WORDS, CONCEPTS, AND SEMANTIC RANGE: RETHINKING ΠΡΟΓΝΩΣΙΣ AND ΠΡΟΓΙΝΩΣΚΩ IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
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Introduction

"I wish to make it clear that in rejecting the Arminian interpretation of I Peter 1:2,1, I am by no means accepting the cliché which makes God's foreknowledge nothing but His decree of election. Divine election is one thing and divine foreknowledge is another thing. There is no disharmony between them and no dependence of one upon the other is indicated in the Scripture"—J. Oliver Buswell[2]

"*When* I *use a word*," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I chose it to mean—neither more nor less."
"The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things."
"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."[3]

I feel compelled to begin this paper with a disclaimer: my thesis here will have no measurable effect on either soteriology or theology proper. I must reiterate, since just like the expression "Marley was dead, to begin with, . . . This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of this paper which I am going to present."[4] Indeed, my thesis is compatible both with a Calvinistic view of God's foreordination and an Arminian emphasis on libertarian free will. Whether or not everything God foreknows he also foreordains is irrelevant to this paper. The only theological position that would *of necessity* be incompatible to the arguments here is Open Theism (and, of course, the related excesses of Process Theology). Similarly, whether or not God's election is based on man's faith or whether or not man's faith is based in God's election is completely irrelevant. As will be demonstrated, 1 Peter 1:2 (for example) does not actually support either view; while not totally irrelevant to the discussion, it is not a true proof text for soteriology either way.

 This paper is, first and foremost, about the meaning of *words* in the NT, and as James Barr so painstakingly pointed out over fifty years ago,

> *It is the sentence* . . . which is the linguistic bearer of the usual theological statement, and *not the word* (the lexical unit) or the morphological and syntactical connection. Neither the Christian preaching nor the religious structure of ancient Israel . . . consisted primarily (if at all) in the issuing either of new words or of new word-concepts or of new conceptual 'content' for old words. The newness or uniqueness of the structure consisted rather in *new combinations of words, in which it was often possible for the semantic value of the words to be changed only slightly or not at all*, and for the new or distinctive concept to be indicated by the word-combination.[5]

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[2] *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962), 2:140-141
[3] Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, ed. by Florence Milner (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1917), 99.
[4] With apologies, of course, to Charles Dickens (modified quote taken from ch. 1 of *A Christmas Carol*, online: http://literature.org/authors/dickens-charles/christmas-carol/chapter-01.html).
[5] James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, reprint (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 263.

Barr's point is that the Apostles did not need to invent new words or create *ex nihilo* new additions to a word's semantic range in order to advance their new theological ideas based on the *kerygma* of the Gospel. Such advancement was done at the sentence level, not the word level.

Barr may have slightly overstated his case. We do not wish to downplay the impact, even the *lexical* impact, that the Gospel itself may have had on the Apostles as they strove to write down the sheer indescribable wonder of the Kingdom of God. Such words as δικαιοσύνη at the very least, take on new significance and implication. Occasionally even Paul, finding existing Greek words insufficient to convey a concept, may have created an entire word from scratch, e.g., θεόπνευστος.[6] Nonetheless, one should assume that the inspired writers of Scripture, far from manifesting a "Holy Spirit language" which infused new theological meanings into words, utilized the semantic ranges of the day and relied on unique combinations of words to transmit their radical theological ideas.

Consequently, it is disappointing to see that virtually every single discussion in the secondary literature on the words πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω shows little or no interest in how, exactly, those words were used in the 1st century (or in the LXX).[7] Furthermore, when this is neglected something akin to circularity can creep into the lexical discussion. Thus Schreiner, in his Romans commentary, cites 1 Pet 1:2, 20 as examples where "foreknowledge" means "covenantal love," but then in his commentary on 1 Peter cites Rom 8:29 and 11:2 to support his views on the meaning of πρόγνωσις in 1 Pet 1:2.[8] In both cases the meaning of the word in the non-commentary texts is assumed and then utilized as support for the commentary texts themselves, with no regard for what the word actually meant in 1st century *Koine*.

It is possible, of course, that πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω can, indeed, refer to "expressing covenantal love" or "determining something ahead of time," or even "baking a cake for somebody" *if* the semantic range allows it or, failing that, *if* the very laws of communication would render any other meaning nonsensical. Yet this must be proven at the lexical level, not at the theological level. In other words, one's assumption of the theological point of the context must not be "reverse-engineered" into the semantic range of individual words. As will be demonstrated, this is not how language and communication work.

Once again, the point of this paper is lexical semantics, not theology. The question I am examining is *not* "does God foreordain all that he foreknows?" The answer to that question is *completely irrelevant* to this thesis. Presuming that (1) "to know something ahead of time," (2)

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[6] The word does not appear anywhere in published Greek literature up through the first century except for Second Timothy, though it does appear within the Papias material embedded in Eusebius.

[7] To my knowledge, the most significant treatments of the topic are as follows: S. M. Baugh, "The Meaning of Foreknowledge," pages 183-200 in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, eds. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce W. Ware (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000); Edgar C. James, "Is Foreknowledge Equivalent to Foreordination?" *BibSac* 122 (1965): 215-219; Tom McCall and Keith Stanglin, "S. M. Baugh and the Meaning of Foreknowledge: Another Look," *TrinJ* 26 (Spring 2005): 19-31; C. Gordon Olson, "A Lexical Study of Foreknowledge and Predestination," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Region of the ETS" (Philadelphia, PA: April 2, 1993); and Thomas R. Edgar, "The Meaning of ΠΡΟΓΙΝΩΚΣΩ ('Foreknowledge')," *CTS Journal* 9 (Spring 2003): 43-80. None of these sources show awareness of how either word was actually used in the 1st century, often preferring to rely on lexicons for their arguments. In other words, original research is sadly lacking in this discussion (and, as John A. L. Lee has convincingly demonstrated, lexicons themselves have often demonstrated an "undue reliance on predecessors, an unsatisfactory method of indicating meaning, interference from translations, and inadequate means of gathering evidence and opinion." See *A History of New Testament Lexicography*; Studies in Biblical Greek 8 [New York: Lang, 2003], 177).

[8] Compare Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 452, with Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter Jude*, NAC (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2003), 53.

"to express covenantal love," and (3) "to determine something ahead of time" are all different concepts, the point of this paper is to ask, which concept or concepts do the particular words πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω point to? The evidence seems to indicate that both πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω overwhelmingly (though not exclusively) point to the concept of "knowing something ahead of time." While God's foreordination and/or covenantal love may be *implied* in the use of such words, the words themselves cannot be proven to possess such a meaning in 1st century or the LXX, with one possible exception in Wisdom of Solomon where προγινώσκω might refer to "possessing an intimate relationship with." This paper will begin by focusing on the difference between "word" and "concept," proceed to discuss the importance of semantic range for interpretation, list every single occurrence of πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω in 1st century published Greek literature and the LXX with some observations, and, finally, examine the seven passages where these two words occur in the NT.

Words and Concepts

The conflation of "word" and "concept" in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* was the chief foil of James Barr's *The Semantics of Biblical Language*. Indeed, "The difficulty here is made much greater by what is one of the most irritating things about *TWNT*, the habit of the writers of saying 'concept' (*Begriff*) for the linguistic entity usually called a word."[9] To this I would add that some systematic theologies are guilty of the same mistake. For example, Millard J. Erickson states, "The word [πρόγνωσις] means more than simply having advance knowledge or precognition of what is to come. It appears to have in its background the Hebrew concept of ידע (*yada*), which often meant more than simple awareness. It suggested a kind of intimate knowledge—it was even used of sexual intercourse."[10] Yet there is no such thing as "the concept of ידע ," simply because "ידע " is a word, not a concept (and even Erickson himself shows awareness that this *word* points to different types of *concepts*, from "the state of possessing simple awareness of a person or object" to "the state of possessing intimate knowledge of somebody" to "engaging in sexual intercourse"). It is more accurate to say, "The Hebrew *word* ידע can point to multiple concepts, including concepts which include more than simple knowledge." More will be said about ידע later.

