

Did Jesus Cite the Apostolic Council? The Possible Intertextuality of Revelation 2:24 and Its Ramifications for Translation Style.

by Paul A. Himes¹

Revelation 2:24—Ἦμῖν δὲ λέγω, τοῖς λοιποῖς τοῖς ἐν Θυατείροις, ὅσοι οὐκ ἔχουσιν τὴν διδαχὴν ταύτην, οἵτινες οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὰ βαθέα τοῦ Σατανᾶ, ὡς λέγουσιν, οὐ βάλλω ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἄλλο βάρος²

1. Introduction

In John Walvoord's classic dispensational commentary on Revelation, one can find an interesting discussion on the phrase ὡς λέγουσιν in Rev 2:24–25. Drawing from Henry Alford, Walvoord argues that the phrase is an allusion to the Apostolic Council's statement in Acts 15:28; consequently, "The clause is therefore an introduction to the material which follows rather than a conclusion of the material that precedes."³ Walvoord is hardly unique in his conclusion, as we shall see, though his discussion is longer than most.

One is struck by an anomaly, however, when comparing the old Walvoord commentary with the posthumously revised edition. In the newer edition, the entire paragraph (10 lines) is completely missing, with no material substituted.⁴ It is as if it never existed. The reason seems to be that the newer edition switched primarily to the ESV as the base text.⁵ Since the ESV interprets ὡς λέγουσιν as referring to the previous clause ("who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan"), the omitted paragraph most likely would not make sense to any reader who lacks access to the Greek. In light of that, the editors cannot in any way be faulted for their decision to avoid confusion.

Yet this discrepancy between the old and new Walvoord raises three key questions. First, was the "original" Walvoord right? Could Rev 2:24 actually be an allusion to the Apostolic Council, with the ironic result that Jesus is citing the Apostle James instead of vice versa? Commentators are split on the issue (see chart 1), yet generally those opposed to the idea are more likely to offer concrete argumentation, while often those in favor simply take it for granted. In addition, virtually nobody discusses how the referent of ὡς λέγουσιν can impact interpretation

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² The Greek text here is taken from *Solid Rock Greek new Testament: Scholar's Edition*, eds. Joey McCollum and Stephen L. Brown (North Conway, NH: Solid Rock, 2018). The SRGNT notes a couple textual variants: (1.) The TR has Ἦμῖν . . . καὶ λοιποῖς . . . καὶ οἵτινες (thus the addition of the conjunction and the omission of one article); (2.) the TR and *f*²⁵ have βάλλω instead of βάλλω. Neither of these makes a difference for this paper's thesis.

In addition, it should be noted that unless a translation is specified, all translations from Greek are this writer's own.

³ John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 76.

⁴ John F. Walvoord, *Revelation*, rev. and ed. by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock, The John Walvoord Prophecy Commentaries (Chicago: Moody, 2011), 73. The preceding and following paragraphs have been slightly modified (mostly stylistically), but not significantly changed regarding content.

⁵ See page 10 of the preface. In personal correspondence via e-mail (6/11/19), one of the editors, Philip Rawley, stated that he had consulted various translations and had likely decided that the ESV "was a good rendering of the phrase," and that he had "to be selective in the editing due to length constraints without leaving out vital discussions," though he cannot be totally sure since the revision occurred quite a few years ago. I am grateful to Mr. Rawley for his helpful response, and nothing in this paper should be construed as a criticism of his or Mr. Hitchcock's editorial work.

at this point; indeed, some commentaries do not even see a connection.⁶ This paper will attempt to rectify that lacuna.

Chart 1: Commentaries on the possibility of an intertextual allusion to the Jerusalem Council

Favorable	Skeptical	Uncertain or Unclear
Beale, 1999: 266 Ford, 1975: 404, 406 Hengstenberg, 1851: 163–4 Leithart, 2018: 176 Morris, 1987: 73 Newell, 1935: 59–60 Prigent, 1981: 59 Ryrie, 1996: 31 Swete, 1977: 46 Tatford, 1985: 169 Walvoord, 1966: 76	Beasley-Murray ⁷ , 1974: 92 Beckwith, 1919: 469–70 Giesen, 1997: 121–22 Hort, 1908: 31 Koester, 2014: 301 ⁸ Lohmeyer, 1926: 27 Osborne, 2002: 163–4 Thomas, 1992: 229–30	Caird, 1966: 45 Keener, 2000: 135 ⁹ Ladd, 1972: 53 Mounce, 1998: 89 Patterson, 2012, 116–7 Phillips, 2017: 129 ¹⁰ Rohr, 1932: 85 Smalley, 2005: 77 Tenney, 1957: 63 ¹¹ Tiefenthal, 1892: 192 Walvoord, 2011: 73 Williamson, 2015: 80 fn20

Secondly, if “no other burden” were an allusion to the Apostolic Council, what is the point that Jesus is making? What would be the theological significance of such an allusion? Very little has been written on this.¹²

Finally, if a case can be made that ὥς λέγουσιν refers to what follows rather than precedes, what significance does this hold for translation style? In other words, should the phrase follow a more structurally literal placement in an English (or Japanese, or German, etc.) translation, if such were possible, retaining the positioning of the clause? Or should the translator make an interpretive decision and make it clear that it refers to what comes after (“no other burden”) or what precedes (“the deep things of satan”)? The answer, as we shall see, is not as clear as one might wish.

