tival, 1 adverbial clauses)
s. 19 7:26–27 [And everyone hearing these my words and not doing them will be like a foolish man, [who built his house upon the sand;] [and the rain came down] [and the flooding rivers came] [and the winds blew] [and beat against that house,] [and it fell] [and its fall was great.] (illative sentence, 1 main, 7 adjectival clauses)

James: Translation and Grammatical Analysis

s. 1,1:2–3 [Consider for yourselves all joy, my brothers & sisters,58] (initial sentence, main clause) [whenever you might fall upon various trials,] (adverbial clause) [knowing (adverbial clause) [that the testing of your faith produces endurance.]] (noun clause)
s. 2, 1:4 [But let endurance bring about a mature work,] (explanatory sentence, main clause) [in order that you may be mature and complete in nothing lacking.] (adverbial clause)
s. 3, 1:5 [But if any of you is lacking in wisdom,] (initial sentence, adverbial clause) [let him/her ask from the One giving—God—to all generously and without reproaching,] (main clause) [and it will be given to him/her.] (main clause)
s. 4, 1:6 [But let him/her ask in faith in no way wavering;] (explanatory sentence, main clause) [for the one wavering resembles a wave of the sea being blown by the wind and being tossed here and there.] (adverbial clause)
s. 5, 1:7–8 [For let not such person suppose for him/herself (explanatory sentence, main clause) [that he/she will receive anything from the Lord,] (noun clause) [(that person is) a two-willed man,60 restless in all his ways.] (adjectival clause)
s. 6, 1:9–10 [But let the lowly brother [believer] boast in his high position,] (initial sentence, main clause) [but the rich one in his low position,] (main clause) [since as a flower in wild grass he will pass away.] (adverbial clause)
s. 7, 1:11 [For the sun rose61 with the heat and dried up the grass,62] (illustrative sentence, main clause) [and its flower fell off,] (main clause) [and the beauty of its face was ruined;] (main clause) [in the same way also the rich in his/her journey will wither.] (adverbial clause)

58 ἀδελφός in the plural here is generic (LSJ 20; BDAG 18).
59 Whenever possible, the unusual Greek word order will be retained in the translation.
60 James uses the sex-specific ἄνδρος when referring to illustrations, the generic ἄνθρωπος (1:7) otherwise, but his intention is for the illustration to rep-resent all believers. The sex-specific term makes the illustration more concrete.
61 James uses for the narrative the aorist, whereas we tend to use the present for narrative. See Robertson (1934, 835–36).
62 These are compound verbs since “the sun” is the subject of “rose” and “dried up.”
s. 8, 1:12 [Blessed is a man\textsuperscript{65} [person]] (initial sentence, main clause) [who endures trial,] (adjectival clause) [since having become approved will receive for him/herself the crown of life] (adverbial clause) [which is promised to the ones loving him.] (adjectival clause)

s.9, 1:13 [Let no one being tempted say] (explanatory sentence, main clause) [that from God I am being tempted:] (noun clause) [for God is untemptable by means of evils,] (adverbial clause) [and himself tempts no one.] (adverbial clause)

s.10, 1:14–15 [But each is tempted by [his/her] own desire dragging away and seducing:] (explanatory sentence, main clause) [then the Desire having conceived bears Sin,] (main clause) [and the Sin having been fully formed gives birth to Death.] (main clause)

s. 11, 1:16 [Do not deceive yourselves, my beloved brothers and sisters.] (additive sentence, main clause)

s.12, 1:17 [Every good gift and every perfect present is from above coming down from the Father of lights,] (adversative sentence, main clause) [from whom there is no change, the one of a turning shadow.\textsuperscript{64}] (adjectival clause)

s. 13, 1:18 [Having desired he gave birth to us by means of a word of truth] (explanatory sentence, main clause) [in order that we may be a kind of firstfruit of his creations.] (adverbial clause)

s. 14, 1:19a [Understand, my beloved brothers and sisters.] (initial sentence, main clause)

s.15, 1:19b [And let every human be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.] (initial sentence, main clause)

s. 16, 1:20 [For a man's [person's]\textsuperscript{65} anger does not work God's righteousness.] (explanatory sentence, main clause)

s. 17, 1:21 [For this reason having laid aside all filth and abundance of evil in humility receive the implanted word, the one being able to save your lives.] (illative sentence, main clause)

s.18, 1:22–23 [And become doers of [the] word and not only hearers deceiving yourselves,] (initial sentence, main clause) [since, if anyone is a hearer of [the] word and not a doer,] (adverbial clause) [that person resembles a man\textsuperscript{66} observing well his natural face in a mirror.] (adverbial clause)

\textsuperscript{63} See earlier note on James 1:8.

\textsuperscript{64} In 1:17, many manuscripts of a variety of text-types support παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπὴς ἀποσκίασμα ("change of position or turning of a shadow"), but the earliest Greek witnesses are from the fifth century (codexes A and C). I have chosen παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπὴς ἀποσκίασματος because it is supported by the two earliest and most important fourth century uncial (codexes Sinaiticus and Vaticanus). The earliest papyri (𝔓\textsuperscript{23}) from the third century also agrees with τροπὴς ἀποσκίασματος ("change, the one of a turning of a shadow"). The genitive ἀποσκίασματος is also supported in the ninth century Western translation (it\textsuperscript{30}) and some early church fathers (Augustine, Ferrandus, Primasius). Bruce M. Metzger (2002, 608) explains that this reading makes sense only if η is read ἦ ("variation which is of [i.e. consists in, or belongs to] the turning of the shadow").

\textsuperscript{65} In the illustration, James uses ἀνήρ, but earlier he uses the generic ἄνθρωπος (1:19b). See 1:8c; 1:12a.

\textsuperscript{66} See 1:8c. In 1:23, the generic τις is used in contrast to sex-specific ἄνήρ in the illustration.
s. 19, 1:24 [For he observed himself well] (causal sentence, main clause) [and has gone away] (main clause) [and immediately forgot] (main clause) [of what sort he was.] (noun clause)

s. 20, 1:25 [But the one having stooped to look into the perfect law, the one of freedom, and having remained not having become a forgetful hearer but a doer of action, this one will be blessed in his doing. (adversative sentence, main clause)]

s. 21, 1:26 [If anyone considers [him/herself] to be religious not bridling his/her tongue but deceiving his/her heart] (illative sentence, adverbial clause) [this religious worship is useless.] (main clause)

s. 22, 1:27 [Pure religious and undefiled worship in the presence of God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their difficulties, to guard oneself spotless from the world.] (additive sentence, main clause)

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substitution (Syntactical) Sentence Changes</th>
<th>Jesus (Matt 7:7–27)</th>
<th>James (Jas 1:2–27)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nominal vs. Verbal Style</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominal Style (nouns, adjs, pronouns excluded)</td>
<td>123 (53%)</td>
<td>134 (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Style (verbs, verbalis, adverbs)</td>
<td>110 (47%)</td>
<td>86 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finite Verbs vs. Participles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finite verbs</td>
<td>60 (79%)</td>
<td>48 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participles</td>
<td>16 (21%)</td>
<td>25 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active vs. Passive finite Verbs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active (&amp; middle) verbs</td>
<td>50 (83%)</td>
<td>41 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive verbs</td>
<td>60 (17%)</td>
<td>7 (15%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb Density</th>
<th>Jesus (Matt 7:7–27)</th>
<th>James (Jas 1:2–27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbals (participles and infinitives)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finite Verbs</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb Density</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>65% (48% greater)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

67 Ἐργάω is rendered “action” so as not to create confusion with the translation “work,” which is used theologically more frequently in English as a contrast with “justification by faith.”

68 If “is” is in ellipsis, 1:25a (“the one... is not having become a forgetful hearer, but a doer of action) is the main clause while 1:25b is a subordinate adjectival clause, modifying the first “the one.”
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Pronouns (personal pronouns and finite verbs)</th>
<th>Jesus (Matt 7:7–27)</th>
<th>James (Jas 1:2–27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person Singular</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Person Plural</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8 (12%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 (8%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person Singular</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person Plural</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21 (33%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>5 (10%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person Singular</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person Plural</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>35 (55%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>41 (82%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Verbs</th>
<th>Jesus (Matt 7:7–27)</th>
<th>James (Jas 1:2–27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperatives</td>
<td>7 (12% verbs)</td>
<td>12 (25.5% verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future verbs</td>
<td>16 (27% verbs)</td>
<td>6 (13% verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Indicative verbs</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjunctive verbs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Verbs</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Adjectives</th>
<th>Jesus (Matt 7:7–27)</th>
<th>James (Jas 1:2–27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive (Value)</td>
<td>Good (6), narrow (2), sheep, ravenous, rotten (2), evil (3), wise, foolish, great, wide, broad, hard=21 (62%)</td>
<td>Giving, two-willed, restless, lowly, life, beloved (2), good, mature (3), true, of God, evil, forgetful, religious, pure, undefiled, free, useless, untemptable, blessed, spotless=23 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives (% of all Adjectives)</td>
<td>34 (52%)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Adjectives</td>
<td>all (5), heavens, father, that (3), many, these (2)=13 (38%)</td>
<td>All (6), various, in no way, of sea, that, wild, face, own, of lights, turning, some, male, implanted, natural, quick, slow (2), word (2), work= 25 (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Adjectives</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Size</th>
<th>Jesus (Matt 7:7–27)</th>
<th>James (Jas 1:2–27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Words</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Syllables</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monosyllables</td>
<td>141 (37%)</td>
<td>126 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polysyllables</td>
<td>239 (63%)</td>
<td>265 (68%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Complexity of the Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>text</th>
<th>Average clause length ***</th>
<th>Ratio of Clauses per Main Clause **</th>
<th>Average Length of a Main Clause Syllables</th>
<th>Main clauses Sentences</th>
<th>Average Length of a Sentence Syllables Sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>66 (68%)</td>
<td>28 = 2.36 (100%)</td>
<td>28 = 28.29 (96%)</td>
<td>28 = 1.47 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>918</td>
<td>52 = 17.65</td>
<td>31 = 1.68 (71%)</td>
<td>31 = 29.6</td>
<td>31 = 22.41 (96%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variety of Sentence Length</th>
<th>Jesus (Matt 7:7–27)</th>
<th>James (Jas 1:2–27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>26.404 (100%)</td>
<td>16.3684 (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>41.684</td>
<td>41.727</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence Size and Structure</th>
<th>Jesus (Matt 7:7–27)</th>
<th>James (Jas 1:2–27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Sentences</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Sentence Length (in words)</td>
<td>20 words</td>
<td>18 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Sentences (1 main clause)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound Sentence (2+ main clauses)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sentences without Subordination</td>
<td>9 (47% sentences)</td>
<td>8 (36% sentences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex Sentences (1 main clause + 1 subordinate clause)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound-Complex Sentences (2+ main clauses + 1+ subordinate clauses)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sentences with subordination</td>
<td>10 (53%)</td>
<td>14 (64%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverbs and Adverbial Clauses</th>
<th>Jesus (Matt 7:7–27)</th>
<th>James (Jas 1:2–27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clauses</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>18 (5% words)</td>
<td>13 (5% words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial clauses</td>
<td>13 (20% clauses)</td>
<td>13 (25% clauses)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Summary of the Types of Sentence Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>text</th>
<th>Addition</th>
<th>Omission</th>
<th>Substitution</th>
<th>Transposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>16 (16%)</td>
<td>6 (5%)</td>
<td>38 (37.5%)</td>
<td>42 (41.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>25 (23%)</td>
<td>6 (5%)</td>
<td>47 (44%)</td>
<td>31 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Imagery

Sample 1: Matthew 7:7–27 (The numbers indicate sentences.)

1. Seek, and you will find;
   Knock, and it will be opened to you;
   the one seeking finds,
   to the one knocking, it will be opened
2. His son will ask for bread, a stone instead he will give to him?
3. He will ask for a fish, a snake instead he will give to him?
4. Good gifts to give to your children
   Your Father, the One in the heavens,
6. Enter through the narrow gate;
   since the gate is wide,
   And the way is broad, the one leading into destruction
   Many are the ones entering through it,
   For the gate is narrow
   and the way is hard, the one leading into life,
   Few are the ones finding it

69 An “image” is something that represents something else, including metaphor, simile, and personification (Spencer 1998, 33–34).
7. Be on guard
   Come to you in sheep’s clothing
   but within are ravenous wolves.

8. from their fruits

9. not gather from thorn-plants—grapes
   Or from thistles—fig trees?

10. every good tree good fruits makes,
    But the rotten tree bad fruits makes.

11. A good tree is not able bad fruits to make
    nor a rotten tree good fruits to make.

12. Every tree not making good fruit is cut down
    and into a fire is thrown

13. from their fruits

14. enter into the kingdom of the heavens
    My Father, the one in the heavens

18. a wise man who built his house upon the rock;
    and the rain came down and the flooding rivers came and the winds blew and
    beat upon that house, and it did not fall, for it was founded upon the rock.