By definition "Concepts . . . are abstract entities."[11] I will take this definition a step further and suggest that "concepts are *ideas*, both abstract and concrete, which can be represented by words." A concept cannot be tied down to a single word, because words change meanings over time while concepts are (if the reader will pardon some Platonic speculation) eternal in the mind of God. In other words, the concept of "a mode of transportation on four wheels that runs of gasoline" has existed in the mind of God for all eternity, whereas words such

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[9] Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, 210.

[10] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 382. This is a common argument; see, for example, Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 532 fn 140; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB33 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 525; Schreiner, *Romans*, 452; Leonhard Goppelt, *Der Erste Petrusbrief*, KEK 12/1, 8th ed. (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 85 fn46 (where he even notes the DSS use of ידע).

[11] Jerrold J. Katz, *Semantic Theory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 38; cf. the discussion in Alonzo Church, "The Need for Abstract Entities," *American Academy of Arts and Sciences Proceedings* 80 (1951): 100-113, repr. as "Intensional Semantics," pages 61-68 in *The Philosophy of Language*, ed. A. P. Martinich, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

as "automobile," "car," *kuruma* (Japanese), and *voiture* (French) are not inseparably tied to that concept, but may at a particular state of a language's development point to that concept. They may also point to other concepts in the same time period or may share the same concept with other words (see diagram A on the next page). As time progresses, the same word may cease pointing to one concept and point to another instead, making arguments based on etymology rather dangerous.[12]

Thus, "lexical semantics," the whole point of this paper, "explores how words encode concepts."[13] Specifically, this paper asks the question, what concepts do the words πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω point to? We acknowledge the possibility that they may indeed point to the concept of "determining something ahead of time" or "expressing covenantal love towards a person or group." Yet this determination must be made first and foremost at the lexical level, not the theological level. In other words, as Barr states, the problem is that "authors have allowed philosophical-theological and linguistic judgments to mingle confusedly."[14]

Consequently, to say "πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω cannot mean mere foreknowledge because everything God foreknows he also foreordains" is not relevant to the discussion. Such a statement is a *theological* judgment attempting to dictate to the Greek language what it can or cannot do. Indeed, even assuming for the sake of argument the veracity that "all God foreknows he also foreordains," this does not mean that the two concepts cannot be discussed separately. Buswell's statement cited at the beginning of this paper holds true: even if everything God foreknows is also foreordained, "to know something ahead of time" is *still* a different concept from "to determine something ahead of time" (or "to express covenantal love towards a person or a group of persons").

Consider as an analogy the following two concepts: (a.) "the process or result of using one's laws to fairly judge and punish sins and sinners" and (b.) "strong, vengeful anger or retribution," which we will represent using the words "justice" and "wrath" respectively.[15] Obviously, in reference to God Himself, the former does not exist without the latter and vice versa. When God is wrathful, it is a *just* wrath that he manifests. When God exercises justice, wrath naturally plays a role (and Romans 1 gives a clear example of this). Yet even so, one cannot then claim that "wrath" means the same thing as "justice"; indeed, this very idea is refuted by the fact that we can talk about one without necessarily talking about the other.[16]

If one wishes to know what πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω mean, one should not start with the assumption that every early Christian possessed copies of the systematic theologies of either Arminian or Calvinistic theologians, i.e., that they had a deep philosophical understanding of the theological significance of key words *vis à vis* the methodology of TDNT. What one *should*

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[12] Thus I heartily endorse Michael Bréal's statement, "The one who embraces etymology without taking care of the deterioration of meaning [over time] will bring about strange errors" ("Celui qui s'en tient à l'étymologie sans prendre garde à l'affaiblissement des sens peut étre amené à d'étranges erreurs"; Michael Bréal, *Essai de sémantique (science des significations)*, 3rd ed. [Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1904], 103-104). Cf. Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, 107; and John Lyons, *Language and Linguistics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 55.

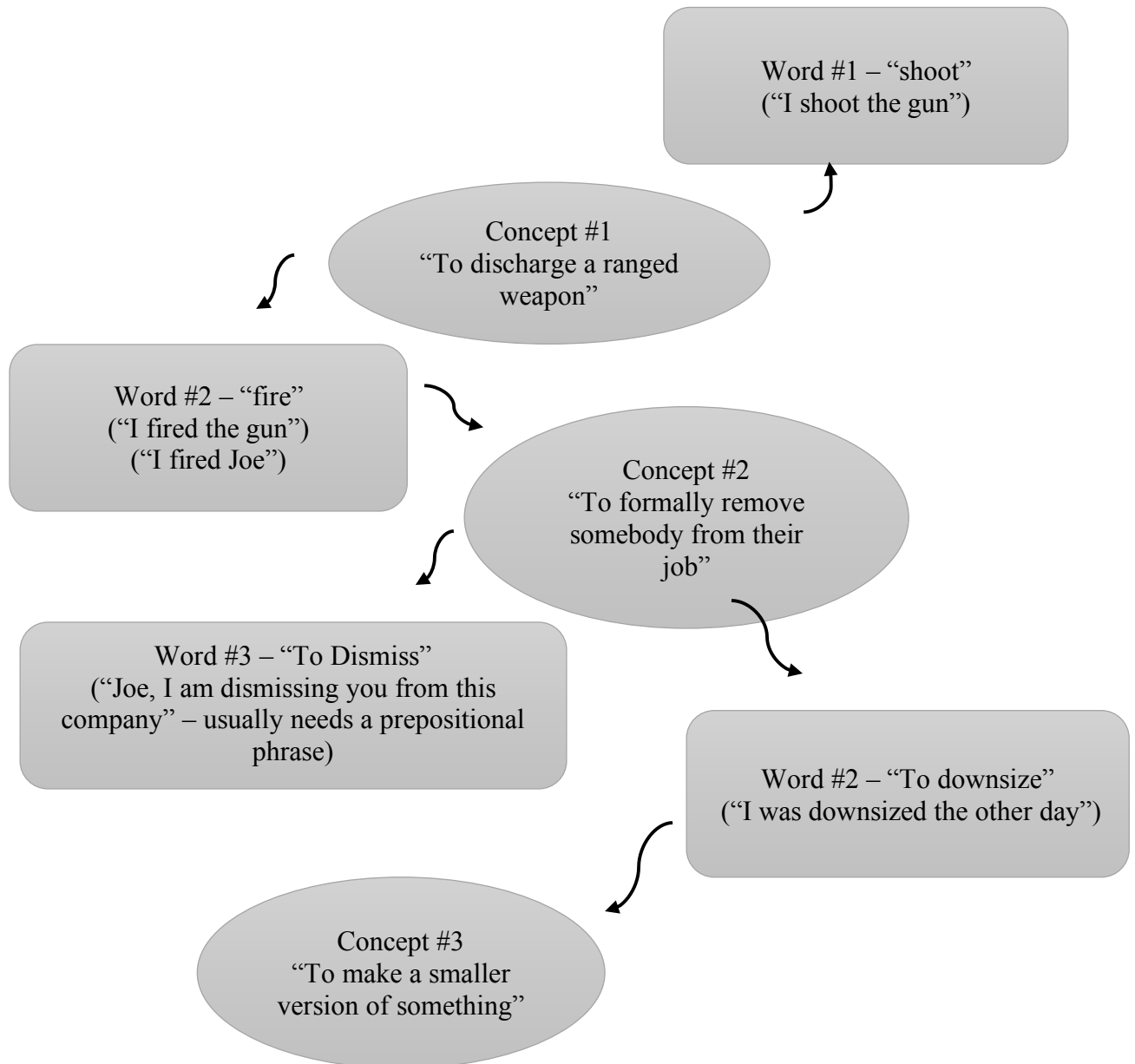[13] Gene L. Green, "Lexical Pragmatics and the Lexicon," *BBR* 22 (2012): 317.

[14] Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, 196.

[15] I have taken the definitions from http://www.merriam-webster.com, slightly altering the first one.

[16] Interestingly, centuries ago Tertullian argued that God's "goodness" and his "justice" are inseparable, *even while treating them as representing two separate concepts* ("In short, from the very first the Creator was both good and also just. And both His attributes advanced together"). See *Against Marcion*, 2.12 (trans. Peter Holmes).

