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Translation technique term and semantics

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the nature of technical terms from a semantic standpoint, gleaning insight from both classical and cognitive models. It also discusses this topic's relevance and application to the interpretation and translation of key biblical terms. Anyone who has spent time reading an academic book or article has encountered an unfamiliar word, or even more confusing, a familiar word that does not seem to mean what it would normally mean. An example of this comes from general and cognitive linguistics, fields relevant to this study. The literature frequently uses terms such as "frame," "domain," and "context." These terms often vary from their more general definitions, from their definition in a related subfield of linguistics, and even from the definition given by another author in the same field. This is just one manifestation of the flexibility and sometimes frustration of language. Any person or social group can select a word and use it for their purposes, regardless of how others typically use it. The Bible is no exception to this phenomenon. The biblical authors used some words in technical or specialized ways, with the result that their meanings were in some way distinct from more general usages.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Key biblical terms present one of the greatest challenges in Bible translation, due in part to their theological significance and deep integration with the biblical cultures in which they were used. This paper posits that a linguistic study of technical terms, a linguistic classification that has not received much-focused attention, reveals useful insights that can be applied to the translation of key biblical terms. Drawing from both classical and cognitive models, it presents an overview of the semantic features of technical terms, namely their linkage to discrete categories and exclusivity to a particular cultural group. Important diachronic and pragmatic considerations are also discussed [1]. A case study on the Greek word provides the application to the theory presented, arguing that a diachronic study of the technical category's origins influences an understanding of the concept, and providing an overview of the category structure. Finally, some practical suggestions for the translation of this term are provided, positing that longer-term strategies are necessary for the fullest understanding of a technical term. Explanations and examples focus on New Testament terms, particularly those which developed after the advent of the church. Finally, a case study on the Greek word applies these principles.

2 METHOD

"Technical term" is a commonly used label in a multitude of fields, including general linguistics and biblical studies, but there have been few attempts to define it. Roger Cowley investigated what many have called "technical terms" in Hebrew, but came to the conclusion that the term is used without much apparent consensus to its meaning, and that it "is not a defined term of linguistic science". It is doubtful that everyone who uses the phrase means the same thing by it. Nevertheless, it would be helpful to explore a linguistic description or definition of "technicity" (Cowley's term) as its features are in some way related to biblical key terms [2]. Furthermore, Barr and Silva emphasize an important distinction between technical and non-technical terms, to the effect that some of the exegetical methodologies they generally reject can in their view be legitimately used if a word has become technical. This section will summarize two basic features of technical terms, drawing from both classical and cognitive theories. It will also outline some important diachronic and pragmatic considerations.

While "technical term" may not be a technical term itself, it does have a general meaning that most would agree with. The New Oxford American Dictionary defines the word "technical" in this way: "of or relating to a particular subject, art, or craft, or its techniques." Cowley states nearly the same idea in more linguistic terms, describing a technical term. Barr would also concur that ethnicity is linked to a particular domain. He gives the example of a term being technical *to* religious life.

However, there is more to the definition. It is not just placement in a semantic field that makes a word technical. No one would say that "rain" is a term technical to the domain of "weather," because the weather is a domain of which virtually every human has some experience and knowledge [3]. Rather, technical terms occur in domains that only certain people have experienced, with the result that only those people can understand what the term means. Another part of NOAD's entry for "technical" reflects this reality in its definition of the word in collocation with an article or book: "requiring special knowledge to be understood."

One way to explain this exclusivity is through the notion that our conceptualizations are informed by certain kinds of knowledge bases. Taylor says, "Any conceptualization or knowledge configuration, no matter how simple or complex, can serve as the cognitive domain for the characterization of meanings". The knowledge bases most relevant to this study are cognitive models, defined by Ungerer and Schmid as knowledge bases which "cover all the stored cognitive representations that belong to a certain field". These are very similar to what Taylor calls frames, "configurations of culture-based, conventionalized knowledge".

By way of example, the cognitive model AT THE OFFICE might embed some contexts like 'writing emails' or 'board meetings,' in which sets of categories (concepts) interact [4][5][6]. In the context 'board meeting,' the category TABLE may interact with the categories OFFICE and MEETING with the result that the prototypical table would be a long glossy table with high-backed swivel chairs all around it. Anyone without the cognitive model AT THE OFFICE will not pick up on the interactions between categories in contexts embedded within that model. Instead, they may try to understand them through models that do exist in their minds, even if they are inaccurate. The office example, a person completely ignorant of an office setting may picture the table in an office scene as a dining table.