⁶ For example: F. J. A. Hort sees ὥς λέγουσιν as forward-pointing, but denies the likelihood that “burden” links to Acts 15:28 (Hort, *Apocalypse of St. John I–III*, 31). For him, ὥς λέγουσιν refers to how “these teachers professed the deliverance from superfluous burdens.” Yet this is utterly inexplicable, since it is *Jesus*, not the false teachers, who is promising freedom from any “other burden.” On the other hand, some commentators that do see a reference to Acts 15:28 nonetheless view ὥς λέγουσιν as backward-pointing (e.g., Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 265–66; Morris, *Revelation*, 72–3).

⁷ To be fair, Beasley-Murray does not even mention Acts 15. However, he clearly sees a different referent to “no other burden”; he states, “None, that is besides the traditions they received in their baptismal instruction (cf. Rom. 6:17, 1 Th. 4:1, 2 Th. 3: 6ff., and the common tradition reflected in the New Testament letters).” I will argue, however, that such a position is not irreconcilable with “no other burden” as an allusion to Acts 15:28.

⁸ However, Koester sees “similar concerns” with the Apostolic Council, without there being a direct reference.

⁹ Keener does mention Acts 15:28 in passing, however,

¹⁰ Phillips simply says that “we are reminded” of the Acts 15 context and notes the parallels of idolatry and immorality.

¹¹ Tenney references Acts 15:28–29 favorably, but merely says that Rev 2:24 “is reminiscent” of this passage.

¹² Though an unsurprising exception (given the *theological* focus of his commentary) is Leithart, *Revelation I–II*, 176–77.

Indeed, one thing this paper cannot do is make a *decisive* case for Rev 2:24 as an allusion to the Apostolic Council (though I hope the reader will, at the end, acknowledge that at least a *strong* case can be made), nor will this paper dare to presume to suggest a “right” way to translate ὥς λέγουσιν. Rather, the point of this paper is to demonstrate that because at least *some* sort of case can be made for an allusion to Acts 15:28, both the translator and the expositor owe the possibility some thought. When it comes to translation style, the benefits of ambiguity (keeping ὥς λέγουσιν between the two clauses that bracket it in the Greek) must be weighed against clarity, all in congruence with the translator’s *skopos* and the syntax of the target languages (some of which may not allow a “neutral” placement of ὥς λέγουσιν).

B. The Significance of ὥς λέγουσιν in Rev 2:24

1. Introductory Considerations

Revelation 2:24 contains a number of ambiguities. First of all, the expression “have not known the deep things of satan,” though clearly parallel with the phrase “this teaching” that precedes it, begs the question as to whether or not this was a slogan of the heretics (e.g., something like “We are learning the deep things of satan, of which we need not be afraid!”)¹³ or rather a “parody of the expression ‘deep things of God.’”¹⁴

Secondly, and central to this paper, the expression “no other burden” needs clarification: no other burden than what? Some commentators see the next verse as key: no other burden than to hold on to what they already have¹⁵, though this still begs the question: what is it they “have”?

Thirdly, and linked to the second point, what exactly does the expression ὥς λέγουσιν refer to? While one cannot deny the possibility it refers to a slogan of the heretics (“deep things of satan”), if Jesus meant ὥς λέγουσιν to point forward to the subsequent clause, then one is forced to consider an older background to “no other burden.” In other words, who, exactly, said “no other burden” before Jesus did? At this point the answer becomes obvious, simply because no other candidates exist: The Apostolic Council is the only group in the entirety of Scripture, within a context discussing abstaining from idolatry and immorality, to declare that they would place “no other burden” on their audience (Gentile Christians). This point is amplified by the relative rarity of βάρος in the Greek Bible: only 6x in the NT (Matt 20:12; Acts 15:28; 2Cor 4:17; Gal 6:2; 1Thess 2:6; and Rev 2:24) and 3x in the LXX, all in the apocryphal books (Judith 7:4; 2Mac 9:10; Sir 13:2).