Chart A
(created by Paul A. Himes;
formatted by James Kotvas)

Word #1 – "shoot"
("I shoot the gun")

Concept #1
"To discharge a ranged weapon"

Word #2 – "fire"
("I fired the gun")
("I fired Joe")

Concept #2
"To formally remove somebody from their job"

Word #3 – "To Dismiss"
("Joe, I am dismissing you from this company" – usually needs a prepositional phrase)

Word #2 – "To downsize"
("I was downsized the other day")

Concept #3
"To make a smaller version of something"

assume, however, is that most believers possessed a working knowledge of *Koine* Greek and the Septuagint.

<div align="center">**Semantic Range and Context**</div>

Language is a social construct.[17] In other words, language exists only so far as two or more entities manifest structured interaction, interaction which may include physical signs, written words, or vocalized speech. A "personal language," then, would be something of an oxymoron, for language does not exist without interaction between multiple beings.[18]

Consequently, without denying the existence of idiolect[19], anybody who wishes to communicate must make sure that how they use a word has at least *some* overlap with how their dialogue partner uses it. I will illustrate this with two examples from the adventures of a former missionary to Japan (one quite talented in language!) who is very dear to me.

In the first example, this missionary was preaching on Jesus' statement "I am the Light of the world." To illustrate, he gave the example of spelunking during his college days, noting how dark it was in a cave without a light, how easy it was to get lost in a cave (even when he and his friends had a map), etc. Confused expressions greeted him, for rather than using the word *hora-ana* ("cave"), he accidentally used the word *ana-guma* ("badger), thus regaling a dazed audience with tales of how, in his college days, he would get lost exploring the insides of a badger. Obviously context was not enough to prevent miscommunication.

In the second example, the missionary had both context *and* etymology on his side, but to no avail. Attempting one day to witness to a lady, who had a young boy with her, the missionary endeavored to make friends with the young boy, who was clearly scared of the foreigner. Gesturing at the young boy, the missionary attempted to say, "He seems not to like me" by combining the word for "dislike" (*ya*) with the adjective for "seems to be" (*ra-shii*). Unfortunately, when combined in such a manner vocally, the resulting word was radically different and did not possess "seems to dislike" as part of its semantic range. What the missionary said to the horrified lady was, "He seems to be morally repugnant." The lady stalked away in shock, much to the missionaries confusion.

In other words, *context is not enough* to facilitate clear communication, if in fact a word is not being used in accordance with its semantic range. The mantra "Context is King," then, is *in of itself* not sufficient. As E. D. Hirsch states,

> It is sometimes said that 'meaning is determined by context,' but this is a very loose way of speaking. It is true that the surrounding text or the situation in which a problematical

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[17] As Ferdinand de Saussure notes, language is "a social product" and "a social occurrence" ("un produit social" and "un fait social"; *Troisième cours de linguistique générale (1910-1911): d' après les cahiers d'Emile Contantin*, ed. and trans. by Eisuke Komatus and Roy Harris [Oxford: Pergamon, 1993], 9 and 97.

The social nature of language can be further illustrated by how a baby learns English. Left to itself, a baby does not learn to progress beyond babbling. Yet through its interaction with parents and caretakers, a baby slowly but surely learns the difference between "papa," "mama," "yes," and "no," based on how people around it use those words. For an excellent discussion of linguistics and child development, see Paul Bloom, *How Children Learn the Meanings of Words* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

[18] This does raise the interesting speculation that language might be an intrinsic feature of God Himself, sense He is a Trinity and consequently a social Being.

[19] D. A. Cruse correctly notes that each person has their own "mental lexicon"; nevertheless, communication occurs apparently due to "an adequate degree of overlap between individual lexicons" ("The Lexicon," in *The Handbook of Linguistics*, eds. Mark Aronoff and Janie Rees-Miller [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001] 263).

word sequence is found tends to narrow the meaning probabilities for that particular word sequence; otherwise, interpretation would be hopeless. And it is a measure of stylistic excellence in an author that he should have managed to formulate a decisive context for any particular word sequence within his text. But this is certainly not to say that context determines verbal meaning. At best a context determines the guess of an interpreter (though his construction of the context may be wrong, and his guess correspondingly so). To speak of context as a determinant is to confuse an exigency of interpretation with an author's determining acts. *An author's verbal meaning is limited by linguistic possibilities but is determined by his actualizing and specifying some of those possibilities.*[20]

In a slightly different vein, Daniel Wallace states, "Often linguists say that the word being examined should have the meaning of 'X' with 'X' being only what one can determine from the context. But this is an unreasonable demand on any word. If *every word* in a given utterance had the meaning 'X' then we simply could not figure out what any utterance ever meant."[21]

When we examine a sentence, then, each word is *not* a blank slate, "x," to be filled with whatever context demands of it. Rather, each word has, at that moment of time, a number of concepts that it can point to *based on how people are, at that moment, using the word*. Obviously the concepts the word reflects, as well as the very form of the word, may change over time. This is why etymology should not be relied on except in rare circumstances.

Consequently, communication can only occur when substantial overlap exists between how one person uses a word and how another person uses a word. Context will delineate which of the possible meanings is the correct one.[22] Yet if neither of them are drawing from the possible meanings of the semantic range reflected in that language (or at least that particular dialect), miscommunication occurs.

Ironically, though, one cannot understand the semantic range of a particular word without looking at its use in various contexts. Yet when looking at a particular context, the reader should already know the semantic ranges of most of the words in order to understand the meaning of a particular word. Occasionally, a sentence will be too difficult to puzzle through precisely because the reader does *not* know the semantic ranges of words or the significance of specific syntactical constructions. Consequently, when dealing with both written and vocal language, one must always work from the *simpler* to the *more complex*, gaining insight as one continues to immerse oneself in the language.

This can be illustrated with a "tourist" analogy. At the most primitive level of communication, a completely lost foreigner looking for the train station in Tokyo would not (contrary to popular perception) resort to raising his voice, but rather to gestures imitating a train ("charades"). Having established, through the use of gestures, that "train" is *densha* in Japanese, he can now make educated guesses as to the words surrounding *densha* in a sentence, especially those words that occur frequently in simple contexts. Some of his guesses will be wrong, but his guesses will improve the more he is immersed in the language. As his understanding of the

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[20] E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 47-48 (emphasis added).

[21] Daniel B. Wallace, "Lexical Fallacies by Linguistics," Online: http://danielbwallace.com/2014/12/08/lexical-fallacies-by-linguists/ (accessed 2/12/2015).

[22] As David Alan Black succinctly states, "Because most words are polysemous, the context is usually necessary to *disambiguate* (clarify) the meaning of the polysemous word by indicating which of the several possible meanings is intended in that particular occurrence of the word" (*Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995], 129.

meaning of both words and sentences improves, so will his ability to make educated guesses regarding the meaning of new words within different contexts. Furthermore, his guesses will be more likely to be correct in simpler sentences than in complex sentences. After all, in English the word "car" would be more easily understandable in the sentence "The car was in an accident" (accompanied by gestures) than "Tony Stewart short-shifted his car while expertly slipstreaming past the lead."[23]

  Thus the more comprehensive one's grasp of the language is (i.e., semantic ranges and syntactical constructions), the more likely somebody can determine from a specific context the meaning of a particular word. Both a knowledge of context and semantic range are necessary; if "context is king," then "semantic range is parliament."

The Semantic Range of Πρόγνωσις and Προγινώσκω

The following tables, lifted from *Foreknowledge and Social Identity in 1 Peter*, list every single occurrence of πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω in the published literature of the 1st century (not counting the New Testament) and the LXX (utilizing the online *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*).[24] A more comprehensive discussion of each of these occurrences can be found on pages 101-125 of that book. A few observations will follow.

Table 1 (occurrences of the noun)

Text (πρόγνωσις)	Meaning
LXX Jdt 9:6	Unsure: *either* "knowledge of the future" *or* "determination of the future"
Jdt 11:19	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Josephus *Ant*. 8.234	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Ant. 8.418	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Ant. 13.300	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Ant. 15.373	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Ant. 17.43	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Ant. 18.201	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Ag. Ap. 1.256	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"

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[23] I stress, then, that how a word is used in clear, non-controversial sentences is the best evidence for how a word is used in a more difficult or controversial sentence.