Cultural models are a closely related concept, described by Ungerer and Schmid as "cognitive models that are shared by people belonging to a social group or subgroup". Technical terms are specific to cultural models. To give a biblical example, the early church would have developed a model like in the church, which embedded contexts like 'praying,' 'living in fellowship,' and 'submitting to authority.' In this third context, concepts like deacon would have a unique meaning as

they interacted with other categories in that context. However, those outside of the early church experience would not have understood this new meaning and may have wrongly assumed to refer to some kind of assistant or intermediary, a meaning more in line with their cultural model [7][8].

NOAD rightly recognizes the exclusivity that exists in the use of technical terms. For this reason, it provides subsenses in its entries for such terms, labeling them as specific to domains (cultural or cognitive models) like computing, law, mathematics, philosophy, religion, sports, etc. In fact, one of the primary aims of this dictionary is "to break down the barriers to understanding specialist vocabulary." Defining these types of terms requires access to the cognitive and more specifically, cultural models in which they are used [9][10].

Silva offers a concise summary of this feature: "Technical or semitechnical terms refer to or stand for defined concepts or ideas". This description goes against the grain of the current preference for prototypes, where categories are characterized by fuzzy boundaries, and whose members are related through family resemblances rather than through a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. A technical term points to an atypical category that *does* have clear boundaries, fitting better into a classical paradigm of discrete units defined by sets of necessary and sufficient conditions, or in Nida's terminology, diagnostic components [11][12].

This is not unprecedented. Ungerer and Schmid remark, "In a mathematical or scientific context, the logical or classical view comes into its own. In such a context…categories can be established as clear-cut and homogenous categories by an act of definition. In other words, the classical paradigm of categorization has a wide field of application wherever there is a need for precise and rigid definitions…And there is no reason why the discrete categories of science and the everyday prototype categories should not coexist in the mental lexicon and even influence one another".

Taylor describes discrete and prototype categories in terms of expert and folk categories, expert categories being "defined by the imposition of a set of criteria for category membership." He says, "Expert categories…have been specifically created…such that the relevant experts are competent to say whether, and on what grounds, any particular instance is or is not a member of the category…The definitions serve to eliminate the fuzzy edges from the categories, giving them the status of technical, rather than merely pretheoretical constructs".

Another helpful way to look at this is through the lens of hierarchical categories. Cognitive studies have revealed that in a taxonomic hierarchy, categories somewhere in the middle at the basic level, where we "achieve an ideal balance between internal similarity and external distinctiveness," are the most cognitively simple. This is also the level at which prototype effects are most noticeable [13]. Something different happens at the superordinate and subordinate levels, where "generalization proceeds 'upward' from the basic level and specialization proceeds 'downward'. Subordinate categories are the realm of technical terms. These categories have an expanded list of specific features with a specifying function. Such terms do not leave much room for prototypes, as their members have such a high degree of internal similarity.

Technical terms are a result of two types of semantic change that fall under semantic conservatism, a type of change that is the result of nonlinguistic factors. First, substitution occurs due to historical changes affecting the world of the speakers of a language. Silva quotes Stern in describing this type of change: "The causes of substitution lie in the fact that referents change and that we require new names for them; these we get, in the present case, not by coining a new word, but by placing the referent in some known category, denoting it by the same name". In cognitive terms, this is called prototype shift. Over time, the category structure remains unchanged, but changes in the world result in the prototype shifting. Second, specialization occurs, resulting in a subordinate category with clearer boundaries and lessened prototype effects. According to Silva, "These are the terms that become technically charged at times so that they serve as 'shorthand' for considerable theological reflection".

There are two notable ways in which this type of semantic change occurred among Koine Greek speakers with a Jewish or Christian background. First, many terms came to substitute their general meaning with one corresponding with the meaning of an equivalent Hebrew word. This change was triggered by the LXX, as Hebrew words were translated into Greek. Over time, the meaning of the Greek words was replaced by the meaning of the Hebrew terms. Discovering the meaning of such terms, then, depends on a study of the Hebrew concept that became attached to that word, in addition to a lexicographical study of the word in Greek usage. A particular word was chosen to carry a new meaning because the category it represented at the time probably had some key similarities to the Hebrew word.