A neglected corollary of this question is that if ὥς λέγουσιν actually does *not* refer to the “deep things of satan,” then one is forced to question whether or not any of the Thyatira heretics were actually saying something like that (either “deep things of God,” which Jesus parodies, or actually “deep things of satan”). Could not Jesus simply be making a derisive comment about the content of their teachings *without* reference to one of their slogans? To claim that somebody is going after “the deep things of satan” is, after all, an obvious rebuke. Having said that, one must also not ignore the possibility that ὥς λέγουσιν was meant to simultaneously point forward *and*

¹³ E.g., Rohr, *Der Hebräerbrief und die Geheime Offenbarung*, 85; Thomas, *Revelation 1–7*, 228; Trench, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches*, 154.

¹⁴ So Koester, *Revelation*, 300; cf. Patterson, *Revelation*, 117 Smalley, *Revelation to John*, 76. A thorough comparison of the two views is given by Prigent, *L’Apocalypse*, 59–60. It should be noted that a number of commentators see a gnostic or proto-gnostic background to “the deep things of satan” (e.g., Lohmeyer, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, 27; Smalley, *Revelation to John*, 76; Tiefenthal, *Apokalypse des hl. Johannes*, 192. Hort (*Apocalypse of St. John I–III*, 31) makes note of what “later Gnostics” believed but is careful to avoid anachronism.

¹⁵ E.g., Giesen, *Offenbarung des Johannes*, 122; Mounce, *Book of Revelation*, 89; Thomas, *Revelation 1–7*, 230.

backward, a deliberate ambiguity that would simultaneously contrast what “they (the false teachers) say” with what “they (the Apostles) say.” Space prohibits an examination of this third possibility, however,

2. The Positioning of ὥς λέγουσιν and Its Referent

This section will explore the following question: Is ὥς λέγουσιν more likely to refer to that which precedes or that which follows? We will examine that question in the following manner: 1. A general examination of the NT, LXX, and Josephus via Accordance with the following command line: “ὥς <FOLLOWED BY> <WITHIN 2 Words> λέγω”¹⁶; and 2. A more specific examination of the exact phrase ὥς λέγουσιν within the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (an examination which will, of necessity, be selective).

In the New Testament, running this search yields 13 hits across 16 verses. Ignoring those hits where ὥς has no clear relation to λέγω, we end up with the following results: Mark 14:72¹⁷, Luke 20:37; Luke 22:61; John 18:6; Acts 11:16; 1Cor 10:15; 2 Cor 6:13; and Heb 7:9.

Out of those relevant texts, both 1Cor 10:15 and 2Cor 6:13 seem to deal broadly with what the author is speaking of throughout the general context, simultaneously pointing forward and backward. Of the remaining texts, however, *not a single time* does ὥς + λέγω point backwards; rather, it always points forward. For example, in Acts 11:16, ὥς ἔλεγεν points forward to the next phrase, which refers to what Jesus had said in the past, a close parallel to what we are suggesting might be the case in Rev 2:24.

In the LXX, that same search surprisingly garners only one hit, LXX Gen 44:10. In this text, ὥς λέγετε does not introduce a direct quote as does Acts 11:16, but it does introduce the general content of something Joseph’s brothers had just said. Nonetheless, rhetorically ὥς λέγετε still points forward—the reiteration of the general content of Judah and company’s statement *follows* ὥς λέγετε in the discourse structure.

In Josephus, however, the situation becomes more complicated. There are clear examples of both backward-looking and forward-looking ὥς + λέγω clauses.¹⁸ For the former, *Antiq* 7.91 has ὥς Μωϋσῆς εἶπε, “as Moses said,” clearly referring to the previous clause (the topic of building a temple for God). Similarly, in *Antiq* 16.182 ὥς ἐλέγετο points backwards to the previous clause, detailing what happened to two of Herod’s guards when they intruded on the sepulcher of David and Solomon.

Yet in *War* 7.134, the expression ἀλλ’ ὥς ἂν εἴποι τις clearly points forward to a proverbial expression ῥέοντα ποταμόν (“but rather as certain people say, ‘flowing [like] a river’”). Similarly, in *Apion* 1.167, Josephus writes, δηλοῖ δ’ ὥς ἂν εἴποι τις ἐκ τῆς Ἑβραίων μεθερμηνευόμενος διαλέκτου δῶρον θεοῦ (“And [Theophrastus speaking of Corban, which] declares, as certain of the Hebrews say, being interpreted out of [their] language, ‘A gift of God’”). Clearly here “as they [the Hebrews] say” points forwards to the proper meaning of “Corban,” that something is “a gift of [*or*: for] God.”