[24] Paul A. Himes, *Foreknowledge and Social Identity in 1 Peter* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 139-141.

Clement *1 Clem*. 44.2	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Plutarch *The 'E' at Delphi* 386.D	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
The Oracles at Delphi 339.D	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Animals 979.A	"knowledge of the future (meteorological patterns)"
Animals 979.E	"knowledge of the future (phases of the sun)"
Animals 982.C	"knowledge of the future (patterns of the Nile)"
Fragments (Title)	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Fragments 21 (subtitle)	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Fragments 22 (subtitle)	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Fragments 23 (subtitle)	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Antiochus *Fragmenta* (*e cod. Napolitano*) 4.154	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Fragmenta (*e cod. Paris*) 8.3.108	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Fragmenta (*e cod. Paris*) 8.3.119	unsure, but possibly "knowledge of future events (or an event)"
Erotianus *Fragmenta* 33	unsure, but possibly "knowledge of the future events" or a more technical, medical sense
Balbillus *Fragmenta* 8.104	"knowledge of future events (or an event)"

Table 2 (occurrences of the verb)

Text (προγινώσκω)	Meaning
LXX Wis 6:13	"to intimately know somebody in the future"

Wis 8:8	"to know future events (or an event)"
Wis 18.6	"to know future events (or an event)"
Josephus *Ant*. 1.311	"to know future events (or an event)"
Ant. 2.86	"to know future events (or an event)"
Ant. 4.121	"to foretell future events as blessing or curse"
Ant. 5.358	"to know future events (or an event)"
Ant. 6.54	"to know future events (or an event)"
Ant. 6.348	"to know future events (or an event)"
Ant. 7.57	"to know future events (or an event)"
Ant. 8.418	"to know future events (or an event)"
Ant. 13.175	"to know future events (or an event)"
Ant. 16.214	"to know future events (or an event)"
Ant. 18.218	"to know future events (or an event)"
J. W. 1.55	"to know future events (or an event)"
J. W. 1.608	"to know future events (or an event)"
J. W. 2.159	"to know future events (or an event)"
J. W. 3.484	"to know future events (or an event)"
J. W. 4.236	"to know future events (or an event)"
J. W. 6.8	"to have known in a previous time something that has changed in the present"
Ag. Ap. 1.204	"to know future events (or an event)"
Ag. Ap. 1.256	"to know future events (or an event)"
Life 106	"to know future events (or an event)"

Philo *Dreams* 1.2	"to know future events (or an event)"
Plutarch *Comparison of Pericles and Fabius Maximus* 2.3	"to know future events (or an event)"
Alcibiades 24.4	"to know somebody's plans for the future"
Sulla 37.1	"to know future events (or an event)"
Dion 21.8	"to know future events (or an event)"
Bravery of Women 255.C	"to know somebody's plans for the future"
Obsolescence 431.E	"to know future events (or an event)"
Busybody 519.F	"to have previously discovered knowledge (regarding patterns of human conduct)"
Divine Vengeance 567.D	"to know future events (or an event)"
Fragments 216c	"to have previously discovered something"
Fragments 217a	"to have previously discovered something"
Aristonicus *Iliadis* 23.857	"to know future events (or an event)"
Dorotheus *Fragmenta Graeca* 424.6	"to know future events (or an event)"
Erotianus *Vocum Hippocraticarum collectio* 109	unsure, but possibly *either* "to plan ahead of time" *or* "to take council about future events"
Longinus *De sublimitate* 9.12	"to experience"
Epictetus *Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae* 2.10.6	"to know future events (or an event)"
Rufus *Quaestiones medicinales* 20	unsure, possibly used in a technical, medical sense ("to diagnose")

Quaestiones medicinales 21	unsure, possibly used in a technical, medical sense ("to diagnose")

First of all, of the 72 total occurrences of the verb and noun, not a single one unambiguously means "to determine something ahead of time" or "to choose something ahead of time," i.e., as a synonym of προοριζω or εκελγομαι. In fact, in none of the cases outside of the NT except Judith 9:6 does such a meaning even appear to be a remotely possible (and I suspect the only reason Judith 9:6 is suggested as referring to foreordination is so scholars can have a proof text for the NT passages). Although it is not completely impossible that Paul, Peter, or Luke could have used the word to mean "determine ahead of time," the likelihood of miscommunication arises in direct proportion to the degree that such a meaning is lacking in the literature outside the NT. We stress, once again: the inspired writers did not speak a "Holy Spirit" language adding brand new meanings to words that already had well-established semantic ranges. Thus, as Barr states, "The extent to which words received 'new content' is to a large extent related to the degree in which words became technical. But many of the most important words of the NT were not technical unambiguously, but only in certain syntactical combinations; . . ."[25]

The hermeneutical significance of this point must not be neglected. If meanings for words are posited without regard to a word's semantic range in 1st century *Koine*, then the interpreter's *theological system* becomes the determiner of meaning instead of *the language itself*. Hermeneutical restraints are then cast off, and any argument on the meaning of a word becomes unfalsifiable whenever two theologians of opposing systems dialogue.

If, however, the use of a word in *Koine* is the key to determining the meaning of a word, then fresh evidence may be presented that can falsify my thesis. In other words, the thesis of this paper does *not* depend on a theological system but rather the language of 1st century Greek. Consequently, if, for example, a papyrus were unearthed tomorrow with the statement, οὗτος Πολυκράτης προέγνω παραστῆσαι αὐτοῦ φίλῳ οτι ἐφίλει αὐτόν, in a context describing how Polycrates came suddenly upon his friend being accosted by robbers (thus probably ruling out "to know something ahead of time" as the meaning), suddenly the sense of "to determine something" or "to choose a course of action" would need to be acknowledged as a possible meaning of προγινώσκω.

In the absence of such evidence, however, we reiterate: it is incredibly unlikely that Paul, Peter, or Luke would have created *ex nihilo* an addition to the semantic range and expect the original readers or hearers to understand.

Secondly, as noted in fn 10, scholars often argue that πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω reflect the intimacy often associated with the Hebrew word ידע . This is an easily testable hypothesis—does the word occur in the LXX translating ידע ? The answer is obviously no (the word does not occur in the OG translation at all, only in the apocryphal works). If one objects that πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω are obviously combinations of πρό and γινώσκω, the latter of which obviously quite often reflects the more intimate side of ידע , I would respond that one should not assume that a compound word equals the sum of its parts. In other words, the semantic range of a compound word may be narrower (or, in theory, broader) than the combination of the semantic

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[25] Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, 249.

ranges of the words from which it is composed. Thus προστρέχω, for example, should not be understood as: "=[semantic range of πρός] + [semantic range of τρέχω]," as if the compound word could potentially have the meaning of "running in accordance with something" instead of "running up to someone or something." As Turner and Cotterell state, "We should not, however, be beguiled . . . into thinking that compound lexemes always are, or even usually, bear a meaning that is little more than a summation of the separate meanings of the elements of which the word is composed."[26] To argue, based on the combination of πρό and γινώσκω, that this word necessarily reflects יָדַע, would potentially result in a form of the etymological fallacy.[27]

Yet thirdly, the sense of "to possess intimate acquaintance with" does seem to be a possibility in Wisdom of Solomon 6:13. The context here imitates and expands on the "seeking Wisdom" theme found in Proverbs 8 (and elsewhere). Those who seek Wisdom have a special relationship with her. In light of that, φθάνει τοὺς ἐπιθυμοῦντας προγνωσθῆναι should, perhaps, be translated, "She overtakes those who desire her, in order to become intimately known [by them]."[28] Consequently, here in Wisdom of Solomon we have the first (and only) piece of evidence that προγινώσκω could actually mean what most NT scholars want it to mean in the NT. It is a rare usage, yet it is admissible evidence nonetheless and should not be overlooked. The question is, however, how likely is it that an isolated usage in Wisdom of Solomon would be closer to NT usage than the vast majority of *Koine* usage?[29]

Despite the above data, one caveat must be included. Semantic range generally changes slowly, but it *does* change.[30] Furthermore, this fact does not preclude sudden, abrupt changes that somehow "catch on," especially when introduced via poetry.[31] Nonetheless, if Peter, Paul, or Luke wished to introduce a radically new (or even an extremely rare) meaning to a word that is not, in fact, all that rare in the 1st century, we would expect to see clear, unambiguous, contextual clues coupled with the near impossibility of the word meaning anything else within that context. With that in mind, let us examine the relevant NT passages.