Second, some technical categories developed within the first century, substituting pre-existing concepts with newer understandings [14]. It should be noted that much scholarship within the last half-century has turned against the idea that Christianity semantically altered the meaning of words, but this type of change is a valid exception. Even Barr, who spoke strongly against Christianity's influence on the Greek language, said, "The extent to which words received 'new content' is to a large extent related to the degree to which

words became technical". As with words whose meanings were substituted with Hebrew concepts, these words also require a combination of lexicographical and historico-conceptual study to achieve the fullest understanding.

One obvious but important point to note is that semantic change does not occur overnight. A term becomes technical through a gradual process that we might call "technicalization," in which two aspects of the term slide on a continuum: the fuzziness of the category (specialization), and the extent to which nontechnical senses exist alongside the technical senses (substitution). Most technical terms used by the New Testament authors were still on their way toward full technicalization. In the middle of the first century, words like frequently used techniques, but there is still plenty of evidence of non-technical uses.

Due to the gradual nature of technicalization, many Greek words were not technical in every occurrence. For this reason, it would be better to use the label "technical sense" when referring to specific examples of technicity. Barr agreed that "many of the most important words of the NT were not technical unambiguously, but only in certain syntactical combinations". At a particular time, a term may point to multiple cognitive categories, some with a degree of technicity, and others with a degree of fuzziness. These categories can even take the form of expert and folk definitions of the same entity. Would these two categories relate to one another, and how would one differentiate between a technical and a non-technical usage? Answering these questions is of great importance in interpreting these terms.

"Context" in the framework of cognitive linguistics provides some helpful insights here. Ungerer and Schmid define context as "a cognitive representation of the interaction between…concepts" (i.e. cognitive categories within a model). There is ample evidence that the structure and qualities of cognitive categories can shift when used together with other categories. This shift can take different forms. According to Ungerer and Schmid, "Context can change the weight of attributes that seem to be relevant for a certain category…The result is that previously peripheral examples are equipped with large bundles of heavily weighted attributes and turned into good examples or even prototypes, while well-established good examples are reduced to the status of marginal members". Additionally, the context may reduce the size of the category structure [15].

Lakoff illustrates the dependency of categories on pragmatics in his discussion on hedges, defined as "linguistic expressions which speakers have at their disposal to comment on the language they are using" English expressions like "strictly speaking," "so-called," or even the use of quotation marks can function to shape category boundaries by including or excluding central members, removing the fuzziness for a category, etc. A particularly relevant hedge for this discussion is the word "technically," which serves to define a category by classical principles [16].

One strategy that is very common in the New Testament is the addition of a definite article to trigger the technical category linked to a word, instead of a more general counterpart. Words are frequently used with the article to denote a well-defined category with clear boundaries, with the result that there is only one possible referent. Sometimes instead of an article or a hedge triggering a technical sense, it is a broader aspect of the text, such as the social situation in which the word is used. Most occurrences in the New Testament point to the Christian church (i.e. a community of believers), because the word is used in situations where the audience is a church, and the topic at hand recalls a church-related cultural model. However, it points to a diverse assembly of people. We know this because it occurs in a situation that is not a Christian gathering. The situation alters the cognitive category because it recalls a different cognitive model. It is only in the model of church life that the word takes on its technical sense.

Even when a technical sense is triggered by pragmatic factors, there is another potential complication. There may be more than one possible technical sense. An example from linguistics is the word 'reference,' for which there are numerous definitions, many of them incompatible with one another. In order to determine what an author means by this term, one must look for either an explicit definition, look to the context, or consider what is known about that author to piece together which definition is in mind. The same can be true for biblical technical terms. The same term could be used in different places, even by the same author, to refer to two distinct or overlapping categories. It would be a mistake to assume that whenever a term is used technically, it always points to the same technical sense. For example, another word whose technical sense is often triggered by the definite article most often refers exclusively to the Old Testament Scriptures, but there is evidence that the category in Peter's mind had shifted to include the writings. In such cases, even broader pragmatic considerations must be taken into account, and the exegete must be guarded against illegitimate totality transfer.

In summary, a technical term could be defined as a word that when used in certain contexts, links to a discrete cognitive category that is part of an exclusive cultural model. Barr and Silva's descriptions of technical terms differ somewhat from this conclusion in one significant way. In their view, technical terms are highly referential, almost to the degree of a proper name. As a result, the meaning of the term will be found by analyzing the referent, rather than through structural analysis,

that is, looking at its place in a paradigmatic system. This referent will often be a conceptual entity, so the meaning of the term may consist of a definition of some sort of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Silva summarizes his position in this way.