19. a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand;
    and the rain came down and the flooding rivers came and the winds blew and
    beat against that house, and it fell, and its fall was great.

Sample 2: James 1:2–27 (The numbers indicate sentences.)

1. My brothers and sisters
   You might fall upon various trials

2. the One giving—God—to all generously

4. the one wavering resembles a wave of the sea being blown by the wind and being
   tossed here and there

5. a two-willed man,
   restless in all his ways

6. the lowly brother
   his high position,
   his low position
   As a flower in wild grass he will pass away.

7. For the sun rose with the heat and dried up the grass, and its flower fell off, and the
   beauty of its face was ruined;
   the rich in his/her journey will wither.

8. the crown of life

10. tempted by his/her own desire dragging away and seducing; then the Desire having
    conceived bears Sin, and the Sin having been fully formed gives birth to Death.

11. brothers and sisters

12. from above, coming down from
   the Father of lights,
   from whom there is no change, the one of a turning shadow.
13. he gave birth to us
   a kind of first fruit of his creations.
14. brothers and sisters
17. having laid aside all filth and abundance of evil
   receive the implanted word, the one being able to save
18. resembles a man observing well his natural face in a mirror.
19. For he observed himself well and has gone away and immediately forgot of what
   sort he was.
20. the one having stooped to look into
   Having remained
21. not bridling his/her tongue
   but deceiving his/her heart
22. Father
   to guard oneself spotless

Table 13: Summary of the Types of Propositions in Each Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>text</th>
<th>initial</th>
<th>Explanatory</th>
<th>Illustrative</th>
<th>Illative</th>
<th>Additive</th>
<th>Adversative</th>
<th>Causal</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>Total sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES


Poverty and Economic Justice in Second Corinthians

John W. Taylor
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johntaylor@gs.edu

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to investigate Paul's understanding of economic justice, as evidenced in his letters. Twenty-first century debates such as that between equality of outcome and equality of opportunity do not enter into Paul's first-century letters. Nevertheless, given that Paul does discuss issues such as wealth and poverty, equality, and giving practices, especially in 2 Corinthians, it is worth asking whether Paul has in mind some particular vision of economic justice. Looking at 2 Corinthians in the light of other first-century attitudes to poverty and justice, it is clear that Paul did not see poverty in itself as a result of injustice, though it can be, and economic differences do not require mandatory redistribution. Instead, Paul's concern is for equality and justice as is worked out within the community of faith, through voluntary, sacrificial generosity to the those in need, derived from mutual love, and the example of Christ.

Keywords: Second Corinthians, Economic Justice, Equality, Poverty, Wealth, Injustice

INTRODUCTION

Stephen Friesen complained in 2008 that “for at least a century, poverty, and economic inequality have not been important topics in Pauline studies” (Friesen 2008, 121). Although recent work has to some degree made up for this lack (note especially Longenecker 2010; Blanton 2017), there is still a relative dearth of scholarship on economic issues in Paul. Given the current political climate, it is worth asking, is the gap between rich and poor, which exercises so many, a concern for Paul? What kind of concern, if any, does he show for economic equality or justice, and how does this compare or contrast with other views of his time?

There have been numerous attempts to examine Paul in the light of socio-economic concerns. Particular attention has been paid to establishing the socio-economic location of Paul and his churches, through the efforts of scholars such as Edwin Judge (1960), Gerd Thiessen (1982), Ronald Hock (1989), and Wayne

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1 An earlier version of this paper with a wider focus on Paul's writings has been published (Taylor 2020).
Meeks (1983). The so-called “new consensus” (Malherbe 1983, 31), which developed from their work, differed somewhat from the earlier position of Adolf Deissman who argued on the basis of literary remains that the early church was virtually universally poor, and said: “The social structure of Primitive Christianity points emphatically to the lower, occasionally to the middle class. Primitive Christianity stands in but slight relationship to the upper class at the beginning” (Deissmann 1908, 66). The cumulative effect of the “new consensus” was to highlight the importance of socio-economic factors in interpreting Paul’s letters and to demonstrate that the Pauline churches were not homogenous but contained a mixture of people from various social strata, though weighted strongly towards the poor rather than the rich.

More recently there have been a series of attempts to locate the economic level of the early Christians with more specificity, including the work of Justin Meggitt, who, resisting the new consensus, found the evidence for “belief in the presence of affluent groups in the Pauline churches” to be “not convincing” (Meggitt 1998, 153). He returned to Deissman’s view that the early believers were mired in grim poverty. The work of Steven Friesen and Bruce Longenecker has sought to assess the status of the early church in terms of a precise economic scale (Friesen 2004, 323–361; Longenecker 2010, 220–258). The result has been a reiteration of the severe poverty of most of the early church while allowing for the presence of a number of people at some higher economic levels.

There is no doubt that Paul is concerned about the economic suffering of the early believers, and to some extent with the suffering of those outside the church. He reminds believers of their obligations to meet the financial needs of the poor, particularly poor believers (2 Cor 9:12). The question, however, is whether Paul has in mind some particular vision of economic justice, and if so, how does he envisage that justice coming about? Can Paul be brought into modern arguments about equality of outcome versus equality of opportunity? Given the current political and media interest in economic and social justice issues, there is a danger of anachronism, whereby modern language and concepts are read into Paul.

We ask whether Paul, especially in 2 Corinthians, sees poverty or economic inequality as an issue of justice (or injustice), and, if so, in what way? Does the

\footnote{Also notable is Hengel 1974.}

\footnote{Friesen and Scheidel argue that: “The top 1.5 per cent of households [in the Roman empire] controlled around one-fifth of total income; that economically ‘middling’ non-elite groups accounted for a modest share of the population (around 10 per cent) but perhaps another fifth of income; and that the vast majority of the population lived close to subsistence but cumulatively generated more than half of overall output” (Scheidel and Friesen 2009, 62–63). The study’s comment that the economic control of the elite and middling groups meant “leaving not much more than half of all income for all remaining households” (ibid., 85) suggests that authors were thinking in terms of a zero-sum game, where the wealth of the upper classes came at the expense of the poor.}
existence of economic inequality require a response for the sake of justice, and if so, what kind of response? Attention shall be paid to Paul’s reflection on his own poverty, and to 2 Corinthians 8:13–15, where Paul uses the language of equality while promoting the collection for Jerusalem. To begin with, we shall look at the broader discussion of poverty and justice in the first century.

POVERTY AND JUSTICE IN THE FIRST CENTURY

There is little sustained reflection on the causes of poverty in the extant literature of the early Roman Empire, but what we have indicates multiple explanations of poverty. Cicero lamented the failures of the grain harvest which caused great suffering, but also condemned “the avarice of the dealers” who made things worse by hoarding or diverting grain during crises (Dom. 11–12). Tacitus records that food shortages and famine were seen as ill omens (Annals 12.43). Plutarch said that “poverty is never dishonorable in itself, but only when it is a mark of sloth, intemperance, extravagance or thoughtlessness” (Comp. Arist. 4.1). Poverty can also be inflicted on people, the result of the unscrupulous use of power (Agis. 5.3). He distinguished poverty caused by “laziness, soft living and extravagance,” which is “disgraceful and reprehensible” (Aud. Poet. 23F–24A), from poverty caused by misfortune, by fate (τυχή), or the malevolent daimons (Armitage 2016, 84–91). Epictetus shared the Stoic attribution of poverty to the divine will, and with it, therefore, the need to accept poverty: “I have been poor because it was your will, but I was content also” (Disc. 3.5.8). Seneca reported how the teaching of the Stoic Attalus made him (temporarily) desire to be poor (Ep. Luc. 93). Voluntary poverty, though rare, was a possibility, as was the practice among the Cynics (Malherbe 1989, 19; also Malherbe 1986, 38–39).

There was no assumption that poverty was prima facie evidence of injustice or oppression. Quite the contrary, the poor were frequently regarded as “responsible for their own destitution by their own moral failings” (Osborne 2006, 14), and “The regular attribution of poverty to vice (whether extravagance or laziness) was correlated with contempt for the poor” (Armitage 2016, 61). Of course, the evidence we have for the status of the poor in the early Roman Empire comes largely from the wealthy and educated. The poor left little record of their passing, nor independent record of their opinions. For some of the wealthy, at least, poverty was evidence of justice, not injustice.

The Romans prided themselves on their justice. Augustus, writing his own funerary inscription, describes a gold shield which was mounted in his honor in

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4 Armitage notes that Plutarch’s attribution of poverty to impersonal fate was a way of removing the gods from direct responsibility, thus maintaining their virtue.

5 “Latin writing about poverty almost never had anything to do with the actual experience of those whom we would classify as the Roman poor” (Woolf 2006, 94).
the senate-house in Rome, which acclaimed his justice, along with his virtue, mercy, and piety (Res Gestae 34). According to the poet Ovid, the emperor Tiberius was honored with a triumph in AD 12, after his return from military victory in Pannonia, and he offered incense on “sacred fires” to Augustan Justice, that is to say, the justice of his step-father Augustus (Ex Ponto 2.1.32–33). Shortly afterwards, he dedicated a sculpture of Justice, probably on the same site. Ovid wrote, “No god is more lenient than our prince. Justice moderates his powers. Caesar recently established her [justice] in a marble shrine, but long ago in the temple of his heart” (Ex Ponto 3.6.23–26). A contemporary addition to the Fasti Praenestini calendar inscription (Inscr It. 13.2.17) notes that “Tiberius Caesar dedicated the statue of Augustan Justice when Plancus and Silius were consuls.”

A dedicatory inscription on the “Monument of the Roads” in Patara, from the citizens of Lycia to the Emperor Claudius, honors him for building roads throughout the region, and for “having recovered concord, the equal administration of justice [τὴν ἰσημερίδα δικαιοσύνην] and the ancestral laws” (Jones 2001, 163; see also Onur 2016, 570–577). This inscription illustrates a key focus for Roman discussion of justice. For the Romans, with their strong legal apparatus, justice meant the fair application of the law. The Emperor Claudius established a number of laws which protected certain classes of people from poverty or oppression (Scramuzza 1975, 331). These included laws protecting women’s dowries, a law forbidding masters who had abandoned their elderly or sick slaves from reasserting their ownership, and a law making the killing of a sick slave a matter of murder. Some idealized the administration of Roman law, claiming that the poor and rich were equal before the law. Seneca the Elder dramatizes the example of a poor man whose rich neighbor burned down his tree and his house. The poor man claims his legal rights, “There is no difference at law between you and a poor man” (Seneca, Controversiae, 5.5; further examples in Larsen 2015, 105–106). Paul’s call to avoid public lawsuits between believers (1 Cor 6:1–8), along with several negative accounts in the New Testament of Roman court proceedings (John 18:28–40; 19:1–22; Acts 16:19–40; 24:1–27), point to a reality that was far below the Roman ideal (see discussion in Winter 2001, 58–71).

Not everyone thought of the Romans as just. Sometimes poverty was attributed to their abuse of power. Even Cicero laments, “All the provinces are...
mourning, all the autonomous communities are complaining, indeed all foreign kingdoms are protesting over Roman greed and Roman injustice" (Second Speech Against Verres, 3.89). Evidence from Egypt during the reign of Nero points to significant numbers of people fleeing the district in which they resided, in order to avoid the burden of Roman taxation and compulsory public service (Llewelyn 1998, 103). It seemed that Rome treated Egypt as a storehouse to be raided, and gave little back. Flight was also a common response to the terrors and trials of slavery (Knapp 2011, 137). A small but potent ancient literature laments the injustices slaves suffered under Roman masters (ibid., 132–140).

Some of the explanations of poverty in early Judaism are similar to those found in Roman thought. Several of them are found in the one book, Sirach. In the manner of Proverbs and other wisdom literature, it critiques behaviors likely to impoverish, such as idleness (22:1–2), drunkenness (19:1) and extravagance (18:32–33), as causes of poverty and disgrace: “Do not become a beggar by feasting with borrowed money, when you have nothing in your purse” (Sir 18:33). The same book, however, attributes both poverty and wealth to God himself: “Good things and bad, life and death, poverty and wealth, come from the Lord” (11:14).

And Sirach also predicts the future impoverishment of the unrighteous, implying a divine judgment or settling of accounts: The unrighteous wealthy should not be arrogant, because justice is coming, even if it seems to be delayed: “An hour’s misery makes one forget past luxury, and at the close of one’s life one’s deeds are revealed” (11:27); “Panic and insolence will waste away riches; thus the house of the proud will be laid waste” (21:4); and “All bribery and injustice will be blotted out, but faith will last forever. The wealth of the unjust will dry up like a river, and crash like a loud clap of thunder in a storm” (40:12–13).