Πρόγνωσις and Προγινώσκω in the New Testament

Acts

The concept of "knowing something ahead of time" does not rely on the words πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω; it may be represented by any of the synonyms such as προβλέπω (LXX Ps 36:13), προοράω (LXX Ps 138:3; Josephus, *J.A.* 17.211), θεσπίζω (various uses in Philo), προεπίσταμαι (Josephus, *Vita*, 106), etc. In addition, any passage dealing with prophecy of necessity deals also

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[26] Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989), 130.

[27] My thoughts here echo those of Edgar, "The Meaning of ΠΡΟΓΙΝΩΣΚΩ ('Foreknowledge')," 65-67, though I came to my conclusions before reading Edgar's article.

[28] I am dissatisfied with Sir Lancelot Brenton's rendering, "She preventeth them that desire her, making herself first known unto them." I do not see how he justifies "making herself first known" from a *passive* infinitive (compare with the use of γινωσθῆναι in Sirach 38:5).

[29] Evidence suggests that the NT writers were more likely to react *against* Wisdom of Solomon than draw from it (at least at the theological level). See Jonathan A. Linebaugh, "Announcing the Human: Rethinking the Relationship Between Wisdom of Solomon 13-15 and Romans 1.18-2.11," *NTS* 57 (2011): 214-237.

[30] For a comprehensive discussion, see de Saussure, *Troisieme Cours de Linguistique Generale*, 98-103.

[31] For a discussion of this phenomena, see Peter J. Leithart's fascinating *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), chapter 2, esp. 80-84. I believe some of Leithart's arguments are overstated; nevertheless, this chapter offers a healthy corrective to the tendency to dispense completely with etymology and the possibility of abrupt, sudden changes to the meanings of words.

with the concept of "knowing something ahead of time," as in 1 Pet 1:10-12.[32] In other words, simply studying πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω does not exhaust all the passages that deal with the concept of "knowing something ahead of time." Nevertheless, this paper is not an exhaustive treatment of that concept in the NT, but rather a (no doubt already too exhaustive) treatise on only πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω.

We begin with Acts 2:23—τοῦτον τῇ ὡρισμένῃ βοθλῇ καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ ἔκδοτον. Having just articulated the theological significance of the events at Pentecost, Peter at this point "goes on the offensive,"[33] accusing his audience of the heinous crime of crucifying God's Son. Yet curiously, even while hammering home the guilt of his listeners, Peter makes it clear that they themselves were not masters of the situation but mere tools in the hands of the Divine.[34] Indeed, here Luke, via Peter, develops a "theology of the plan of God," making it clear that divine council enforces its will despite whatever man may do.[35]

Two issues must be addressed here: the use of the single article to govern two nouns, and the use of the dative case. Regarding the former, this is a TSKS construction but not a Granville-Sharp Construction. Sharp himself made it clear that his rule applied only to *personal* nouns.[36] Daniel Wallace, the definitive expert on this topic, clearly states, ". . . the evidence—both within the NT and outside—overwhelmingly points in one direction: impersonal constructions do *not*, as a rule, imply an identical referent."[37]

Yet using a single article to govern two nouns does indicate a close link between the two. Thus, for example, in Eph 3:18, ὁ πλάτος καὶ μῆκος καὶ ὕψος καὶ βάθος, the Apostle is obviously not stating that "width" is the same thing as "length" or "height" or "depth"; he is, however, linking all four abstract nouns very closely together to make a key point: God's love is so great that it permeates the entirety of the dimensions of the universe. Similarly, in Acts 2:23, the main point Peter is making is *not* "God's foreknowledge and God's determinate council are the same thing," but rather that God (and Jesus) are not the hopeless victims of the acts of men, but always in control. This sovereignty is manifested in both God's "determinate council" (choosing that Jesus Christ would die at the hands of sinful men) and his foreknowledge (one cannot be surprised at something one knew all along would happen). The two are linked, perhaps inseparably so in this context, but the two words still represent different concepts.

Secondly, in light of the use of the dative here, Edgar James argues, "Certainly foreknowledge *knows*, but it does not *perform an act* like the delivering of Jesus to His

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[32] For a brief discussion of the link between prophecy and foreknowledge in Peter's theology, see Paul A. Himes, "Peter and the Prophetic Word: The Theology of Prophecy Traced Through Peter's Sermons and Epistles," *BBR* 21.2 (2011): 242.

[33] Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 144.

[34] Otto Bauerenfeind, *Kommentar und Studien zur Apostelgeschichte*, WUNT 22 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1980), 46; James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Epworth Commentaries (Peterborough: Epworth, 1996), 30.

[35] Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte (Apg 1-12)*, EKKNT 5/1 (Zürich: Benziger, 1986), 121.

[36] Granville Sharp, *Remarks on the Uses of the Definitive Article in the Greek New Testament* (London: Sharp, 1803), 3.

[37] Daniel B. Wallace, *Granville Sharp's Canon and Its Kin: Semantics and Significance*, Studies in Biblical Greek 14 (New York: Lang, 2009), 177. This does not mean, however, that a TSKS construction with abstract nouns will *never* utilize synonyms. It simply means that one cannot argue from the TSKS construction itself that the words have the same meaning.

enemies."[38] It is unclear why James believes an instrumental date must necessarily "perform an act." This is surely too narrow; at its core, "The instrumental use of the dative is a fairly broad category that indicates how an action is carried out."[39] Thus, for example, in Luke 7:38, the tears do not, by themselves, "perform an act" (the one performing the act is the woman, utilizing the tears).[40] Can mere knowledge, then, be an instrument supporting an action? At the human level, certainly ("Having read the scouting report on the pitcher, the hitter did not swing at the first pitch"). Whether or not, at the philosophical-theological level, God would interact *by means of* his knowledge is debatable, yet at the very least Scripture does *portray* God in this manner, as acting armed with knowledge (e.g., Gen 18:20-21).[41] Regardless, it is highly doubtful that Acts 2:23 would have sparked a metaphysical debate between any Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes in the audience. Peter's point is straightforward: God was in charge all along, but the audience is still guilty.

In Acts 26, the Apostle Paul speaks to Agrippa of the change that has come over him via the Gospel of Jesus Christ. At the beginning of his testimony, in v. 5, he tells Agrippa that the Jews "προγινώσκοντές με ἄνωθεν" that he had lived as a dedicated Pharisee. The use of προγινώσκω is significant here for two reasons. First of all, the verb takes a personal pronoun as its direct object and yet *still refers to "knowledge" rather than "relationship"*! In other words, one cannot make the claim that to "προγινώσκω" people automatically refers to more than "mere" knowledge simply because the object is a person or group of people. Acts 26:5 demonstrates that προγινώσκω may take a personal object and still refer to "mere" knowledge.

Secondly, the verb προγινώσκω does not actually mean "knowing somebody ahead of time" in this case, but rather "to have known in a previous time something that has changed in the present"; lest there be any ambiguity about meaning, the Apostle Paul included ἄνωθεν. Even so, this is not a lexical anomaly, as indicated by Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.8 and, perhaps, the three occurrences in Plutarch that are *past*-oriented (*Busybody* 519.F; *Fragments* 216c and 217a).

Romans

Romans 8 contains so much theological richness that even the most erudite theological commentaries have barely begun to plumb its depths. By the time we arrive at 8:29, the ὅτι "indicates that Paul is now offering a clear causal explanation of" v. 28, why "all things" will "work together for good" for Christians.[42] Thus,

The course of the argument of the letter to the Romans has been unfolding the development of salvation from initial human failing through justification, reconciliation,

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[38] James, "Is Foreknowledge Equivalent to Foreordination?" 217. Yet note Baugh, "The Meaning of Foreknowledge," 189, who has a more balanced perspective (noting that πρόγνωσις indicates that "Christ's death did not take God by surprise").

[39] Andreas J. Köstenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 130.