"Insofar as a word can be brought into a one-to-one correspondence with an extralinguistic object or entity, to that extent the word may be subjected to the concordance-based, word-and-thing, historico-conceptual method typified by TDNT". Silva would go so far as to say that in rare cases where the word is completely technical, the "word-and-thing" method should entirely replace a structural study of the word.

Silva's assessment is not perfect. What he describes as "reference" is better described as sense if he is talking about mental content, but his analysis still works on many levels. He is correct in his assessment that a technical term can be defined by a rigid definition, and he rightly emphasizes the important diachronic component underlying the technicalization of a term. He also rightly downplays the role of paradigmatic relations in determining the meaning of technical terms. The problem is the methodology he proposes is that it comes with the assumption that it is clear when a word is technical and when it is not. (At least, he does not suggest a method for making this determination.) This creates the false impression that context is not very important when dealing with technical terms. He says, "Once the semantic range of a term has been narrowed, we are less dependent on the context when we wish to grasp the meaning of the word. That is, the word becomes more precise: a more or less definite referent…is automatically associated with the word itself". What Silva seems to miss here is that unless the term has become completely technical, the narrowing of the semantic range is itself the result of the usage of the term in a particular context. Technical and non-technical senses often coexist, and context is the key to determining which sense is being recalled [17][18].

Langacker describes meanings as "emerging dynamically in discourse and social interaction. Rather than being predetermined, they are actively negotiated by interlocutors based on the physical, linguistic, social, and cultural context". One important implication of this is that the boundary between lexical and encyclopedic information is a blurry one. There are ways in which words are conventionalized. Otherwise, communication would be impossible. However, the final determination of a word's meaning lies in the context in which it is spoken and the cognitive models it triggers among the interlocutors. Technical terms are not exempt from this pattern. While their meanings maybe "predetermined" to an extent by some act of definition, they are still subject to negotiation as the social and cultural context changes. One's exegetical method in determining the meanings of even the most technical terms needs to be done with a sensitivity to the entire context in which it was written, just as with any other word. It may be that this leads to some kind of rigid definition or a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, but sensitivity to context is what leads to that conclusion.

According to SIL's Key Terms of Biblical Hebrew Project, a key biblical term is "a word or phrase which occurs in the Bible and which points to a conceptual network of high cultural (often religious) significance. Such key concepts usually have a broad and complex network of relationships with other concepts. Because of cultural differences, these concepts are often difficult to communicate accurately and clearly in translation." This section will outline some areas of overlap between this definition of key biblical terms and the above discussion of technical terms. It will also provide some thoughts on the translation of terms that fit into both categories.

As stated above, a key biblical term "points to a conceptual network of high cultural (often religious) significance." This is also true of technical terms. Recall the words of Ungerer and Schmid quoted earlier: "The classical paradigm of categorization has a wide field of application wherever there is a need for precise and rigid definitions." The need for such definitions arises when the concept is of some significance or importance to a particular social group. One of the biggest challenges facing the early church was the task of protecting the truth that had been entrusted to them by Jesus. There is no doubt that some technical terms came into use in the early church as one way of defining and preserving concepts of great importance [19].

One of the most important concepts in the New Testament was that which linked to the term. The concept was the heart of the Christian message, that which people needed to understand in order to truly obtain salvation. According to BDAG, this nominal exclusively points to "God's good news to humans," although people's understanding of this good news underwent change as the life and ministry of Jesus showed them its true nature. Jesus revealed it directly preserve its true and full meaning. At times, Paul spoke of what he called a "different" gospel, which is really not another gospel at all, but a distortion of it. Word provided a concise and efficient way for people to speak of a very important category in their cultural model, but it also required effort to ensure that the category's boundaries remained firm. It was another important term that required a rigid definition. Because this word was used to refer to people to whom Jesus personally entrusted the gospel, it was important for clear criteria to be in place so that the wrong people could not distort the message. The definition of it required defense. Paul had to defend his apostleship. He also called out those who wrongly considered themselves apostles, labeling them. These are the kinds of terms whose definitions

were extremely important to the message and mission of the early church [20].