The judgment of God also features in Philo’s reflection on the Deuteronomic curses. Poverty, indigence, and destitution are promised “for those who transgress the commandments and the laws” (Praem. 127, cf. Deut 28.33; Praem. 136). Yet this curse, is, according to Philo, “the lightest evil” (κουφότατον κακόν). Likewise, the Psalms of Solomon see poverty as one of the ways in which God punishes sinners (Pss. Sol 46, 15; 16:13–14). Philo also blames fate, or at least misfortunes (αἱ ἀναρωπῶν τύχαι), for the enslavement which happened frequently, even to

8 Rathbone argues against reading too much significance to the flight statistics, and suggests that Roman Egypt enjoyed relative prosperity during the early empire (Rathbone 2006, 108, 113).

9 E.g., “Laziness brings on deep sleep; an idle person will suffer hunger” (Prov 19:15, NRSV).

10 M. Qidd. 4.14 recounts the opinion of Rabbi Meir, who said, “A man should always teach his son a clean and easy trade. And let him pray to him to whom belong riches and possessions. For there is no trade which does not involve poverty or wealth. For poverty does not come from one’s trade, nor does wealth come from one’s trade. But all is in accord with a man’s merit.” This ascription of poverty or wealth to merit here implies divine action, rewarding merit as it deserves.
well-born freemen (Prob. 18). And he acknowledges the voluntary poverty of the Essenes (Prob. 77).

Philo makes it clear that sometimes poverty is the result of oppression or cruelty. Those who lend to the poor but demand the payment of interest in addition to the principal show “inhumanity and terrible hardness, making the poor person even poorer” (Spec. 2.75). Josephus recounts the complaint made by a large delegation of Jews against Herod Archelaus before Augustus in Rome, that "when he took the kingdom, it was in an extraordinary flourishing condition,” but “he had filled the nation with the utmost degree of poverty” (Ant. 17.307), through heavy and unjust taxation. In the Letter of Aristeas, King Ptolemy grants freedom to 100,000 Jews who had been captured by his father's troops and brought as slaves to Egypt. He said, “The spoil that fell to the soldiers on the field of battle was all the booty that they should have claimed. To reduce the people to slavery, in addition, was an act of absolute injustice” (Let. Aris. 23). The variety of explanations offered for poverty in both Roman sources and early Judaism include acts of divine judgment, and acts of human sin and injustice. There is no evidence, however, that poverty in and of itself is considered unjust, apart from some unjust cause.

**Paul’s Poverty**

When Paul reflects on his own poverty, it is in graphic terms: “Until this present hour also we hunger and thirst, and are poorly clothed, and are beaten, and are homeless, and toil, working with our own hands” (1 Cor 4:11–12). The degree of his deprivation varies. At one level, his times of poverty are a matter of indifference, because he has learned the secret “of being filled and going hungry, both of abounding and lacking” (Phil 4:12). At times he supports himself through his own prodigious labor, night and day (1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8). He is occasionally supported by churches (2 Cor 11:9), though not the ones he is working in at the time, for he refuses to be a burden on the churches (2 Cor 12:14), wanting to make the gospel free of charge (1 Cor 9:8) and to set an example of hard work (2 Thess 3:9).

It appears then that Paul could be lumped in with the Cynics and the Essenes, as having chosen a form of voluntary poverty. And yet it is clear from the Corinthian correspondence, and elsewhere, that Paul has not chosen poverty per se. He has chosen, or been called to, a mission and a way of life, for the sake of Christ, the gospel, and others, which entails suffering, while not seeking it. Thus, “If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort” (2 Cor 1:6); and “Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our bodies” (2 Cor 4:10). Perhaps then he could be lumped in with the Stoics (and Epicureans) in his willing endurance of hardship. There is no doubt that Paul is willing to endure suffering (Phil 3:7–11). Yet Paul’s “hardship lists” in 1 and 2 Corinthians
(1 Cor 4:9–13; 2 Cor 4:8–15, 6:4–10, 11:23–30, 12:10) point to something more than
the willingness to suffer for his cause.

In 1 Corinthians 4:9–13, he is talking about the experiences of the apostles,
who have become a spectacle (4:9), the scum and the dregs of the world (4:13).
But it is God who has done this. He has exhibited the apostles as last (ἔσχατος),
as condemned to death (ἐπιθανάτιος). Elsewhere in the letter, Paul says that he is
compelled to preach the gospel (1 Cor 9:16). The passage is heavy with irony, of
course. The painful experiences of the apostles—the emissaries of Christ him-
self—are contrasted to the Corinthians’ lofty opinion of themselves. But the irony
goes deeper. The apostles, Paul says, bless when reviled, endure when persectu-
ed, and encourage when defamed. In other words, Paul is lamenting the injustice
he suffers, that when doing good in obedience to God, bringing the best ‘good
news’ to the world, he experiences evil. Thus Paul’s apostolic poverty is at once
an injustice, and at the same time something God-ordained, because God has
put him in the position which entails such unjust suffering.

The hardship list in 2 Corinthians 6:4–10 is also ironic. Paul commends him-
self to the Corinthians, ironically through his suffering and hunger, as well as his
love and truth. Once again, a contrast is drawn between the horrible treatment
the apostles endure, and the truth of who they are, and between their own suf-
ferring, and the (gospel) riches they spread to others: “As deceivers, and yet true;
as unknown, and yet well known; as dying and yet behold, we are alive!” and “As
poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.” The
list in 2 Corinthians 11:23–30 is a grim recitation of sufferings, including hunger,
cold, and exposure. And Paul uses this list to boast, ironically, in his weakness,
unlike the “super-apostles” (2 Cor 11:5), who boast in their accomplishments. The
list in 2 Corinthians 12:10 explains the suffering that Paul’s “thorn in the flesh,”
the angel of Satan (12:7), is bringing about: the “weaknesses, insults, hardships,
persecutions and difficulties” with which Paul is content “for the sake of Christ,”
and which also keep him humble in spite of his extraordinary spiritual experiences.

The hardship list in 2 Corinthians 4:7–15 points to a key explanation for all of
this. The apostles are the earthen pots in which the treasure of the gospel is dis-
played. They continually experience, at some level, the death of Jesus so that
Jesus’ life may be displayed through them. Paul’s experience of poverty and oth-
er suffering is his sharing in the poverty and suffering of Jesus himself, who, ac-
cording to Paul, “though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that you
through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9). Most likely the incarnation
is in view here, and “poverty” is a summation of Jesus’ whole earthly existence
including his death. But the context indicates that material deprivation is not
out of view. The messengers of the gospel share in the rich blessings of the gospel
of Christ, in his glory and resurrection life, but they also participate in the suffer-
ings of Christ (cf. Rom 8:17).
Thus, Paul explains his sufferings for Christ, including his poverty, as part of the cross-shaped existence in Christ, in the service of the gospel. At one level, Paul's poverty, like that of Christ, was a striking example of injustice: the ones who are blessing the world with the greatest of true riches suffer unjustly and are mistreated horribly. At another level, it is through this very suffering that the gospel is proclaimed and exhibited, and so Paul is quite willing to suffer the unjust poverty that his mission entails. When we look at Paul for explanations for poverty beyond his own, we have such a small corpus that it is not surprising that we find very little. The poor simply exist. But Paul's strenuous efforts to alleviate poverty make it clear that he thinks in general of the suffering which poverty imposes as an evil to be addressed.

**PAUL, POVERTY, AND EQUALITY**

Some have taken Paul's emphasis on equality, in his discussion on the collection for the poor, from a modern political angle, to mean a radical redistribution of wealth. For Julien Ogereau, Paul “aimed at reforming the structural inequalities of Greco-Roman society that were also becoming apparent in the early church” (Ogereau 2012, 377). For L. L. Welborn, who hopes for a growth in Marxist readings of Paul (Welborn 2017, 390–395), the collection meant, “the equalization of resources between persons of different social classes through voluntary redistribution” (Welborn 2013, 11; see also Horrell 1995). For Petros Vassiliadis, “The ultimate purpose of the collection project was to realize the social ideal of the equal distribution and permanent sharing of material wealth” (Vassiliadis 1992, 57). All this is, however, is too political and too grand for Paul's purposes, as Brian Tucker has pointed out (Tucker 2014, 69–70). John Kloppenborg also downplays the political significance of the collection: “It is an exaggeration to call Paul's project 'subversive', as some have claimed. Subversion was simply beyond Paul's reach since he lacked the political power and influence to bring about significant change . . . It is doubtful that Paul's collection would be noticed by those outside the narrow circle of Christ followers” (Kloppenborg, 2017, 197).\(^\text{12}\)

Paul uses the language of justice and equality (or fairness) in a key passage that concerns economic issues. In 2 Corinthians 8:13–15, he puts the collection in

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\(^{11}\) Paul does exhort believers to work for a living (1 Thess 4:11), probably because some were becoming unnecessarily dependent on the generosity of believers (2 Thess 3:10), but also as a righteous alternative to theft and to enable generosity to the poor (Eph 4:28). This suggests that Paul understood that poverty sometimes had a moral cause.

\(^{12}\) He has an ethnic take on the collection: “Paul's notion of equality in 2 Cor 8:14 is not one of equal civic rights but of Greeks sharing economic resources with Judeans” (Kloppenborg 2017, 193).
terms of equality (ἰσότης): "For it is not for the relief of others, and your affliction, but from equality; in the present time your abundance for their lack, so that also their abundance might be for your lack, that there may be equality, as it is written, ‘The one with much did not have too much, and the one with little had no lack.’"  

The term Paul uses for “equality,” ἵσότης, has a range of meanings, including fairness, balance, impartiality, equity, and equality, and it is sometimes associated with ideas of justice, especially in legal and political contexts (Vassiliadis 1992, 52–53). The Romans, according to Donald Engels, “never accepted democracy, because they never accepted equality” (Engels 1990, 87). Even Cicero rejected “the democratic ideal of democracy” (Tatum 2018, 36). Among the Greeks, however, equality formed at least a political ideal. Plato said that political equality was a goal to be aimed at, though its accomplishment properly belonged only to Zeus. But the kind of equality he advocates is one where everyone receives their due, measured out in proportion to their goodness, greatness, and education. This kind of political justice—which clearly does not lead to equal outcomes—is the equality to be pursued (Laws 6.757 a–c). Euripides personifies ἵσότης as the goddess Equality, “who always joins friend to friend, city to city, allies to allies, and is to be chosen instead of the destructive Ambition (φιλοτιμία)” (Euripides, Phoenissae, 536–539). Polybius uses the term in a political context, praising the kind of kingship that is the opposite of tyranny, a regime in which civic equality and free speech (πολιτικῆς ἰσότητος καὶ παρρησίας) are experienced (Hist. 6.8.4.4). Equal treatment under the law is emphasized. Amongst Jewish writings, the Psalms of Solomon says that the coming messiah “will shepherd the flock of the Lord with faithfulness and justice [δικαιοσύνη],” and “he will lead them all in equality [ἵσότης], and there will be no pride among them to oppress any among them” (Pss. Sol 17.41–42). Philo says, “Equality [ἵσότης] gives birth to justice, which is the mistress and ruler of the virtues” (Plant. 122).  

Paul’s notion of equality in the offering has several distinct features. One is proportionality, the idea or expectation that burdens should be shared variously according to one’s resources. Philo discusses the equality (ἵσότης) of proportion (διὰ ἀναλογίας), such as when cities “command every citizen to contribute an equal share of his property, not equal in number, but in proportion to the value

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13 The LXX uses ἰσότης to translate the Hebrew וְשֵׁשׁ in Job 36:29 and Zech 4:7, likely reading the root as וֹשֶׁשׁ, which forms the verb וֹשֶׁה “to be equal, level,” instead of וֹשֶׁה, which forms וֹשֶׁה (MT), meaning “noise, shouting.”

14 The quote here from Exod 16:18 does not include the last part of the verse, which explains the variation as each person gathered what was needed, or, in the LXX, what was fitting for himself, and presumably for his household (εἰς τοὺς καθήκοντας παρ’ ἑαυτῷ).

15 Cicero said, “Whenever all public affairs are conducted by the people, however just and moderate its administration, such equality is none the less inequitable because it does not recognize distinctions in social standing” (Rep. 1.43).
of his assessment" (Her. 145). Paul has something like this proportionality in mind in 2 Corinthians 8:12, when he says, “For if the eagerness [to give] is there, it is acceptable to the degree that one has, not to the degree that he does not have.” The amount of the gift does not determine its acceptability (see discussion in Guthrie 2015, 410–412). This proportionality, however, must be qualified by the account of the Macedonians, who through their rich generosity gave according to, and even beyond their ability (8:3). Thus for Paul, giving can, by God's grace, go beyond the proportional equality of mutual provision for one another's needs out of the excess of what is earned, to that which is truly sacrificial.