[40] This example is taken from Köstenberger, Merkle, and Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek*, 131. Note on fn 42 that the authors object to Wallace's extra classification of "dative of material," since "All the examples Wallace gives can just as easily be understood as datives of means."

[41] Obviously none of us believe that God "learned" something and then acted on it. Yet this does not change the fact that Genesis portrays God's knowledge as being instrumental, to some degree, to his action; i.e., God takes action against Sodom and Gomorrah armed with his knowledge.

[42] Stanley E. Porter, *The Letter to the Romans: A Linguistic and Literary Commentary* (NTM 37; Sheffield, G.B.: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015), 172.

and life in the Spirit to the point where one can look back and see the will and intention of God at work in every stage along the way.[43]

Nonetheless, I am not so sure that the list of verbs in 8:29-30 is meant to necessarily give us a temporal or logical *ordo salutis*. In other words, I do not believe there is anything *necessarily* inherent in the syntax that necessitates προγινώσκω being the logically or temporally predecessor of προορίζω, which would then logically and/or temporally precede καλέω, etc. This may, of course, be argued from lexical semantics and/or theology (for example, it would make theological and lexical sense for "predestinating" to precede "calling"), but this should not be assumed from the syntax, anymore than it would be assumed in any other list, e.g., 1Cor 9:1.

With that in mind, there is no reason why προγινώσκω cannot mean "knowing something ahead of time" here. Douglas Moo objects: "That the verb here contains this peculiar sense of 'know' [i.e., intimate knowledge, as opposed to 'simple' knowledge] is suggested by the fact that it has a simple personal object. Paul does not say that God knew anything *about* us but that he knew *us*, and this is reminiscent of the OT sense of 'know.'"[44] Yet we have already seen from Acts 26:5 that the word *can* have a personal object and still refer to "simple" knowledge rather than intimate relationship. Granted, in Acts 26:5 the *content* of that knowledge was delineated in a ὅτι clause, but this does not change the fact that the word *can* have a personal object and still point to the idea of "knowing *about* somebody." In fact, based on the lexical data from 1st century Greek, this would be the most natural reading, the one that would most likely spring into the mind of Paul's audience (since, as we have demonstrated, no evidence exists for a link between προγινώσκω and ידע).[45]

Nonetheless, we must once again acknowledge that "to have an intimate relationship with" is, at least, a possibility here, though I reiterate my previous objection—how likely is it that Paul would utilize a sense seen in Wisdom of Solomon and *nowhere else* in the LXX or 1st century literature? How likely would it be that his audience would have understood the word that way?[46]

Yet if προγινώσκω does mean "know something ahead of time about [us]," what exactly does God foreknow about us? A myriad of possibilities exist, and we must not too hastily dismiss the possibility that Paul was being deliberately ambiguous. The simplest answer would be "everything," a depth of knowledge so exact that, with a divine subject, the verb would indeed approach what could be classified as "intimate" knowledge (yet not "covenantal intimacy" *per se*). Non-Calvinists may prefer to suggest that God foreknows our faith, yet this is not explicitly stated. Calvinists could perhaps posit that God foreknows his own divine purpose towards us, or even that God foreknow his own relationship with us (in the same way that a married couple

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 532-533.

[45] Some commentaries argue that προγινώσκω in this verse means "choice" without actually showing why this is the case (e.g., Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, PNTC [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012], 423; and Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer (Röm 6-11)*, EKKNT 6/2 [Zürich: Benziger, 1980], 163). See Olson, "Lexical Study," 4, on the odd redundancy of making προγινώσκω a synonym to προορίζω here.

[46] Although, in light of Linebaugh's thesis ("Announcing the Human"), one can speculate that the Roman believers may indeed have been familiar with the language of Wisdom of Solomon, which may be precisely why Paul has to refute the *theology* of Wisdom of Solomon.

might lovingly recollect their time together); once again, this may or may not be the case, since it is not explicitly stated.[47]

Regardless, "to know something ahead of time about [us]" still makes sense within the context, even if ambiguous.[48] If it makes sense, then the dominant usage of the word ("knowing something ahead of time") becomes a preferable option to (a.) "to express covenantal love towards" (never clearly attested in 1ˢᵗ century literature or the LXX), (b.) "to choose ahead of time" (never clearly attested to in 1ˢᵗ century literature or the LXX), or (c.) "to have an intimate relationship with" (never attested to in 1ˢᵗ century literature, and only once in the LXX, Wisdom of Solomon). I am skeptical that Paul was attempting to lay down an *ordo salutis* here *per se*, and we must be careful in assuming that the Roman Christians had a systematic theology handy to help them puzzle through Paul's lexical choices.[49]

In Rom 11:1, Paul asks the question, Μὴ ἀπώσατο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ, then responds vigorously in the negative. To the contrary, in v. 2, οὐκ ἀπώσατο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ὅν προέγνω. The expression "God has not forsaken his people" is either drawing from Ps 94:14 [LXX 93:14], 1Sam 12:22, or both.[50] The subsequent relative pronoun and accompanying verb detail something significant about God's people, essentially reinforcing Paul's claim.[51]

How, then, do the relative pronoun and aorist verb function? Schreiner argues, "The verb προέγνω here functions as the antonym to ἀπώσατο. In other words, the verse is saying that God has not rejected his people upon whom he set his covenantal love (cf. also Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:2, 20)."[52] Thus, regarding these two verbs, "The latter means 'rejected,' and thus the former means 'selected.'"

Yet Schreiner provides no syntactical justification as to why προέγνω must be the antonym of ἀπώσατο; furthermore, as best as I can determine, his logic that προέγνω means "selected" is apparently based on his argument that the two words are antonyms, though it is difficult to understand how "the two words are antonyms" can possibly function as an argument for the meaning of either word, since "the two words are antonyms" is, by its very nature, a lexical judgment. To make a lexical judgment the logical basis of a lexical judgment is circular reasoning. If, perhaps, Schreiner believes that the syntactical construction itself (negative particle + verb + relative pronoun + verb) can only function if the two verbs are antonyms (I am speculating here, since Schreiner does not state this), then this is a hypothesis that must be tested. In such a construction, where the second verb follows a relative pronoun, the two verbs have the same subject, and the first one has a negative particle attached to it, are the two verbs likely to be antonyms?

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[47] We acknowledge, then, that the line between "simple" knowledge and intimacy begins to get blurred. Yet I would posit that it is the sentence, not the word προγινώσκω here, that indicates intimacy. Obviously God has an intimate relationship with his followers; this becomes apparent at the sentence level, not the lexical level.

[48] That such a statement would amount to a tautology is irrelevant. Surely the inspired writers are allowed a tautology or two, especially since "God foreknows everything about you" may have been less of a tautology to 1ˢᵗ century Roman believers than it is to 21ˢᵗ century American fundamentalists!

[49] Having said that, we must grant Robert Jewett's point that "By including these ideas under the rubric of what 'we know' (8:28), Paul assumes that the biblical themes of divine foreknowledge and election were familiar to the congregations in Rome, perhaps through their use in baptismal homilies or ceremonies" (*Romans*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007], 539).

[50] Schreiner, *Romans*, 579.

[51] Heinrich Schlier, *Der Römerbrief*, HTKNT (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 323.

[52] Schreiner, *Romans*, 452.

The evidence, unfortunately, is inconclusive.[53] If, however, the οὐ is omitted, clearly such a construction does not necessarily entail true antonyms, as may be seen by such passages as Heb 11:8, James 4:5, and Rev 16:14.[54]

Yet whatever the relative pronoun and accompanying verb are doing, clearly they are adding weight to Paul's statement that God will not abandon his people. Schreiner (and others) seem to suggest that ὅν προέγνω indicates *reason*: "God will not abandon his people *because* he chose them [or 'intimately knew them']." Yet another very obvious possibility would be the implication that "God will not abandon his people *despite the fact* that he has known what they are alike all along [i.e., foreknown all the sins they will commit]." Indeed, in 11:3, Elijah is detailing precisely what sins Israel has committed—he is expressing a "formal complain 'against Israel.'"[55] Yet *despite* this fact, God has reserved to himself a remnant (i.e., God has not abandoned his people). James argues, "Certainly if [προγινώσκω] means only a mere prevision here, then in view of their unfaithfulness this would be reason for God to discontinue His promises—not to continue them."[56] Yet *this is precisely the point!* God has every reason to forsake Israel, *yet he does not*!