Paul's impassioned defenses of such key concepts are evidence that much effort was spent within the early church maintaining and preserving the category boundaries of certain words. It follows then, that anyone with no exposure to these people or their communications would not understand the rigid definitions they had established. If this was true of first-century people outside of the church, then it is certainly even more true of people 2,000 years later who are even further removed from that culture. The difficulty of translating technical terms due to cultural differences between the original and receptor audience recalls the same difficulty described in SIL's definition of key terms.

Due to the exclusive nature of technical terms, how can translations fully communicate these important concepts? The answer is that they cannot. Meaning exists in the mind, and when the necessary categories and cognitive models do not exist in people's minds, no word will suffice. Therefore, a shift in expectations is necessary. While there is no instant solution, a longer-term strategy can be adopted. Technicalization is a process. Some New Testament terms only developed their full technical meaning as the church grew and as new cognitive models and categories became established. Paul's writings are evidence of this process. His reason for writing was often to correct the error, to set the record straight. For a receptor language group with no prior knowledge of these important concepts, a similar process needs to take place today.

The best starting point will be a rendering that already has as many of the necessary attributes as possible. In contexts where the church is well-established, that may be a word borrowed from a majority language. However, this will likely not be sufficient. Harmelink acknowledges that while the word and concept chosen to render a key biblical term may not include all of the encyclopedic information necessary for a full understanding of that concept, "missing contextual information can be supplied in a variety of ways to enrich the reader's encyclopedic information. For readers of the biblical text, exposure to the variety of contexts in which a word is used is one of the best ways to enrich the encyclopedic information". Supplementary help like footnotes or glossary entries can also aid this process, as can preaching and teaching in a corporate environment.

Essentially, the language must undergo semantic change, to the extent that some words must become technical over time. In other words, people need to be brought into the experience of the cultural model of Christianity. Only then can the fullest understanding take place.

3 RESULTS

Due to the important diachronic component to the development of technical terms, the historical-conceptual study of a technical category can be insightful in determining which cultural models influenced its development. Because most of these terms do not come with a clear set of defining criteria, discovering the origins of the concept can provide important information regarding which components of meaning may or may not be present in its New Testament usage. The origin of the apostle concept has been debated in scholarly circles since the 1860s, but most of this debate can be summarized by outlining three cultural models that may have influenced the development of the concept: Christianity, Rabbinic Judaism, and Gnosticism.

The longest and most widely held position in modern scholarship on the origin of the NT apostle concept dates back to an excursus in J.B. Lightfoot's 1865 commentary on Galatians. This position centers on an institution found abundantly in rabbinic Judaism, that of the *šalîaḥ*, or 'sent-man.' The *šalîaḥ* has numerous similarities with the New Testament apostle: they both act with the authority of one who sent them, the focus for both was the relationship between the sender and sent, and they involved religious duties. (*Šalîaḥ* was primarily a legal institution, but sometimes the nature of the commission was religious.

This comparison is promising, but there is one major problem: there is no direct evidence for the *šalîaḥ* institution before the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. Because of this, scholars have attempted to trace indirect evidence of this institution to the New Testament, and even farther back. In the New Testament, the use of nontechnical uses of preserving the connotation of the commission present. The sudden appearance of the already well-developed apostle concept in the New Testament is cited as further evidence institution predated the extant evidence. In the Old Testament, the substantive *šalîaḥ* is not present, but the verb often includes a similar kind of commissioning. It is also often used concerning prophets, who some take to be a type of *šalîaḥ*.

More recent studies have shifted away from arguing a direct descent to it. Rather, it is argued that *šalîaḥ* developed from the same Old Testament sending convention which used word group. They also argue that Paul would have been aware of a broader non-technical sense in addition to the technical sense.

This theory fits best with the position that Jesus himself founded the apostolic office if an original reading, would seem to make this clear, as Jesus named or designated the twelve as "apostles." At this early stage, the apostle concept might have greatly resembled institution, and the concept would have evolved over the next several decades. Herron argues that there is an underlying unity underneath the varying conceptions of the apostle in the New Testament, and he believes this is where it started.

Walter Schmithals has been one of the strongest voices in discussions about it. Dissatisfied with other origin stories, he argues that there were gnostic communities in the time of the early church who had redeemer-figures, both heavenly and earthly types. He outlines numerous similarities between the earthly redeemer and the New Testament apostle: they are members of a "spiritual community," their mission is global and eschatological, a sign of one's status is an ecstatic experience, and they have absolute authority. In addition to the similarities between the two figures, he also points out that the homeland of this redeemer figure in Syria, which is in his view where the apostolic office originated.