The situations to which Philo was referring (Her. 145) when taxes were assessed in proportion to assets involved compulsory confiscation from citizens. But the voluntary response to the needs of others is the second distinct aspect of Paul's view. Paul emphasizes the voluntary nature of the collection for Jerusalem. Willingness is not enough, of course, but should be backed up by action, as Paul makes clear in 2 Corinthians 8:8 (“I say this not as a command, but testing by the earnestness of others the genuineness of your love”), and 8:11, where their eagerness to help should be fulfilled by action according to their resources. Nevertheless, unless the gift was given willingly, it would not be acceptable. Likewise, 9:5, where Paul wants the offering to consist of gifts willingly given from a desire to bless, not grudgingly given by stingy people, and 9:7 (“Each one as he has chosen in his heart, not with sorrow or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”) make it clear that this is not compulsory, though Paul expresses himself very strongly: participating will prove the genuineness of their love. Paul was especially concerned in the case of the Macedonians, who had to beg to be allowed to participate in the collection, in view of their own poverty, since they were in “a great trial of affliction” and “deep poverty” (8:2). Paul salutes their joyful willingness to give beyond their means and sees it as a work of the grace of God, but he makes it clear that they were not forced but gave voluntarily, or of their own accord (αὐθαίρετοι). It seems likely that they were not even asked (8:4–5), which is why they had to beg to be allowed to participate.17

The third feature of Paul's approach distinguishes equality, which the Jerusalem offering instantiates, from a system that afflicts some for the relief of others:

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16 In one further passage Paul uses the language of justice and equality within an economic relationship: “Masters, provide your slaves justice and fairness [or equality], knowing that you also have a master in heaven” (Col 4:1). It seems odd perhaps for Paul to speak of justice and equality right after instructing slaves to obey their masters (Col 3:22–25), but it does suggest a transformation through Christ in the relationship between master and slave. Masters are warned that they are accountable to God for how they treat their slaves. See O'Brien 1982, 232–233.

17 Willingness is also emphasized in describing the ministry of Titus, who, being zealous and willing (αὐθαίρετος), accepted Paul's request to go to Corinth to administer the offering (8:17). He is thus set forth as an example to the Corinthians.
“For it is not for the relief of others, while you are burdened, but from equality” (οὐ γὰρ ἧνα ἄλλοις ἀνέσεις, ύμῖν ἐλληψίς, ἄλλ’ ἐξ ἰσότητος, 8:13). That is to say, burdening some to relieve others would not lead to equality, in Paul’s view, but the opposite. The financial goal of the collection was to meet the needs of poor believers in Jerusalem, but not in a way that afflicted others. It would be contradictory, and, to Paul, unfair or unequal, to afflict the Corinthians to meet the needs of the Judeans. Instead, the abundance of the Corinthians would make up for what the Jerusalem church lacked (τὸ ὑμῶν περίσσευμα εἰς τὸ ἐκείνων ὑστέρημα, 8:14).  

The fourth distinct feature of Paul’s discussion of equality is that it is worked out over time: “in the present time your abstinence for their lack, so that also their abundance might be for your lack, in order that there might be equality” (8:14). The use of the verb of being γένηται in the second clause (and implied in the first) suggests that the abundance of the Corinthians exists for the sake of meeting the needs of the Judean believers, and vice versa. But this mutual economic support—indeed, their very equality—takes place and becomes visible only over time.

Exactly what Paul intended with his quote from Exod 16:18—which reports what happened after the Israelites gathered their manna (“Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack”) is debated. Some scholars, reading the context which follows in Exodus, when the unused manna rots overnight, focus on the avoidance of hoarding (Garland 1999, 385; Guthrie 2015, 414; Hughes 1962, 307–308). Some focus on the divine provision of the manna which miraculously met everyone’s needs, thus reminding the Corinthians that they are participating in an act of divine grace whereby God himself “works the wonder of equality” (Seifrid 2014, 338). Hans Dieter Betz thinks Paul is reflecting a Jewish tradition of ethical reflection on Exod 16:18 (Betz 1985, 69). Some interpret Exod 16:18 as saying that the excess of each person’s gathering of manna was redistributed to others after they weighed it out (Gotsis and Dodd 2002; Hughes 1962, 307–308). However, the correspondence between the text of Exodus and that of 2 Corinthians should probably be kept as simple as possible, given that Paul’s introductory formula, “just as it was written” (καθὼς γέγραπται) focuses attention on the text more than the context of the quote. Thrall suggests: “The point of the quotation is simply to validate the principle of equality” (Thrall 2000, 543).
For Paul then, equality is worked out through voluntary mutual generosity and care over time, so that at various times the Greek and Judean churches would be able to help each other. Equality is expressed in the mutual and voluntary willingness of believers to meet the needs of others at times of necessity, and proportionally according to their own resources. And all this is set in Christological context: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9).

There are two notable innovations in Paul’s collection, resulting from this view of equality and sharing. The first is the organized voluntary collection for the poor, of money, gathered regularly over a long period, in this case around a year (2 Cor 8:10). In the following century, Trajan permitted the formation of associations in Amisos in Pontus, “for the relief of hardship among the poor” (Pliny, Ep. 10.92–93), but how they were organized is not known. Collections have been recorded for other projects, such as setting up inscriptions to honor benefactors, or for building projects (Kloppenborg 2017, 174, 185). Jews collected for the poor, the Levites, and the temple regularly, but largely through a system of taxation (through tithing) which was at least nominally compulsory, though neither the tithes nor the temple tax was necessarily policed. Greco-Roman associations could provide emergency loans to their members who were in financial strife (Harland 2015, 26–31), or might help one another in emergencies (Downs 2008, 108). However, the sustained but voluntary collection of money for the poor was a departure from the norm.

The second innovation was international giving by non-elite people for the sake of the poor elsewhere (2 Cor 8:1–3). The early church in any event was likely to have been unattractive to elite benefactors, even those who were sympathetic, because there was little prospect of receiving the kind of honors they normally expected (Longenecker 2009, 54–55). And, like Judaism (from which it would of course be hardly distinguished in the middle of the first century, at least to outsiders) it was distinct from most Greco-Roman associations in not being confined to a local area. It was generally beyond the resources of the

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20 Paul also occasionally calls for help for the poor on the basis of the justice of obligation. The explanation for the collection which Paul gives in Romans 15:25–28 is also related to ideas of justice. It is at one level a matter of voluntary fellowship or participation: “For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution [κοινωνία] for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem” (15:26). At another level it is an obligation: “For they were pleased—and they are under obligation to them” (15:27). The debt that the Greek believers owe derives from the spiritual blessings they have received through the Jews, especially the Jerusalem saints.

21 Sometimes these loans for relief of hardship were interest free (Harland 2015, 27, 30).

22 Paul also encouraged giving beyond the community of believers (Gal 6:10; 1 Thess 5:15).

23 One exception was the guild of artists (actors and musicians) devoted to Dionysus, which began as local guilds in Greece during the Hellenistic period, but in the imperial period
poor to organize internationally. Occasional benefaction took place internationally in the empire, but mostly at an elite level, as might be expected. But this is still quite different from Paul’s collection.

CONCLUSIONS

Our brief study has shown that Paul does not treat the existence of poverty in itself as a sign of injustice. Concerning justice, there are several key conclusions. First, as with Romans and Jews, there is no evidence that Paul, who is both Jewish and a Roman citizen, sees poverty in itself as evidence that injustice has been committed, though sometimes poverty is the result of injustice or oppression. Even when he thinks that the suffering he experiences is at one level an injustice, Paul accepts the resulting poverty as a persecuted apostle of Christ, knowing that God has put him in that position. There is no call for mandatory redistribution, but he urges and organizes voluntary acts of generosity to the poor, especially among fellow believers. Paul sees justice, or equality, being worked out through the mutual care (and love) of believers for one another over time, and in response to need, as they give voluntarily, generously and in proportion to their means, shaped by the self-giving grace of Christ himself. And ultimately, for Paul, hope is in God, not on riches in this age. Life in this age is like shivering in a tent, waiting for the sun to rise—for mortality to be swallowed up by immortality (2 Cor 5:4).

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became an international association, with patronage at times from notables such as Mark Antony and Hadrian. See Aneziri 2009, 222 n. 35, 232 n. 86.

Downs suggests, as an example of a voluntary association offering help to a related association in another area, the inscription which shows a Tyrians in Puteoli (near Naples), asking for funds from the city council of Tyre to pay the rent for the maintenance of their Tyrian civic cult while away from home (CIG 3.5853). See Downs 2008, 115. The council at Tyre decided to agree to the request, and, to pay the rent from Tyrian tax revenues, or to tax its stationarii in Rome 250 denarii a year to cover the cost, depending on how the relevant inscription is understood. For the former, see Sosin 1999. For the latter interpretation, see Kloppenborg 2017, 180. Sosin also establishes that the amount concerned was 250 denarii, not 100,000 denarii as has sometimes been assumed, by reading “CN as Latin (in the middle of a Greek inscription), instead of the Greek for 250 denarii. There is nothing in the council’s response to the request which suggests a voluntary offering. It was a tax imposed by government on its local or expatriate citizens.

For example, according to Suetonius, Augustus rebuilt some cities which had treaties with Rome after they had suffered earthquakes (Aug. 47:5).


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Book Reviews


Vince Bantu’s *A Multitude of All Peoples* will help the church to recognize some of its identity issues and broaden our sense of Christian history beyond the Western tradition. This book has been widely celebrated, winning *Christianity Today’s* Award of Merit in the Missions/Global Church category, but I will raise a few concerns which call for a more cautious reception.

Bantu confronts a missiological issue with a historical survey. The issue is that the perception of Christianity as a Western/white religion is a “profound stumbling block to the reception of the gospel” because it allows non-Western and non-white people to dismiss it as inappropriately alien (p. 6). This is a valid concern and an important note to strike. Bantu is therefore critical of studies which have positioned the more recent rise of the Majority World Church as new and unprecedented. His survey seeks to show that “Christianity is not becoming a global religion; it has always been a global religion” (p. 2).

There are three moves made by Bantu in this book. First, chapter 1 suggests how the “Western cultural captivity of the church” grew over the early centuries of Christianity (p. 9). He describes the rise of an association of Christianity with Rome to such an extent that “the Christian faith became seen as incongruous with non-Roman identities” (p. 71). Theological differences led to the ostracization of churches outside the Roman tradition and the resulting divisions were exacerbated by the rise of Islam. Non-Roman churches were isolated and so much more vulnerable and liable to be decimated by Muslim military expansion and the association of Islam with ‘the East’ fed into a growing suspicion of non-Western Christianity.

Despite the relative dominance of the Roman tradition, there were significant Christian communities in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia and Bantu’s second move is to narrate their stories. Chapters 2–4 give an account of the church in each of these regions respectively.

Lastly, in chapter 5, Bantu draws out the implications of his study. He is especially concerned to emphasize the need of contextualized theology and autochthonous leadership (p. 219) but his conclusions also range more widely. Bantu postures his position in appreciative yet critical conversation with J. Kameron Carter, Willie Jennings, Lamin Sanneh, and Andrew Walls.

*A Multitude of All Peoples* is a very welcome move in a much-needed direction. The central claim of the book that there are significant Christian communities
outside of the Western tradition is a crucial and often overlooked piece of history. Bantu is surely correct to insist that this insight has the power to unsettle unwarranted Western hegemony of the church, that it opens pathways for contextualizing theology globally, and that it earns the gospel a new hearing by upsetting the assumption that Christianity is essentially a white/Western religion. The central three chapters which recount the vibrant church histories of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia are the highlight of the book. Yet we should note that Bantu’s main contribution here is not in unearthing new data or giving new interpretations, but in collating lesser-known material and making it accessible to new audience. Many readers will, like myself, come away with a wider awareness of these traditions, a deeper appreciation for them, and an extensive reading list so that we can explore them further.

Yet there are issues which suggest that a more hesitant response to Bantu’s book is appropriate. I will discuss the character of his narrative, his approach to creational boundaries, and whether what he presents warrants the conclusions which he draws.

First, the “global” frame given to the book may be misleading because the story which Bantu tells is strung across a quite limited set of touchpoints. Bantu has collated high points in Christian history from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia but this approach runs the risk of misrepresenting, perhaps by over-globalizing, early Christianity. Some counterpoints about where Christianity had not yet reached or even some comparative comments to show the relative size and vitality of the traditions he outlines would have clarified the case which Bantu can make. Stretching a broad narration across the highlights which best bolster his point leaves the strength of his proposal in question.

Secondly, Bantu’s ambiguous posture toward creational boundaries fosters uncertainty about his project by calling into question the definition of the central term: “Christianity.” Western Christians who want to see the Global Church as one big happy family soon find themselves stumbling over Miaphysitism and its many cousins. The early creational distinctions persist and no call for increased engagement with World Christianity can ignore this fact. Admirably, Bantu does not gloss over this uncomfortable reality, but his approach here may introduce some confusion for readers. On the one hand he bemoans the use of creational boundaries to turn non-Western Christians into ‘heretics’ (pp. 29 and 48). But on the other he is clearly not calling us to engage ancient Christianity’s global identity by walking across the corpses of the creeds because he also laments that “many liberal, mainline Christian communities have strayed from biblical orthodoxy and have influenced many scholars of color to do the same” (pp. 139–140). For the broader framing of the book, Bantu appears to use the entirely valid marker of self-identification to recognize Christian communities. But in these more particular discussions, creational boundaries are both disparaged and employed.
Bantu has not set out here to solve the rather thorny problems of orthodoxy and Christian identity and it would be unfair to criticize him for the book that he did not write. At the same time, my concern is that a deeper level of engagement with these questions, or even a clearer description of his own position on them, seems to be necessary for his project to succeed.