Indeed, this underscores just how much God's treatment of Israel here is based on grace rather than works (11:5-6). It is not that God foresaw all the good deeds Israel would do and so chooses not to abandon them (i.e., God's selection of a remnant so as not to totally abandon Israel was not based upon the awesomeness of said remnant); such would not be grace, it would be merit. Rather God, foreseeing all the wicked deeds that Israel would do, *still* chooses not to completely abandon them. Now this, truly, is grace!

First and Second Peter

Any discussion of πρόγνωσις in 1 Peter 1:2 must of necessity deal with what, exactly, the expression κατὰ πρόγνωσιν is modifying. The vast majority of scholars argue that it modifies elect. To this writer's knowledge, only Wayne Grudem, Douglas Harink, Wolfgang Schrage, and possibly Francis Wright Beare argue that πρόγνωσις modifies the entire description of the audience in 1:1.[57] Harink points out that tying πρόγνωσις directly to election

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[53] Utilizing *Accordance* 11.1, I ran the following command line: "=οὐ <FOLLOWED BY> <WITHIN 1 Words> [VERB third] <WITHIN 3 Words> [NOUN nominative] <FOLLOWED BY> <WITHIN 2 Words> [NOUN accusative] <FOLLOWED BY> <WITHIN 2 Words> [PRONOUN relative] <FOLLOWED BY> <WITHIN 1 Words> [VERB third]." The only hit in the NT was Rom 11:2. No matching constructions occurred in either Josephus or Philo. However, in the LXX, we have Judges 1:27 and 1Esdras 1:19. In neither case are the two verbs antonyms, though in the former the subjects of the two verbs are not the same and in the latter the two verbs themselves are the same.

[54] Command Line: "[VERB] <WITHIN 3 Words> [NOUN nominative] <FOLLOWED BY> <WITHIN 2 Words> [NOUN accusative] <FOLLOWED BY> <WITHIN 2 Words> [PRONOUN relative] <FOLLOWED BY> <WITHIN 1 Words> [VERB third]." This yielded ten results: Mark 12:42, John 6:2, John 21:20, Acts 16:14, Acts 25:18, Rom 11:2, 2Tim 2:17, Heb 11:8, James 4:5, Rev 16:14 (though except for Rom 11:2, none of these have a negative particle attached to the first verb). Obviously it is quite possible for the second verb to be an antonym of the first verb even without a negative particle, as seen in Philo, *Confusion*, 127—"Justice, coming down, destroys the cities which they built" (though the two verbs have different subjects; my translation).

[55] Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 655.

[56] James, "Is Foreknowledge Equivalent to Foreordination?" 219.

[57] See Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter* TNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 50-51; Douglas Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2009), 39; Wolfgang Schrage, "Der erste Petrusbrief," in *Die Katholischen Brief*, Das Neue Testament Deutsch 10 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 67; Francis Wright Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*, 2nd rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell & Mott, 1958), 49.

tend[s] to leave the last two phrases of 1:2 dangling on their own and theologically separated from 1:1. However, the Greek text may well be read as drawing all of 1:1 into the theological reality described in the three phrases of 1:2 . . . In other words, the church just is what it is, "elect exiles of the diaspora," because of the foreknowing, sanctifying, and justifying action of God the Father, Spirit, and Son.[58]

In *Foreknowledge and Social Identity in 1 Peter*, I defend Grudem's articulation of this position based on the following points: first, it would be virtually unprecedented for κατὰ πρόγνωσιν to modify a noun or adjective *nine words removed* when other options exist. In fact, "No other construction consisting of κατά + the accusative in non-Pauline epistles is ever separated by more than 8 words, and out of those clearly used adjectivally, no other construction is separated by more than 4 words, and there is no ambiguity in these cases."[59] In other words, if Peter wished to get across that κατὰ πρόγνωσιν modified "elect," he went about it in the most confusing way possible.[60]

Secondly, the very fact that multiple words exist as viable candidates for the prepositional phrases ("elect," "strangers," and "Diaspora") make it all the more difficult to chose between them. Since ambiguity is involved, and since all other cases of κατά plus the accusative in 1 Peter itself involve a verb, I believe Grudem is correct when he states, "Since verse 1 contains no verb, it is most natural to let 'according to the foreknowledge of God the Father' modify the whole situation of the readers . . . ."[61]

Thirdly, the closest syntactical parallel (indeed, the only place I have seen where the exact same expression occurs), the κατὰ πρόγνωσιν in Judith 11:19, actually points to a plural pronoun ταῦτα, which refers to the entire content of Judith's speech from 11:6-19. Thus we have a precedent for κατὰ πρόγνωσιν to refer back to a multitude of concepts, not just one.

In addition, the word κατὰ here probably does not mean "according to" in the sense of "as determined by." The nearest parallel, Judith 11:19, means "in accordance with," a sense that is also seen in 1 Pet 1:13 (the overseers should be acting not so much based on the decree of God, but rather in accordance with God's desire; contrast this with the use of κατὰ in 1 Pet 1:3, where clearly God's rich mercy is the direct *cause* of hope).

In light of all this, 1 Pet 1:1-2 cannot be used as a soteriological proof text to prove that God's election is based either on God's intimate covenantal relationship or the foreseen faith of believers. Neither is the point of Peter's introduction. Verses 1-2 were not written to lay out a systematic soteriology, but rather to give comfort and hope to the believers living as strangers. Grudem articulates it best. The phrase κατὰ πρόγνωσιν

Implies that their status as sojourners, their privileges as God's chosen people, even their hostile environment in Pontus, Galatia, *etc*., were all known by God before the world began, all came about in accordance with his foreknowledge, and thus (we may conclude) all were in accordance with his fatherly love for his own people Such foreknowledge is laden with comfort for Peter's readers.[62]

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[58] Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 39.

[59] Himes, *Foreknowledge and Social Identity in 1 Peter*, 141 (see chart 5.1 on pages 139-141).

[60] Peter could have easily placed the prepositional phrases directly after "elect": "Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect ones according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *etc*. . . . . to those who are [τοῖς οὖσιν] Strangers of the Diaspora of Pontus, *etc*. . . ." (cf. Phil 1:1, where we also see two dative plurals with the same referents separated by a number of words).

[61] Grudem, *1 Peter*, 142.

[62] Ibid., 152; cf. Himes, *Foreknowledge and Social Identity*, 150-152.

Thus we are liberated from having to worry too much about the soteriological significance of πρόγνωσις in this passage. *Since*, then, the word overwhelmingly refers to "prescient knowledge" in *Koine* Greek, and *since* God obviously does possess prescient knowledge of *all* things, including the difficult circumstances that accompany believers estranged from those around them, consequently we conclude that disparaging the possibility that πρόγνωσις refers to "mere" foreknowledge misses the point. A God who knows everything about me, including the struggles I am enduring, is a great comfort to the soul. Indeed, I am convinced that this concept of "comfort based on foreknowledge" is a neglected theme in 1 Peter.

Regarding 1 Pet 1:20, Edgar James declares that since ". . . foreknowledge cannot act, and since the act of redemption is in view (vs. 18)," then consequently πρόγνωσις here must mean "foreordination."[63] Yet James vastly overstates is case. Προγινώσκω does not need to "act" in this context, it only needs to play whatever theological role Peter wishes it to. Furthermore, in light of all the lexical data, it is difficult to imagine Peter's audience assuming a meaning for this word that does not exist in the entirety of 1st century *Koine* literature.