Some argue that the apostle concept emerged independently from any previously existing office. It was a new office for a new institution. If this is true, then the foundation that does exist for this concept is the general meaning of evidenced only twice in Herodotus in the fifth century BC. In other words, only the components of envoy or messenger carried over to the New Testament usage of the word. The other components were inventions of the early church as that cultural model developed.

Most who hold to this view argue that the apostolic office was instituted after Easter, which necessitates a reading of the apostolic institution back into the Gospel accounts. Brown seems to go along with this view: "The use of the term in all four gospels appears to be by the application of a term familiar at the time of writing but which was not necessarily current at the time when the incidents described happened". This does not necessarily mean that Jesus did not appoint his disciples as commissioning agents, but that he was not creating a new institution.

Alternative explanations for the institution's origins are many. Some argue that the addition of leaders outside of the Twelve required a new title. To argue for Peter's calling as the origin. Others argue that the term originated in Antioch, when Christian missionaries needed to authenticate their ministry. Others attribute the origin of the apostolate specifically to Paul. Most adherents of Pauline origin would argue a basic three-part progression. First, before Paul's conversion, the word was only used in the general sense of messenger, and to refer to missionaries sent out by Christ. The Twelve would not have been considered apostles, as evidenced. Paul altered this conception by branding himself as a special messenger, authorized by God himself to carry out his task. Later, by the second century, after the concept was more fully established under Pauline's influence, it was transferred exclusively to the Twelve. In this view, Luke's influence played a large part in this later stage.

4 DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this survey is not to determine which of these theories is correct. It is to point out that determining the cultural model the apostle concept came out of is important for the fullest understanding of the word in its technical sense. If the apostle concept was an entirely new invention of the early church, then the New Testament is the only source of evidence towards establishing the features of the category. However, if the concept evolved from a pre-existing institution, there is much to learn by comparing the two and charting its development over time.

One example that illustrates how historico-conceptual study can impact an understanding of this concept is the notion of apostolic succession, which fits much better within the framework of a Christian origin than it does with the theory. If it is indeed the true origin of the apostle concept, the lack of success in the institution does not outright disprove apostolic succession, but it does cast doubts on whether the New Testament apostolate was intended to be passed down.

"It seems clear the early Christians were aware of an office or function of the apostle which could be distinguished from an envoy in a general sense. The challenge to Paul's apostleship and his struggle to secure recognition for it is…good evidence that this circle was exclusive; and that it was possible, at least in principle, to identify an apostle based on certain accepted criteria." This section will briefly summarize some of these defining criteria, or components of meaning, in their technical sense.

A New Testament apostle was commissioned personally by Jesus. He was a firsthand witness of Jesus. He carried the full authority of Jesus. The authority component is bolstered if the *šalîaḥ* theory is correct, as the key component of the *šalîaḥ* figure was the dictum, "the one sent by a man is as the man himself". An apostle was authenticated by signs and wonders. His commission was missional, to witness to the gospel and the resurrection among certain people. His job also included some administrative functions, including the distribution of resources to the needy within a Christian community suggests that apostleship was a recognized office if it is understood in that verse as a public service (BDAG). If one takes the institution as

the origin of the concept, it can be argued that apostleship was also an individual calling with a beginning and an end, not an office to be passed on to someone else when one's work was complete. Granted, Judas was replaced by Matthias as an apostle but this was because the twelve apostles were symbolic of the twelve tribes, signaling that their message was the hope of Israel. There is no other indication in Scripture that apostleship was to be passed on.

In some places, apostles were grouped or contrasted with other offices, which provide more hints as to the nature of an apostle. The groups the apostles together with the elders of the church in Jerusalem, suggesting that together they may have constituted some kind of authoritative, administrative body. Referring to an unknown source, says, "I will send them prophets and apostles," contrasting with the "prophets and wise men and scribes" Here Luke is either using more general sense, or he is drawing a parallel between OT prophets and the Christian apostles as God's messengers. God's appointment of "first apostles, second prophets…" and other roles in the church. Paul appears to be identifying apostles as somehow preeminent over NT prophets, teachers, and those with other gifts. Paul also groups apostles and NT prophets together.