The third issue is that the implications that Bantu draws out at the end of the book appear to go beyond the limits of what he has demonstrated. For example, his claim that the association of Christianity with the white or Western world is the “single greatest obstacle for people coming to faith in Christ” (p. 225) may very well be true, but he does not support it. What he has advanced in the core of the book is a selective historical survey of Christianity in three regions but his claims reach quite broadly. I have no interest in arguing against his conclusions in particular, but I do sense that their scope outstrips what his material here directly supports. Perhaps at least more could have been done within the historical chapters to make stronger connections to his conclusions at the end. Bantu has much to say that is quite valuable, but the significance of his contribution may have been obscured here by allowing his focus to drift from the limitations of this particular project.

I have probably spent more time than is fair on these concerns because this is a significantly helpful book. Bantu has provided an entry point for a much broader engagement with the non-Western Christian traditions. He has, without any doubt, achieved his goal of rendering the assumption of Christianity being a white or Western religion untenable and made that essential insight accessible to a broad audience. A Multitude of All Peoples deserves a wide reading, but I also sense that the conversation it impels will need to include further reflection on the material which Bantu has presented here.

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SIM (Serving in Mission)


Christian ethicist Nigel Biggar of the University of Oxford has provided a penetrating and stimulating volume examining the problems with “natural rights” and proposed solutions to those problems.

The first chapter introduces critiques of natural rights by four intellectuals, while the following four chapters examine rights talk from the pre-modern era to today to see if the critiques hold. Pre-modern and early modern formulations of rights (chs. 2–3) are not absolute and are nuanced, focusing on “moral rightness,” while Catholic formulations integrate duty, virtue, a moral order, and the common
good. The modern era, though, turned toward absolute rights talk with little nuance or consideration of other moral components. Major problems with this rights talk are its merely aspirational nature, its dangerous abstractness, its conflation of legal rights with moral rights, and its neglect of the common good.

Biggar's main and most controversial critique, though, borrowed from Onora O’Neill, is that natural rights are not viable if they cannot be feasibly implemented within a social system, and if they are not viable, they do not exist. Rather, legal rights are paradigmatic rights because they are enforceable, knowable, and modifiable to suit a context or culture. The “basic problem that afflicts talk about natural rights is that it attributes to them the same stability and security that are possessed by positive rights” (p. 123). He concludes, “There is natural right or law or morality .... There are also positively legal rights that are, or would be, justified by natural morality. But there are no natural rights” (p. 131).

After ruling out the existence of natural rights but affirming a broad moral order and the paradigmatic status of legal rights, Biggar enters some additional points of contention in rights talk. Chapter 6 defends “subjective rights” against a Lockean state of nature with its moral order. Chapter 7 argues that rights are not absolute, using torture as a test-case. Chapter 8 attempts to show that human rights as a phenomenon is basically universal, with some eastern views as Confucianism sharing Christian concerns for duties and virtue. Chapter 9 argues for a contextual approach to rights (or overriding them) that considers obligations, duties, proportionality, and intentions.

In the final three chapters, Biggar takes on (some) judges and (some) lawyers involved in human rights cases. He considers specific cases in which judges have, with “universal missionary zeal” (p. 266), circumvented legislatures to champion “human rights fundamentalism” (p. 264) apart from considerations of the common good, making rights the starting foundation rather than the final conclusion of a process of moral deliberation. Some human rights lawyers use imbalanced, unfair, caricaturing rhetoric to dismiss alternative views against proposed natural rights and employ a dismal view of the legislature, which faces a difficult job of determining sensible and feasible legal rights.

In conclusion, Biggar proposes first that judges should consider rights at the end of a process of deliberation rather than as foundational starting points. Second, governments should legislate rights, but with a mind open to improvement. Third, rights advocates should demonstrate why in certain circumstances certain rights can be granted and secured, and also should be. Finally, liberal citizens must get beyond rights talk to bring duty and virtue back into the equation.

*What’s Wrong with Rights?* lives up to its title by demonstrating a number of issues that muddy the waters of rights talk. Biggar is right to dismiss many rights proposed today as “natural rights” by noting that they are unfounded, unpalatably Western, and infeasible. But are there really no natural rights, as he
concludes? He relies heavily on the feasibility critique. Biggar works hard to eliminate every candidate as a feasible natural right (with rights against slavery and torture being the two most difficult) by showing that, while they may obtain in a hypothetical state of nature (whether an amoral or a moral one), they cannot always be enforced in every society at all times (pp. 121–131). But this argumentation based on feasibility seems faulty. If natural rights are defined by those rights for the individual that obtain in the state of nature, then whether they are feasible in a social system has no bearing on their existence. Indeed, Biggar is correct that in social systems natural rights are often less useful than legal rights, but as he also points out, natural rights that are sensible and that garner wide support are useful as moral and cultural critiques of unjust and oppressive systems. Perhaps there is room for natural rights, which may or may not be feasibly protected in various societies, but which also must be situated within a larger moral order alongside duty, virtue, and considerations of the common good. In other words, perhaps the main problem is not that natural rights are a myth, but that natural rights need to be defined in such a way as to allow contextual overrides. Biggar at least makes a compelling case for such contextualization.

If contextualizing rights talk is on the right track, then his proposals for judges should be heeded. He notes correctly that using rights fundamentalism to circumvent legislatures will deny the losing party to “console themselves that at least their views have been heard, and that the opportunity to reverse the decision still lies open to them” (p. 327). I was surprised that Biggar did not include the American Supreme Court’s Obergefell et al. v. Hodges, in which Justice Kennedy asserted in the majority opinion that “the right to personal choice regarding marriage is inherent to the concept of individual autonomy” (p. 3). In their dissent, Justice Roberts joined by Justices Scalia and Thomas echo Biggar’s concern: “Five lawyers have closed the debate and enacted their own vision of marriage as a matter of constitutional law. Stealing this issue from the people will for many cast a cloud over same-sex marriage, making a dramatic social change that much more difficult to accept” (p. 2). Here, the purported “[natural] right” to autonomy trumped all other moral considerations, the common good, the foundation of the legislative process for democracy, and the rights of others who would be impacted, such as children who cannot choose the type of family into which they will be born or adopted. As Biggar would probably state it himself, whether the outcome is morally correct is irrelevant in this context. What matters is that, when judges take one right and make it absolute so that it trumps all other concerns including the rights of others who are impacted, “natural rights” have been abused and used for a judicial utopian vision.

The volume’s main drawback is Biggar’s choice to engage authors, typically one at a time and at length, rather than to engage issues. The volume contains
much overlap, redundancy, and repetition (e.g., p. 101 contains half a page repeating a critique of rights already made, and this occurs often). Moreover, this choice to engage a select number of authors at length causes the reader to wonder whether these authors make the strongest arguments. A thematic approach would have allowed Biggar to simply lay out the arguments for and against each of the issues involved without redundancy and would have allowed him to integrate many more voices to ensure that the strongest case is always made.

Overall, this work on natural rights is a welcomed addition to the current discussion. Biggar’s previous work on the ethics of war gives him a unique angle to approach cases of rights talk, focusing on specific instances such as torture and killing in war. He makes a strong case for making rights the conclusion of a process of moral consideration rather than a foundational starting point to which everything else must yield. And most of all, we should heed his advice to ensure that duty, virtue, and the common good play an equally strong role as rights in the formation of our social moral orders.

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Jeannine Brown (PhD, Luther Seminary) is an experienced, multi-published professor of New Testament and director of online programs at Bethel Seminary (MN). Due to the positive response of the first (2007) edition of this book, she was invited by the publisher to prepare this updated second edition. In her preface (p. ix), Brown points out some of the important new features of this revision: a further theoretical development of her foundational model of communication; the inclusion of more non-western perspectives on hermeneutics; the use of additional biblical illustrative examples, especially from the Old Testament, and a concise glossary of key terms. Space allows for only a thumbnail sketch of this insightful, clearly composed, and theoretically sound exposition of the field of hermeneutics as it applies to the interpretation of sacred Scripture.

Brown’s “Introduction” broaches the subject of Scripture as an act of communication that is initially defined as follows: “Scripture’s meaning can be understood as the communicative act of the author that has been inscribed in the text and addressed to the intended audience for purposes of engagement” (p. 4). The scope of her comprehensive study is delineated into two major sections: a “theoretical perspective” on (chs. 1–6), and “practical guidance” for the notion of Scripture as communication (chs. 7–12). In addition to an essential glossary, bibliography, and subject index, the book’s end matter includes six short but helpful appendices with
reference to guidelines for exegesis, historical criticism, parallelism in Hebrew poetry, the epistles, biblical narratives, and how to carry out topical studies (pp. 279–300).

Chapter 1 defines some of the key concepts central to Brown’s subject, such as hermeneutics, meaning, exegesis, genre, literary context, social setting, and contextualization. Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical foundation underlying her communication-oriented methodology: language theory, speech-act theory, relevance theory, literary theory, and narrative theology. From this, meaning in written communication is further defined as “the whole of what an author intends to communicate with their specific audience for purposes of engagement; meaning is textually inscribed and is conveyed within shared language conventions and mutually held contextual assumptions” (p. 37). This model is applied then in reference to 1 Corinthians 8:1–13. Chapter 3 presents a survey of “about two hundred years of the history of hermeneutical philosophy” in order to “show how authors, texts, and readers have been at the forefront at various points in this history” (p. 68). Chapter 4 presents some important affirmations about the interpretation of literary, including Scriptural, meaning from the perspective of a communication model, namely, that it is: author-derived but textually communicated, complex yet determinate, imperfectly accessed by readers, accompanied by ambiguity, requiring contextualization by readers, and admittedly, “not an easy task” (p. 89). Chapter 5 explores certain “interpretive difficulties [that] frequently arise from what rests at the ‘edges’ of meaning” in literature (p. 91), namely, various kinds of implication and “perlocutionary intention”—“what the speaker [writer] wants the hearer [reader] to do in response to the speaker communication” (p. 305). The presence of implicit information requires that “we read texts carefully and holistically, attending to their contextual assumptions, so as to ascertain whether possible implications fit the pattern of the whole” (p. 110). Chapter 6 challenges biblical readers with “an invitation to active engagement” (p. 111) through a perceptive discussion of interpretive location, the ethics of reading, the notion of an implied reader, and the need to become “readers in dialogue” (p. 126). Concluding Part One of her theoretical discussion, Brown contends that “a hermeneutic that takes seriously the communicative nature of Scripture will need to attend carefully to the following: biblical genres, language, social setting, [and] literary context” (p. 130)—the very topics to be considered next in Part Two of the book.

Salient aspects of three major genres of Scripture are expounded in chapter 7: poetry (e.g., imagery, poetic devices, sound devices, and structural devices, like parallelism); epistles (e.g., social setting, the rhetorical styles of ethos, pathos, and logos); and narrative (e.g., the “discourse level” of familiar themes, event sequencing, rhetorical devices, and point-of-view). Brown correctly emphasizes the fact “that biblical authors affirm a theological story in their communication—the story of who God is and what God is doing in this world” (p. 161, original
“The language of the Bible” is the subject of chapter 8 with respect to: (a) linguistic properties such as potency, adequacy, and limitations like ambiguity; (b) pragmatics, e.g., sense versus referent, langue versus parole, word versus concept, important language maxims; and (c) potential “pitfalls” regarding etymology, anachronism, over-reading, “literal” meaning, and the over-emphasis of some of the “fine points of grammar” (p. 185). External “context,” or “the social world of the Bible” is competently dealt with in chapter 9 in terms of four distinct dimensions—those of the wider world, surrounding culture, audience setting, and shared knowledge (pp. 190–192). The chief “sources for social world analysis” are documented (pp. 192–199); “some guidelines [for] reading the primary sources” are suggested, including the use of “secondary sources” (pp. 199–204); several “cautions” are given, such as “over-constructing” or “over-generalizing” the setting (p. 206); and finally, a more extended example of “the impact of social-world analysis on interpretation” is given, namely, that of the Pharisees in the Gospels (p. 207). Internal “context”—that concerning the literary cotext, intertextuality, and canon is described in chapter 10. The importance of “attending to the whole-book context” (p. 218) is underscored, and various recommendations regarding study-skills are offered, such as, paying attention to structural, thematic, and textual clues for “seeing the whole” (pp. 219–226). Pertinent expositions of the related core notions of “intertextuality” and the “canonical context” conclude this chapter.