Schreiner traces the logic of this passage in the following manner:

Why did Peter state here that Christ was foreknown? How does it fit into the argument? The main theme of the paragraph is that believers should conduct their lives in fear. They should do so because they have been ransomed with the precious blood of Christ (vv. 18-19). Now the readers are informed that this is no afterthought. God determined before history ever began . . . that the Christ would appear at this particular juncture of history as redeemer. This interpretation is confirmed by the last part of the verse. Christ 'was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake.' The 'revelation' or 'manifestation' of Christ refers to his incarnation. Peter emphasized that believers enjoy the blessing of living at the time when God is fulfilling his saving promises.[64]

With Schreiner, we acknowledge the focus on *privilege* in this passage (the δι᾽ὑμᾶς indicates this). Yet the μὲν . . . δὲ construction here sets up a grand contrast between the two participles, namely what is προεγνωσμένου in eternity past (πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου) on the one hand, and what is revealed (φανερωθέντος) in this final era (ἐπ᾽ἐσχάτων τῶν χρόνων) on the other hand.[65] It would appear that "God's *knowledge* of what he was going to do" with "God's *revelation* [to us] of what he was going to do" makes a more natural contrastive pair than "God's *choosing* of what he was going to do" with "God's *revelation* [to us] of what he was going to do." "In other words, it is "*knowing* something now" compared to "*knowing* something all along," rather than

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[63] James, "Is Foreknowledge Equivalent to Foreordination?" 218; cf. Baugh, "The Meaning of Foreknowledge," 196; Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 74.

[64] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 88.

[65] For the use of the μὲν . . . δὲ construction as pointing to contrast (or, more specifically, "correlation"), see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 672, and note Matt 9:37 as an example. For a more comprehensive discussion of both μέν and the μὲν . . . δὲ construction, see Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 2010), 74-82. Runge sees the basic sense of μέν as "forward pointing correlation" (76); e.g., in Luke 23:41, "The use of μέν [and the corresponding δέ] constrains the reader to be on the lookout for a related element that follows. . . . The μέν clause establishes a counterpoint that anticipates a related point that follows" (78). Regarding the near-poetic beauty of the syntactical construction here in 1 Pet 1:20, see Jacob Prasad, *Foundations of the Christian Way of Life according to 1 Peter 1, 13-24: An Exegetico-Theological Study*, Analecta Biblical 146 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 2000), 229, and J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, harper's New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 75.

"*knowing* something now" compared to "*determining* something in the past." Indeed, "Peter is declaring that what God has known within himself all along (namely, the Messianic plan of redemption) has 'now' been made known to the privileged community of strangers."[66] This dovetails nicely with the point Peter made in 1:10-12 regarding the immense privilege believers have to be recipients of the revelation of God's plan through Jesus Christ (notice the similar expression ἃ νῦν ἀηγγέλη ὑμῖν in 1:10).[67]

Obviously God did determine that he would send Jesus to suffer. This is undisputed. Simply because that statement is true does not mean, however, that this is the point of προγινώσκω in 1 Peter 1:20. For one to posit a completely new meaning for the word, a meaning that appears nowhere else in extant 1ˢᵗ century *Koine*, two things must hold true: 1. No other meaning would make sense in the context; and 2. There are overwhelmingly clear contextual clues as to this new meaning. Such a situation is not impossible, but since προγινώσκω actually makes sense as "knowing ahead of time," προγινώσκω as "foreordained" becomes significantly less likely. The measuring stick here must first and foremost be "how would the original audience understand it?" rather than "what fits best with my personal systematic theology?"

Finally, in 2 Pet 3:17, Peter encourages his audience that, based on their prescient knowledge of what will happen (the eschatology of the epistle), they should avoid the fate of the false teachers discussed in vv. 16. No debate exists as to the meaning of the word here, yet this does raise the question of why the verb should be treated differently when it has a human subject as opposed to when it has God as the subject.[68] While the *quality* of an attribute may certainly differ (nobody disputes that God's foreknowledge is infinitely superior to that of a mere mortal), the *lexical meaning* of a word used to describe God does not automatically change simply because the subject is divine and not human. When John said, "God is love" in 1 John 4:8, he used the term ἀγάπη precisely because he expected his audience to understand what the word means *based on daily usage*. We reiterate Barr's point: when any of the apostles wish to teach the ways in which God's love is different from human love, they do so on the *sentence* level (e.g., John 3:16), not by assuming their audience will understand that the word itself has changed meaning(s).

In conclusion: there does not seem to be any indication that πρόγνωσις or προγινώσκω have added a brand new meaning to their semantic range within the NT contexts. Had the inspired writers wished to describe how God's foreknowledge was more than just prescient knowledge, they could easily have done so at the sentence level. Since they did not do so, at least within the five texts the two words appear in, we should assume that πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω mean what they normally mean in *Koine* Greek: "knowing something ahead of time."

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[66] Himes, *Foreknowledge and Social Identity in 1 Peter*, 160.

[67] One again, my thoughts echo those of Edgar, "The Meaning of ΠΡΟΓΙΝΩΣΚΩ ('Foreknowledge')," 51-52, though I came to my conclusions before reading his article.

[68] For example, Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 53 fn21, dismisses Acts 26:5 and 2 Peter 3:17 by stating, "These two verses are distinct from the texts examined here since they refer to human foreknowledge instead of divine foreknowledge." My *reducto absurdum* is that the same could be said regarding any *Koine* word used to describe God. When God φιλέω Jesus' disciples, obviously there is a qualitative difference between that and when the disciples φιλέω Jesus (John 16:27); yet does this truly mean that the *word itself* has a different meaning? If so, how do we determine the new meaning? What are the hermeneutical restraints?

I reiterate: simply because the same word may possess *qualitative* differences depending on who it refers to does not mean that the meaning of the word has changed between the two contexts. Compare "Paul Himes hit a home run" with "Mike Trout hit a home run." Obviously there is a qualitative difference between Paul Himes' home run and Mike Trout's home run, but a home run is still a home run. The meaning has not changed.

Conclusion

If the reader will forgive a tautology, words and sentences are both essential to communication. The former without the latter would be frustratingly ambiguous; the latter without the former cannot exist. When new theological truth is conveyed, however, this is done at the *sentence* level rather than by creating *ex nihilo* new meanings of words and expecting the audience to catch on.

Sadly, in virtually all discussions of the meaning(s) of πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω, the actual semantic range of the word in 1st century *Koine* and the LXX has been neglected. When this is examined, however, clearly the words overwhelmingly point to the concept of "knowing something ahead of time," never do they clearly point to the concept of "determining something ahead of time," and only once does the verb seem to point to the idea of "intimate knowledge" (and even then "covenantal love" would seem to be out of the question). So long as "knowing something ahead of time" is not nonsensical (in the sense of "an absolute failure to communicate" rather than "stating something theologically obvious"), this meaning should be assumed for πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω in the NT contexts, until evidence to the contrary surfaces.[69]

None of this should make a difference for my audience's soteriology or theology proper. Whether or not God foreordains everything he foreknows does not alter the fact that *he does foreknow*, at least from a human standpoint.[70] Furthermore, whenever "foreknowledge" is discussed in close proximity to election, the apostles fail to clarify the relation between the two, and thus the whole issue of "conditional vs. unconditional election" may not be settled with any πρόγνωσις and προγινώσκω proof texts. That debate must choose a different battlefield. Yet once those debates are cleared out of the way, I trust that the expositor of Scripture will be allowed to celebrate divine prescience for its own sake, and that we may declare with Augustine, "But, let these perplexing debatings and disputations of the philosophers go on as they may, we, in order that we may confess the most high and true God Himself, do confess His will, supreme power, and prescience" (City of God 5.9, trans. Marcus Dods).

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[69] I must stress, then, that if this paper's thesis is to be refuted, it should be done on the basis of *linguistic*, rather than *theological*, evidence. Even something as simple as the discovery of two geographically disparate papyri that contain one example each of προγινώσκω unambiguously meaning "to choose or determine ahead of time" would be sufficient enough to seriously question my thesis.

[70] I say "from a human standpoint" because one's perspective on divine foreknowledge will depend on one's view of God and time, etc. Thus, for example, Rolland McCune states, "Technically, God has neither memory nor foreknowledge (prescience) because the whole of His knowledge is simultaneously and perpetually present. But, He is able to see in one instant all sequential events. In this sense, He knows the future" (*Prolegomena and the Doctrines of Scriptures, God, and Angels*, vol. 1 of *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity* [Allen Park, MI: DBTS, 2009], 229). Fortunately, it is beyond the scope of this paper to enter into a philosophical discussion about God, time, and how, exactly, he "foreknows."