In these verses, the similarities between apostles and prophets are highlighted. They both function in some way as a foundation for the church, with only Christ as the cornerstone surpassing them in importance. They are recipients of revelation through the Spirit whose job it is to equip the church for ministry.

The criteria outlined above are very specific and illustrate the kind of discrete category that is typical of technical terms. However, it should be noted that the technicity of the category structure varied between authors. For example, in almost all of Luke's usages of the word, he is referring specifically to the twelve apostles, those sent to the Jews, while the Pauline category is generally wider, including a larger group than the Twelve. The diachronic relationship between these two categories is debated. Some argue that the apostle category was first limited to the twelve from Jesus' initial establishment of the institution, then widened to include the emerging apostles to the Gentiles. Others who argue that the apostolate originated at Antioch or that its origins were Gnostic would argue that the category narrowed over time to include only. If true, Luke would have been a significant influence in that change.

It is difficult enough to wade through the uncertainties about this concept and its origins, but even if the answers were clear this would be a difficult term to translate. First, the category is very well defined, and it is unlikely that a word in a receptor language would even come close to communicating every component of meaning. Second, authorial and contextual differences influencing the category's structure must be considered. Third, renderings chosen for this concept have the potential to overlap significantly with other key terms, names, and their non-technical sense.

To determine the best rendering, it should first be determined which components of meaning are not explicitly described in the text, which of them are, and which are most distinct from other related terms. Priority should be given to components that will not be as easily gleaned from the co-text, and those which will maximally contrast with related words, all while avoiding additional components that do not belong. In the case, most important components and those that would contrast well with related words would be that of being human, being sent on a mission, and representing Jesus with his full authority.

In practice, it can be difficult to find a rendering that communicates even these most basic components. Some ongoing New Testament projects in Nigeria illustrate this point. The Tangale West translation is currently using the word, which is often glossed 'worker.' This kind of person is recognized as having an authoritative kind of role, and *Yesu* can easily be added where necessary to indicate the source of authority. However, the missiological component is missing.

'messenger of Jesus.' While *awe* is more authoritative, the missiological element is still missing. In a third project, Akurumi translators have succeeded in communicating a missiological component with their rendering *atuma*, 'sent one.' However, *atuma* does not inherently carry any kind of authority.

Further complicating the matter, some renderings may distort the category by adding unwelcome components. In a fourth project, Ga̱ mai, translators are considering the word *ga̱ faan* to render. They describe this type of person as someone close to a ruler, who carries out the orders of a king with the king's authority. The authoritative component has much going for it here, but it appears to also include a political component. Differences in their spheres of influence and the types of activities they engage in could present a problem in communicating the apostle concept precisely.

When compared to the narrow definition of its technical sense, none of these renderings seem adequate. However, this does not mean they are poor choices. Taking into account the nature of technical terms, these renderings are likely good starting points for the fuller understanding that will come later. Over time, the renderings in biblical usage will likely take on a more technical meaning as people gain experience of the cultural model of early Christianity. In the Tangale West, Duya, and Ga̱ mai languages, the chosen renderings may over time develop a missiological component. In Ga̱ mai, the category associated

with *ga faan* may shift to include authoritative roles outside the political sphere. These renderings should not be evaluated based on whether they communicate every component of meaning, but by their potential to accommodate a more technical concept over time. If these renderings will facilitate the process of technicalization instead of hindering it, then they are good choices.

5 CONCLUSION

It is no surprise that some of the most important terms in the Bible are the most difficult to translate well. A look at the semantic nature of technical terms has revealed that their exclusivity to a particular cultural group and their linkage to very narrowly defined categories present significant challenges for their translation into other languages and cultures. Often, solutions to these challenges are short-sighted, operating under the assumption that a good rendering will result in an immediately clear and full understanding of the concept in question. Granted, a good rendering is a vital component of the translation process that will aid understanding and avoid unnecessary initial confusion. However, choosing a rendering is only a starting point. It should be chosen with anticipation of how an understanding of the word or phrase might change over time. As people are exposed to it in its various biblical contexts, as they hear the relevant passages being preached in the church and study them on their own, and as they make use of any supplementary helps provided, their understanding of the cultural model of the early church will be expanded. Over time, the chosen rendering will take on a more narrow technical sense in its biblical usage, communicating more fully and accurately to people. In short, the challenges of technical terms can be overcome with historically informed exegesis, a carefully chosen rendering, and a longer-term view of communicating biblical truth through translation.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to the material presented in this article.

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