The book’s two final chapters (11–12) deal with the crucial subject of “contextualization.” First, how can we define and “conceptualize” this notion? Several models pertaining to perception and visualization are concisely presented and illustrated, which lead to a discussion of “the interrelationship of exegesis and contextualization in practice” (p. 248) in terms of genre, the macro-context, and the parameters of “coherence” and “purpose” (pp. 252–254). “Understanding Scripture incarnationally” drives the subject of contextualization home theologically to the individual as well as to the believing community. The following proposition serves as a guide for the subsequent discussion: “The Bible [is] culturally located divine discourse for the shaping of the Christian community” (p. 260), which leads to Brown’s proposal for the use of “principalizing as a tool within purpose-guided contextualization” (p. 269). Her concluding hortatory affirmation applies the concept of “incarnational contextualization” in a very personal and heart-provoking way: “We bring our whole person to the task of reading the Bible, and we are called to respond to Scripture with our whole person, so that our lives, both individually and communally, are fully shaped by the God who speaks to us through the Bible” (p. 278). The author thereby, as throughout the text, exhibits her own compositional proficiency in relation to the main subject of this book, that is, with exemplary hermeneutically based communicative competence.
I have studied and written about communication (and translation) for most of my adult academic life. Among all the books I have read on the subject (including those that I have written), this may well be the best. Therefore, I can appreciatively recommend it as “required reading” for students and their teachers in all seminars, theological schools, and biblical studies departments at both the pre- and postgraduate levels. Adapting the words of one of this book’s endorsers: *For readers who want to listen to the Bible better, there is no better book to help achieve a more faithful, knowledgeable, and capable reading.*

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The *Oxford Handbook of Language Contact* follows the Oxford Handbook tradition of providing significant collections focusing on important fields of research. Contact-Induced Linguistic Change (CILC) is a field relevant to many readers of this journal and every chapter in this volume is worthy of attention. However, due to the size this volume and the limited size of this review, I will focus only on chapters that particularly stood out to me. For readers that are interested in more information on the details of the 33 chapters (by 44 authors), there are two online sources: Grant’s introductory chapter 1, summarizing the contents, is available for free viewing on the Oxford Handbook website, and a review of the volume by Natalie Operstein is available on the LinguistList.org site.

The chapters are organized in two sections. Part I, “Language contact and linguistic theory,” provides mostly cross-linguistic reviews of theoretical topics in language contact and change. Part II, “Language contact in several languages,” primarily presents particular language-contact situations, either over a number of centuries or more recently.

All chapters in Part I review CILC from the viewpoint of different subfields. In his celebrated 1953 book, *Language in Contact*, Uriel Weinreich presented three areas that show how language contact results in language change: structural factors, individual factors, and the socio-cultural setting. In chapter 2 of this volume, “Theories of language contact,” Donald Winford, appropriately situates each of the chapters in Part I within Weinreich’s three areas. Chapters 3–6 deal with structural features of CILC, each within a specific domain: phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. The rest of Part I, chapters 7–13, consider CILC from fields related to the bilingual individual and the socio-cultural context: sociolinguistics, code-mixing and code-switching, language acquisition, pidgins, creoles, and mixed languages.
An important chapter in Part I for readers of this journal who work in endangered languages is Alexandra Aikhenvald’s, “CILC and endangered languages: analysis and documentation,” in which she presents issues that are especially common where there is an extreme power imbalance between the language communities in contact, resulting in language obsolescence. She distinguishes “localized obsolescence,” such as language use weakening among “speakers of immigrant languages” (p. 242), from “global obsolescence,” in which language use is weakened everywhere it is spoken. However, she points out that similar processes can be found in both. She surveys a wide variety of reports, including examples of avoidance of lexical borrowing. Such avoidance is typically driven by language purism—an attitude that tries to ban loanwords but allows foreign influence on phonological and grammatical patterns because they are less obviously borrowed. Some of us have seen such effects among younger speakers even in languages that are still in vigorous use by the older generation.

Like Aikhenvald’s chapter, one might expect the presentations of theoretical concerns in Part I would be based on surveys of a wide variety of languages while the specific examples of language contact in Part II would focus on one or a few cases of language contact. That is true for the most part. For example, the chapters in Part I about phonology and morphology affecting CILC draw on data from a fairly wide sample of languages. Similarly, chapter 9 by Gabriel Ozón and Eva Duran Eppler, provides a useful review of the literature regarding the effects of first and second language acquisition on language change cross-linguistically.

However, a few chapters in Part I focus on the theory of CILC with in-depth illustrations from one or two cases of contact rather than wide-ranging surveys. Malcolm Ross’s chapter on syntax deals with two examples of language contact between Indo-European languages. First, he presents constructional change in Colloquial Upper Sorbian through speakers that are bilingual in German. Then he moves to what he terms shift-induced constructional change resulting from imperfect adult learning of a second language. His example explores constructions found in Irish-English. The limited scope of Ross’s study allows for a more in-depth presentation of the issues while providing a basis for broader claims regarding change due to bilingualism vs. effects due to shift-induced constructional change.

Graham Thurgood’s chapter presents sociolinguistic approaches to CILC but, instead of giving a cross-linguistic survey, focuses exclusively on child bilingualism in Chamic, a subgroup of Austronesian languages. As in Ross’s chapter, this allows the author to focus in more detail on a number of effects in phonology and grammatical constructions.

In Part II, most of the chapters focus on one or two instances of language contact, from ancient and recent times. When there is lack of clear documentation for early contact, they present plausible scenarios that are supported by
what is known of early migrations. They include chapters on major languages of the West (English and Celtic languages, chapters 14, 15, 16, and Spanish in chapter 17) and a rich listing of sixteen language contact situations that have relatively little coverage in the literature.

Benítez-Torres presents a short but fascinating sketch of Tagdal (Songhay, Nilo-Saharan) — a language that manifests both Songhay and Berber features in the lexicon, inflectional and derivational morphology, and syntax. For example, Berber roots and derivational forms are incorporated into words with Songhay inflection and there is a discourse-pragmatic difference in the use of Songhay and Berber vocabulary, in which an initial use of a “generic” Songhay term is replaced by a more “specific” Berber term.

Birgit Hellwig presents examples in Goemai (West Chadic) showing influence from its long contact with languages of the Jos Plateau (Chadic and Benue-Congo) and the recent influence of Hausa on both the lexicon and morphosyntax.

John Haiman presents evidence for CILC in Khmer (Mon-Khmer), especially from contact with Pali (Indo-Aryan) and bidirectional influence with Thai. Regarding the complexity of figuring out the direction of influence, he says, “talk of reciprocal borrowing between only Khmer and Thai misses a larger picture: that all of mainland eastern Southeast Asia is a linguistic alliance with morphosyntactic borrowing among not only Khmer and Thai, but also Lao, Hmong, Kmhmu, and Vietnamese” (p. 578).

Eleanor Coghill’s chapter of “Northeastern Neo-Aramaic and Language Contact” presents the complex dialect continuum of this “largest branch of modern Aramaic” and the linguistic influence of multiple neighboring languages over thousands of years. Coghill’s chart of contact languages in the region brings some order to the complexity of the situation, but also makes it clear that “by far the greatest amount of influence on NENA dialects comes from varieties of Kurdish” (p. 500). Examples of CILC are given not only in the lexicon (both open and closed classes), but also in phonology (introduction of new phonemes and rules and stress assignment), derivational and inflectional morphology, and syntax (including ergativity from contact with Iranian languages).

The chapter on effects of contact between signed and spoken languages or between two signed languages, by Quinto-Pozos and Adam, provides an insightful review of some debates in the field regarding analysis and terminology. They present examples from a number of languages of sign-speech contact, sign-writing contact, sign-sign contact, and linguistic interference from other signed languages or from gestures borrowed from the hearing community.

More than half of the chapters in part II exemplifying CILC include sample texts to demonstrate the impact of neighboring languages. It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of including such texts in a book like this. The texts have to be quite short to avoid making the volume impossibly large. As a result, they do not
provide many examples of CILC. But each text does verify one or more claims the authors make in those chapters, in natural contexts of use.

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This excellent collection derives from a conference in 2013. The introduction provides background on the variety of methodological approaches employed in linguistic investigations of Biblical Hebrew [BH] (pp. 3–11), particularly noting that among the bewildering array of methodologies (no fewer than 26 morphosyntax theories are named) many recent investigations have followed an eclectic “non-theory” approach that applies the most useful insights from a range of theories. The introduction concludes with a thorough survey of the 14 essays. The following are my highlights.

Hornkohl (pp. 53–82) provides evidence that, despite recent skepticism, diachronic linguistic layers can be traced in MT. For instance, spelling and morphology are most likely to have been changed in the transmission process, and “[i]n the face of this instability, the MT’s apparent preservation of diachronically significant distribution patterns ... comes as compelling evidence that variation was not so rampant as to thwart serious diachronic inquiry” (p. 58).

It is difficult to determine whether influence of Aramaic on BH is a reflection of pre-exilic Judean language use or the result of the (post-)exilic transmission of the texts. Bloch (pp. 83–112) approaches the question from a new angle by examining epigraphic evidence, which is manifestly free of later revision. There are two key lines of argument: Iron Age Aramaic inscriptions have been found in close geographic proximity to Israelite territory, and thus language contact is plausible (pp. 86–94); and there are examples of Aramaic lexical and phonological influence in Hebrew epigraphic texts (pp. 94–105).

Tsumura (189–206) describes what he calls “verticality” in BH poetic parallelism: poetic verses a-x || b-x’, where a-b forms a complete clause, and x and x’ are (intrusive) synonymous statements. This interesting syntactical phenomenon resembles ellipsis in both cola, since both a and b are necessary for a complete clause (pp. 191–94). Examples include Ps 18:42[41] “They cried (a)—but there was none to save (x) || to the Lord (b)—but he did not answer (x’)” and Mic 7:3b “The prince (x) asks (a) || and the judge (x’) for a bribe (b).”

Hatav (pp. 207–29) suggests the paranomastic or tautological infinitive absolute construction is used “for contrastive or exhaustive focus, to mark continuative
topic, or to provide a non-specific temporal setting for its respective segment” (p. 226). There is a particularly good general summary of topic and focus (pp. 214–20).

Petersson (pp. 271–95) analyzes the sequence qtol-weyiqtol as two constructions distinguishable on discourse-pragmatic grounds. If the matrix verb is a speech act verb and the weyiqtol is third person, the construction is an indirect command (“Tell X to do Y”); otherwise the weyiqtol indicates purpose or result, as has commonly been recognized.

Miller-Naudé and Naudé (pp. 297–319) present a clear and thorough discussion of negation in clauses involving prepositional phrases. To summarize, לֹא negates the constituent it immediately precedes. If this is a verb, the scope of negation applies to the whole clause; if a preposition, the negation applies to the whole prepositional phrase; if לֹא occurs inside a prepositional phrase, it negates the following constituent (or embedded clause), not the preposition itself. Constituent negation frequently contrasts with a positive statement in the immediate context. Their analysis gives a good explanation for my intuitive understanding of negation in Hebrew. One example, however, challenged my preconceptions: Exod 3:19b

“The king of Egypt will not allow you to go, and not (even) with a strong hand [will he allow you to go]” (cf. KJV, NASB, NET, CSB). They remark, “The elliptical clause further restricts the negative statement of the first sentence—not only will the king of Egypt not allow you to leave, but he will not allow you to leave even with force” (p. 304).

Doron and Dubnov (pp. 321–60) investigate locative alternation. Verbs that describe moving something [locatum] to or from a place [location] typically encode one as the direct (primary) object and the other with a prepositional phrase (or as a secondary object). Hebrew has many verbs with the locatum as direct object and the location in a prepositional phrase (pp. 334–36), but some verbs are encoded oppositely (pp. 346–52). There are also verbs that alternate between the two constructions (pp. 336–46); e.g. Jer 12:13 נָשַׁהוּ מִלֶּחַ יָדוֹ “they sowed wheat” vs. Judg 9:45 וַיִּזְרָעֶהָ מֶלַח וְלֹא לִתֵּן אֶתְכֶם מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לַהֲלֹךְ “he sowed it with salt” (the pronominal suffix is the primary object and מֶלַח is secondary). Surprisingly, they found that the same preposition is used in both constructions: ב for putting something somewhere, and מ for removal; e.g. נִשְׁפָּאָה מִמֶּלֶךְ מִנְיָם “emptied [the] water from it” vs. אַחֲרֵי מִנָּה מַיִם “emptied it of water” (p. 323). The lists of BH verbs of the various types (pp. 334–52) will be useful for reference.

In most edited volumes, one or two essays stand out. I found Miller-Naudé and Naudé as well as Doron and Dubnov extremely helpful, and I will return to them regularly for reference; these two articles alone would be worth the price of the volume. What sets this book apart, however, is that there are at least half a
dozen other valuable articles, which testifies to the overall quality of a volume that deserves to be on every Hebrew scholar’s shelf.

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With refreshing candor, author Matthew Mullins in his book *Enjoying the Bible* begins by examining the state of poetry for readers today. His observations are not flattering. Mullins states “The only major arts category with a narrower audience than poetry is opera” (p. 1). The general disdain for poetry is introduced as a serious problem for Bible readers. Since Scripture contains a considerable amount of poetry, we are inadvertently expressing a disdain for a large portion of God’s self-revelation. Mullins argues that there are problems both in how we read and how we interpret the Bible. He challenges a reductionist hermeneutic whereby readers troll the text for information, reducing the writer’s thoughts to a single main idea. Poetry is not simply a matter of information but of emotion. The book envisions Bible reading as more than simply utilitarian or useful (he argues that no one enjoys instruction manuals). Rather, he wants readers to see Scripture as pleasurable, more like a favorite song you listen to again and again. Mullins wants to develop a hermeneutic that involves both head and heart.

Chapter 1 gives a historical overview of how Western thought has understood the place of poetry and how this has led to its denigration. Chapter 2 orients readers away from viewing the Bible as an instruction manual and toward seeing the Bible as literature, and thus a work of imagination. Chapters 3 and 4 explore the issue of meaning. Mullins explains that literary works are interested in evoking emotion, and that emotion is integral to understanding. Emotional reading keeps us from over-familiarization and helps us see old things in new ways. Mullins guides us to see that a literary reading does not allow meaning to “spin out of control” (p. 63). Though literary language leads to complexity in meaning, emotional engagement does not mean a reader’s personal feelings are allowed to take the text wherever they desire. Literary readings, instead of being distrustful of emotions, capitalize on them. Writers do not simply state a fact but also call into existence a reality. Using Psalm 23, Mullins demonstrates how the words not only help the reader know God’s comfort, but also project a comfort into the reader’s heart (p. 74).

Chapters 5 through 7 begin to unpack how to move from simply studying the Bible to immersing oneself in it. Mullins challenges us to slow down and take
story more seriously. He calls attention to our tendency to read out of obligation, missing the pure pleasure of the scriptures and their ability to delight us. For him, delight and instruction are “inextricably entangled” (p. 95). A more visceral approach to scripture has the potential to awaken our perceptions, exchanging the routine of study for the vitality of experience. Mullins is convinced that Scripture can evoke strong emotional responses. The implications for Christian worship are also explored as believers participate in an immersive and emotional experience of Scripture. In liturgy, truth is not only an objective idea but also “felt and lived” (p. 108).

In Chapters 8 through 11, Mullins walks us through changing our reading approach, reorienting expectations away from the analytical while directing attention and giving validity to emotional impact. Mullins’s method begins with reading to grasp a text’s general sense. This is accomplished through imaginatively inhabiting the world of the poem. The next step is to focus on words that suggest feeling. Expressive words shape the core emotion the poem is intending to invoke. In this way, the text is never reduced to over-personalized interpretive excess. Mullins asserts, “Emotions are as integral to the process of understanding as are ideas” (p. 155). Finally, Mullins reviews how form enables certain readings and exclude others.

There is some irony and difficulty in using words that are directive in nature to promote and teach aesthetic engagements with a literary work. Mullins notes the limits in trying to “make the ineffable, well, effable” (p. 3). The book falls prey to this very limitation in that emotional engagement with a text is largely explained instead of experienced. However, Mullins walks through many specific examples and his modeling provides a good starting point for further discovery.

Mullins, at times, over argues how committed we are to purely rational Bible reading. I think most readers of Scripture, in both scholarly treatments and devotional readings, have at least an intuitive awareness of Scripture’s literary form. Good readers see interpretation as more of an art than a science. Yet Mullins’s book is helpful in giving a more precise vocabulary and technique for literary reading. His passion for the Scriptures is an influential part of his argument.

One addition that might be helpful is a discussion of the art of reading in general. Mullins assumes we are all readers and enjoy reading. As we have moved to a digital society, literacy itself has increasingly been sidelined by the visual. Mullins could do more to help those who are skeptical of reading by bridging the perceived experiential gap between visual and textual mediums.

_Enjoying the Bible_ would be very useful as a complementary volume in a hermeneutics class or as a helpful counterpoint to more rational approaches to interpretation in advanced hermeneutics. I would also recommend this book to anyone wanting to discover or renew a love for the Bible. Mullins is an engaging writer
and, even when making serious points his tone is never somber. You can sense the play and pleasure that inhabit both his reading and writing. His thesis is capably carried by his form, demonstrating his point by both content and container.

Overall, Mullins’s purpose is to move away from only studying Scripture as an object and developing a more pleasure-based relationship with the text. He strikes a healthy balance between intellectual and emotional response. Mullins ultimately argues for a both/and approach to reading the Bible. As readers, we are enriched by his integrated vision of Scripture being both for knowledge and pleasure.

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The book under review contains seventeen chapters, divided into three parts: I) Planning to Revitalize, II) Practical Issues, and III) Tools and Materials. The chapters are introduced by a longer, more academic piece and followed by illustrative vignettes by authors engaged in revitalization projects. Together these provide both theory and application, thereby increasing the practicality of the book. One thing the authors fail to do is provide ISO 639–3 language codes (or any other codes) for the languages discussed. The reviewers provide these the first time a language is mentioned, since many are repeated.

Section I, entitled “Planning to Revitalize” is comprised of five chapters. Chapter 1, “Why Revitalize?” is an inspiring introduction by Lenore A. Grenoble. Since one’s language is tied to one’s identity and culture, revitalizing languages is also a matter of revitalizing identities and cultures. Grenoble explains how social and political factors affect language vitality and in turn, how revitalization affects society and politics. She presents six interrelated benefits to revitalization: (1) connecting with ancestors, the past, and cultural heritage; (2) healing; (3) building community; (4) knowledge and culture; (5) well-being; and (6) cognitive benefits. These benefits both look back, examining healing from language trauma, as well as looking forward to long-term well-being, acknowledging that fluent bilingualism brings the best of both worlds.

In 1.1 “Endangered Languages and Well-being,” Patrick Heinrich introduces welfare linguistics, defined as reviving indigenous languages for the well-being of native speakers, and explains how modern society instead pressures minorities to use major languages. In 1.2 “Benefits for Communities: The Case of the Black Tai Community in Thailand,” Sumittra Suraratdecha records how a linguacultural revitalization effort has given the Black Tai [blt] back their esteem and traditions.
In 1.3 “Language Revitalization Benefits in Wilamowice,” also spelled Wymysióeryś [wym], Justyna Majerska-Sznajder tells of a revitalization effort in Poland which empowered younger and older generations differently. In 1.4 “Reading Ancestral Texts in the Heritage Language,” Justyna Olko tells of the benefits of an annual Nahuatl [nah] workshop in Mexico for reading native texts.

Chapter 2 was written by Julia Sallabank and Jeanette King. The chapter title asks “What Do We Revitalise?” Their answer is that we revitalize a version of the language which satisfies the speaker community. This involves identifying community stakeholders and working with them. Compromises are necessary when there are competing goals and values or limited resources.

In 2.1, Tymoteusz Król describes his experience working to revitalize Wymysiöeryś [wym], reflecting that “I gave up looking for ‘the pure Wymysiöeryś language’ and I started to listen to what people were actually saying.” In 2.2, Justyna Olko also addresses this purism attitude regarding Nahuatl, which was once considered only a dialect by most of its speakers. An attempted elevation of the language with “Classical Nahuatl as the only legitimate version of the language” nearly killed the language.

Chapter 3 was co-authored by Joanna Maryniak, Justyna Majerska-Sznajder, and Tymoteusz Król and voices concerns when beginning a language’s documentation and description. The chapter is organized by first establishing jurisdiction, then explaining how to avoid conflicts within and outside the speaker community. The chapter closes by discussing the legal and ethical implications of acquiring informed consent for the data’s acquisition and dissemination, later sharing a personal anecdote about how to positively impact a speaker community.

The book highlights a situation about a Vilamovian [wym] politically charged play, stressing a community’s creative autonomy regardless of consequences. But the chapter also states that to protect community rights, structural violence should not be intentionally exacerbated. The chapter closes with an anecdote that stresses the importance of data gathering at community events and the accessibility of materials produced from these.

In Chapter 4, “Planning a Language Revitalization Project,” Susan D. Penfield argues for the necessity of planning prior to any effort to revitalize a language. She breaks this down into several steps. These include brainstorming with the community for ideas, setting goals, putting the plans in writing and planning for funding, implementing the project with a mindset of flexibility, and finally organizing an evaluation of the project.

Werner Hernández González contributes a section entitled “Doing Things with Little Money” where he states, “Linguistic activism without funds is possible.”

Chapter 5, “Getting Funding and Support,” is written by Nicholas Q. Emlen. He writes in two sections: Identifying Sources of Funding, and Writing a Good Proposal, the latter of which deals with projected outcomes, the applicant, and the
budget. A proposal must be comprehensive, detailed, and cohesive, addressing the funder’s priorities.

In 5.1 “Attitudes of NGOs in Guatemala toward the Inclusion of Indigenous Languages in the Workplace,” Ebany Dohle advocates for using local languages in the workplace. This chapter only mentions two NGO’s (ELF and FEL) and two government organizations (which only fund projects in North America). Emlen also recommends stereotypical fundraisers like raffles and bingo, which admittedly do have the added benefits of raising awareness and garnering community investment.

The second section of the book has seven chapters and is entitled, “Practical Issues.” Chapter 6 is entitled “Types of Communities and Speakers in Language Revitalization,” and is authored by José Antonio Flores Farfán and Justyna Olko. The authors define a language community as a network of people bound together by “various kinds of interactions and relationships” who “share some aspects of their identities and goals.” They describe four types of communities, categorizing them by the factors that bind them together. The authors also categorize speakers based on their language proficiency. These descriptions provide insight into expected obstacles when working with language communities in revitalization.

In 6.1, Tymoteusz Król discusses the disintegration of the Vilamovian people, but gives hope that a new generation of speakers is reconstructing their cultural identity around their nearly lost traditions and language. In 6.2, Griselda Reyes Basurto, Carmen Hernández Martínez, and Eric W. Campbell note that minority-language speakers may integrate well into a majority-language community and because of this, be overlooked. In 6.3, Maria Olimpia Squillaci recounts the effectiveness of using a one-week intensive language camp in her revitalization efforts.

In chapter 7, entitled “Attitudes and Ideologies in Language Revitalization,” Nicole Dołowy-Rybińska and Michael Hornsby stress that understanding a community’s attitude toward their language is a critical task for anyone working on revitalization. The authors discuss two concepts. First, they say that “negative attitudes result in negative language practices.” They go on to say that there can be “positive language practices in the face of negative attitudes,” where speakers feel they need to protect their language due to oppression.

The chapter concludes with five studies. Klara Bilić Meštrić and Lucija Šimićić wrote section 7.1 entitled “Language Ideologies in an Endangered Language Context: A Case Study from Zadar Arbanasi in Croatia.” Julia Sallabank contributed section 7.2 called “Attitudes towards Guernesiais.” Adrian Cain in section 7.3 “What’s the Point of Manx?” describes the revitalization of Manx [glv], a previously extinct language spoken on the Isle of Man. Soung-U Kim writes about Jejudommal [jje] in section 7.4, “Emotions and Relationships in Language Revitalization and Maintenance.” Finally, Justyna Olko writes section 7.5 entitled “Nahuatl Language Ideologies and Attitudes” where she describes a decrease in transmission of Nahuatl spoken in Mexico.
Chapter 8, written Werner Hernández González is entitled, “Some Considerations about Empowerment and Attitudes in Language Revitalization.” He describes motivations in undertaking a revitalization effort and addresses the violence that often afflicts minority groups. He cites the case of the Pipil language [ppl] where an oppressive majority can create ghost speakers (people afraid to voice their identity). Major steppingstones towards shifting language attitudes are both starting a school curriculum and fostering community events that promote the local culture. The topics of the chapter’s eight subsections include personal experiences by internal shareholders, misalignments in motivation, and explanations about the importance of culture documentation.

Chapter 9, entitled “Economic Benefits: Marketing and Commercializing Language Revitalization,” is written by Justyna Olko. The author addresses the problem of presenting language revitalization projects to people who view language in terms of economic utility. She proposes two broad approaches to anchoring a language revitalization project to some sort of economic gain. The first strategy involves using a community’s traditional knowledge, encoded in their traditional language, to foster economic growth. The second strategy involves utilizing the novelty of the endangered language and culture as a tourist attraction. The first strategy carries some promise: traditional languages often carry a wealth of knowledge and practices that contribute to the flourishing of our world. The second strategy unhappily feels like a petting zoo. There were no subsections to the chapter to support this second view.

In Chapter 10’s “Local Power Relationships, Community Dynamics, and Stakeholders” Wesley Y. Leonard explains how a language program can encounter conflicts of interest between community-external and community-internal stakeholders due to different perspectives about what is potentially being lost. Sometimes community-external motivations can dehumanize language. Land and language ideologies need to be preserved for both legal and social reasons. Subsection 10.1, “Power Relationships and Stakeholders: How to Orient Yourself in Complex Situations,” by Gregory Haimovich gave a personal account of such conflicts.

Chapter 11, “Dealing with Institutions and Policy Makers,” is written by Tomasz Wicherkiewicz, who explains that communities become policy makers when they determine when, where, and how their language is to be used. Such “bottom-up” policy makers rarely have power equivalent to “top-down” policy makers, such as governments and institutions. He covers corpus planning, status planning, grassroots movements, prestige planning, and acquisition planning, all of which are aspects of language development.

11.1, “Language Revitalization and Academic Institutions: Refocusing Linguistic Field Methods Courses” is written by Eric W. Campbell, Griselda Reyes Basurto, and Carmen Hernández Martínez. They assert that many Western field methods courses follow a colonial model and recommend a community-based
approach modelled by UC Santa Barbara. Academic linguists need to empower speech communities by working with them, not just studying them. They make a distinction between language status and prestige. They also call attention to UNESCO’s scale for measuring governments’ attitudes toward minority languages as a resource for planning.

In chapter 12, entitled “Making Links, Learning from the Experience of Others in Language Revitalisation,” Beñat Garai Mendizabal and Robbie Felix Penman discuss “the intersection between language revitalisation and international cooperation.” The authors list ways that endangered language (EL) communities benefit from collaborating with one another, including sharing resources. They suggest ways to cooperate with other EL communities. The authors point out that success in revitalization and cooperation with other EL communities often go hand and hand. They end each section with suggestions on how to put their ideas into action.

Section 12.1, authored by John Sullivan, is entitled “Networking and Collaboration between Speakers” in which he describes IDIEZ (Instituto de docencia e investigación etnológica de Zacatecas), which was organized as a place for people to speak Nahuatl [nah], and to share experiences. In 12.2, Justyna Olko’s section is called “The Engaged Humanities Project and Networking for Language Revitalisation” in which she describes how EL communities have networked together in the past.

The final section of the book entitled, “Tools and Materials” has five chapters. In Chapter 13, Peter Austin provides several useful lists under the title “Language Documentation and Language Revitalization.” He gives seven reasons why most language documentation corpora to date have failed as adequate input to revitalization efforts, which he summarizes with the claim that linguists pay too little attention to the needs of the community. A primary shortcoming is the failure to document adults speaking to children. He also criticizes archives’ difficulty of access, difficulty of finding resources, and lack of completeness in the collections or in their metadata. He suggests improving metadata detail and tagging potential revitalization uses of particular recordings.

13.1 “Technical Questions in Language Documentation” by Joanna Maryniak discusses basic documentary recording principles, including equipment, recording formats, techniques, and backing up data. In 13.2 “MILPA (Mexican Indigenous Language Promotion and Advocacy): A Community-Centered Linguistic Collaboration supporting Indigenous Mexican Languages of California” by Carmen Hernández Martínez, Eric W. Campbell, and Griselda Reyes Basurto, the authors describe community-based activities in language and culture documentation for a diasporic community in the US, which may have applications elsewhere. Section 13.3 “Developing Innovative Models for Fieldwork and Linguistic Documentation: ENGHUM Experience in Halcnów, Poland,” written by Bartłomiej
Chromik, discusses the effects of persecutions following WWII on a minority Germanic language, now located in Poland.

Chapter 14, “Writing Our Language,” is authored by Sheena Shah and Matthias Brenzinger. They begin by listing numerous purposes of written language, including stimulating language status and prestige in the minds of those writing it, empowering speech communities, and improving childhood education. “Countless studies have demonstrated that children learn best in and through their mother tongues.” New words are often learned through reading, and literacy is a powerful tool for accessing information.

In 14.1 “Orthographies and Ideologies,” Tomasz Wicherkiewicz writes about extra-linguistic concerns in orthography development, giving examples from around the world. In 14.2 “Writing Your Language: The Case of Wymysöery’s,” Tymoteusz Król tells his own emotional story of being hated because of the language he spoke. This led to him wanting to save it, beginning as a young boy who recorded his grandmother and who wrote as much as he possibly could. In 14.3 “Indigenous Research, Methodology and Writing,” John Sullivan talks about IDI-EZ, a university in Mexico that operates entirely in Nahuatl. Doing so involves more than just translating; rather, it involves thinking in Nahuatl terms and patterns. He recommends that each culture think for itself and evaluate foreign or dominant culture concepts with that indigenous critical grid. These three supporting sections help explain why it is important for community members to desire and drive the writing of their language.

Chapter 15 showcases a variety of techniques for language teaching to the youth, while highlighting their advantages and shortcomings. The methods are discussed in detail to bolster or warn against particular language learning methods. The chapter relays the importance of being flexible in language acquisition. Because colonialism never affected two peoples the same, nor was it present in all revitalization contexts, approaches towards revitalization will not all be the same. The chapter lists five methods for language learning: immersion, grammar-translation, direct and audio-lingual, proficiency-based, and radically input-based teaching. Immersion is the best and most natural approach; however, the number of fluent adults may have been reduced. Chapter 15 recounts the lived experiences of indigenous people and their language revival and reclamation efforts.

The eight sub-sections of Chapter 15 are too numerous to mention by title and author. They touch on the successes of indigenous language revitalization programs and their respective strategies. In many programs, Western notions of school subjects are interwoven with cultural analogues to the academic subjects, as in the Chinuk Wawa [chn] and Saami [smi]. History is taught in the context of community history, math in the context of the cultural material calculations, literature with narratives, arts and music with handicrafts and traditional songs, and science in the biochemistry of the flora and fauna for cultural use and consumption.
Culture documentation should be carried out in parallel to provide materials for learning environments. Culture will lay the foundation on which learners can anchor understanding of the uses of language for themselves and for the generations to come after them. In higher education, the Hawaiian [haw] Language College offers a bachelor’s degree in the Hawaiian language and even a doctorate on the revitalization of Hawaiian.

In Chapter 16, “Art, Music and Cultural Activities,” Genner Llanes Ortiz gives examples of using audio and visual arts in their efforts to revitalize minority languages. Ortiz talks about minority languages finding their voices through theater, music, and film. He gives principles for using art for revitalization, including creating hybrid music with both traditional elements and “aesthetic forms for younger or new audiences” while reaching people through social media.


Chapter 17 is entitled, “Technology in Language Revitalization,” written by Robert Elliott. He argues that one should adopt a needs-based approach to technology use: the linguist ought to choose technologies based on the actual needs and constraints of the target project. He also encourages the linguist to begin integration of technology based on established areas of expertise, integrating other technologies only as he/she becomes comfortable with them.

In 17.1, Ben Levine details the successes of video-logged, speaker-facilitated, group conversation sessions. In 17.2, Jennifer Needs gives a helpful outline for planning a resource-creation project, from insights gleaned making resources for Welsh [cym]. In 17.3, Eddie Avila gives examples of using accessible social media platforms and even radio for publishing and promoting indigenous language content.

As a collection, the chapters of this book give a clear introduction to the topic of how to do language revitalization. The variety of topics covered is comprehensive. The subsections at the end of each chapter make it rich with real-world examples of the concepts discussed. At the same time, discussion of particular revitalization projects was spread over multiple chapters, which increased processing time for readers.
The book is otherwise accessible to anyone who has an interest in language revitalization, including linguists, activists, and community members. One benefit is its practicality. It breaks down what can seem like an overwhelming endeavor into bite-sized steps, and even gives tips for those who lack resources.

On the deficit side, about half the languages discussed are in Europe, with another eight in the Americas. Africa, the Pacific, and even Asia are underrepresented. It would enrich the discussion of language revitalization to have voices from other parts of the world, filling in potential holes with regard to possible strategies of revitalization and differing cross-cultural contexts.

As mentioned in the introduction, a further weakness is the authors’ and editors’ failure to identify languages through the use of international codes like ISO 639–3. Such unique coding of languages is best practice in language documentation and revitalization and can play a role in funding allocations.

There is also no attempt to make the spelling consistently British or American English, most noticeably in ‘revitalisation’ vs. ‘re-vitalization,’ which are used extensively. While the American spelling is in the book’s title, the publisher is British.

With these caveats, the book is a useful addition to the revitalization literature.

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Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, even projected to surpass Christianity as the largest religion in the next 50 years (p. xiii). Despite this growth, those outside the Islamic faith largely misunderstand it, due in part to ignorance and perpetuated misrepresentations. In Islam Explained, Ahmad Rashid Salim seeks to remedy this problem. In a short 168 pages, Salim offers a broad sweep of the history, beliefs, and practices of the Islamic faith for those who are curious and unaware. In the end, he hopes every reader will leave better informed, with a fresh perspective, renewed compassion, and a desire for harmony between those within and outside of Islam. Though this book may not change your own personal convictions, it will surely help non-Muslim readers better understand and engage with their Muslim neighbors around the world and perhaps even in their own backyards.

Salim divides his book into eight parts, each focusing on a specific aspect of Islam. He begins the first chapter by giving a crash course on the core beliefs of the faith. He briefly explains ideas such as the nature of God (Allah), the condition
of humans and their relationship with sin, and what responsibilities Muslims have on the earth. He also gives an overview of other topics such as angels, Muhammad, their holy book (the Qur'an), the Day of Judgment, and their beliefs on free will and predestination. In the second chapter, he moves to focus on the five pillars of the faith: the declaration of faith, daily prayers, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage. He breaks down the meaning and significance of each pillar.

Chapter Three expands on what was introduced in the first chapter by talking about the Prophet Muhammad in greater detail: his early life, the revelations he says he received from God, and the process of writing those revelations down into what is now the Qur'an. Salim also touches on the history of Islam’s expansion until Muhammad’s death. Chapter Four overviews Shi’a and Sunni Muslims, the two primary sects of Islam. He explains some of their commonalities and their primary differences.

Chapter Five discusses the Qur’an’s significance and how it is understood and used today. Chapter Six then covers Islamic law. Salim first introduces some key ideas that are important for understanding the law, such as the sayings and actions attributed to Muhammad. He also points out that there can be variance in how the law is practiced today around the world.

Chapter Seven allows readers to get a glimpse of some of the cultural values and practices of Islam by exposing them to Islamic views of topics such as family, marriage, modesty, economics, eating, and conversion. The final chapter explains some similarities and differences between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the three monotheistic religions that tie back to Abraham. In the conclusion, Salim briefly discusses some possibilities for a more peaceful coexistence between the three religions. In the last few pages of the book, readers will also find a helpful glossary and list of books and websites for further reading about Islam.

Prior to reading this book, I was aware of my ignorance of the Islamic faith. Aside from the minimal education I received in a high school World History course, I could not confidently attribute many ideas to Islam. This book, written by a devout Muslim, was a welcomed and desired read.

The book is well-structured and easy to follow. Each chapter begins with a clearly defined introduction, giving readers a global perspective of the chapter topic before diving into the variety of particulars within. Subheadings are sufficient in number and used appropriately, making it easy for readers to flip back through the book should they want to reference a specific topic. Throughout the book, Salim also includes helpful visual features such as images, graphs, tables, and timelines. In our increasingly visual Western culture, these features are welcomed additions that will benefit the reader’s understanding.

Salim also succeeds at explaining and reiterating the most important points about the Islamic faith throughout the book. For example, concepts such as the
oneness of God, aspiring to God-consciousness, exerting effort to live righteous lives, and Muhammad being the last and most important prophet are key aspects of the faith. He often reminds readers of these ideas, even when talking about other components of the faith in order to emphasize the core of what Islam is about.

Although Salim excels at explaining many of the major components of the faith, there were a few instances within the book that I found myself wishing for more clarity. From the beginning, Salim explains that the “book offers a comprehensive, though not exhaustive, survey of the Islamic teachings” (p. viii). Naturally, in a short introduction, all the reader’s questions will not be answered; it is only the launching pad to further investigation. However, there were times where certain concepts were left with some ambiguity, specifically in Chapter Eight: Relationship to Judaism and Christianity. Here, the beliefs of Christianity and Judaism could have been more plainly defined to clarify how they differ from Islam. Although there were several instances where this clarity was given, there were other times where the distinctions between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were only alluded to, leaving readers to infer. I was able to make these inferences, but readers with little exposure to the three Abrahamic faiths may not be able to see what makes each religion distinct. A chart displaying the key similarities and differences would be a beneficial addition for readers. Despite this, more times than not throughout the book, Salim provides clear explanations of the various components of Islam.

Salim gives readers a basic introduction to mainstream Islamic tradition. Although some concepts in the book could be clarified for greater comprehension, readers will benefit from the wide breadth of topics and pointed discussion of the most important aspects of the faith written from the perspective of a devout Muslim. This book does not explore alternative perspectives on Islamic origins and early character, beliefs, and practices. For such alternative perspectives, readers may consult The Emergence of Islam: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective by Gabriel Reynolds (Fortress Press, 2012) or Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam by Fred Donner (Belknap Press, 2012). Salim’s book may be too advanced for some adolescent readers, but is a great resource for young adults and older readers who want to learn more about Islam without reading a lengthy textbook. Islam Explained, with its amiable writing style, is especially helpful for readers who desire to become more sensitive to those who hold this faith as it grows rapidly, especially in the United States.

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