¹⁶ Accordance 11.2 (Oaktree Software, 2016). I have deliberately set the command line to “within 2 words” rather than “within 1 word” to allow for the possibility of an article or noun or post-positive δέ being positioned before the verb. Also, it is important with such command lines in Accordance to specify the search across “book” instead of “verse,” since otherwise relevant hits may be omitted due to the verse divisions.

¹⁷ For Mark 14:72, a textual variant (the replacing of ὥς with a relative pronoun) means that not all Greek editions will contain this reference.

¹⁸ The relevant hits are: *Antiq* 7.91 [alt. 7.4.4], 8.97 [8.3.9], 15.387 [15.11.1], 16.182 [16.7.1], 16.313 [16.10.3], 18.17 [18.1.4], 19.123 [19.1.15]; *War* 7.134 [7.5.5], 7.404 [7.9.2]; *Life* 355 [65]; *Apion* 1.7 [1.2], 1.167 [1.22].

Next, we will take a brief look at the exact expression ὥς λέγουσιν within broader 1st century usage via the *TLG*.¹⁹ The results support both possibilities. We will provide here a few examples that demonstrate that ὥς λέγουσιν can point either forward or backward, depending on the context.

First, ὥς λέγουσιν can point forward. Ptolemaeus the Grammarian, in his dictionary, when distinguishing between the terms ἀποκήρυκτος and ἐκποίητος, closes out his entry by stating, “ὥς λέγουσιν «εἰσποίητος γέγονεν».”²⁰ Another example: in Plutarch’s *Themistocles* 1.1, he begins the book with a reference to Themistocles’ mother, and what was commonly known about her²¹, indicated by ὥς λέγουσιν and followed immediately by a quotation: “Ἀβρότονον Θρήισσα γυνὴ γένος ἄλλα τεκέσθαι τὸν μέγαν Ἑλλήσιν φημι Θεμιστοκλέα.” This second example is key, since we see that ὥς λέγουσιν can refer to a saying that is, at least in theory, well-circulated and accessible by the author’s audience.

On the other hand, as evidence that ὥς λέγουσιν can point backward, we see that Plutarch, in *Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat*²² 15.C, when discussing the effects of eating the octopus (or cuttlefish), states, “. . . φαντασίας παραχώδεις καὶ ἀλλοκότους δεχόμενον, ὥς λέγουσιν,” where clearly the words before ὥς λέγουσιν refer to the negative affects one can receive from eating it, negative affects which are quite well known, “as they say.” Similarly, in *Pericles* 13.13 (alt. 13.7), when discussing how Pericles set up a statue of Athena Hygieia near the altar of the local goddess, Plutarch notes that the local goddesses’ altar was there first, “ὅς καὶ πρότερον ἦν,” followed by ὥς λέγουσιν, indicating that this was common knowledge.

As we have seen, the specific expression ὥς λέγουσιν in *Koine* Greek can definitely refer to a well-known expression or piece of knowledge, but structurally can point either backward or forward. When examining the broader construction of ὥς + λέγω within the New Testament and LXX, however, we do see that it is more likely to point forward.

3. The Case for οὐ βάλλω ἐφ’ ὕμῃς ἄλλο βάρος as an Allusion to Acts 15:28.

The previous section has demonstrated that the expression ὥς + λέγω can point either forwards or backwards, though it is more likely in the NT and LXX to point forwards. At this point, then, we must examine the lexical and contextual links between Jesus’ letter to Thyatira and the Apostolic Council. Here, in order to avoid “parallelomania,” we will attempt to use Samuel Sandmen’s classic article as a guide.²³ Sandmel, concerned with the rise of “extravagance” when it came to positing literary parallels to Scripture, argued that one must be able to demonstrate specificity and context.²⁴ In other words, overly-generic parallels are not true parallels, and supposed parallels must contain similar contexts.

In light of that, we begin by noting the specific lexical links between Rev 2 and Acts 15 in chart 2, while acknowledging that this will not be enough to establish an allusion without

¹⁹ Utilizing the online *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (University of California, 2013), <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/index.php>. I performed a “textual search” for the specific string “ὥς λέγουσιν,” and then focused more narrowly on texts in the 1st century AD.

²⁰ Ptolemaeus, *De differentia vocabulorum* 32. It is not certain exactly when Ptolemaeus the Grammarian wrote; *TLG* lists a range of 2nd century BC to 2nd century AD.

²¹ Interestingly, Bernadotte Perrin’s old Loeb translation attributes the quote to “her epitaph,” though that is not explicitly stated in the Greek text.

²² In English, *How the Young Man Should Study Poetry*.

²³ Samuel Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *JBL* 81.1 (March 1962): 1–13. Note that Sandmel popularized, but did not coin, the term “parallelomania.”

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

studying the context. Nonetheless, the lexical links in of themselves are still significant, especially once the reader is reminded of the rarity of βάρος in the NT and LXX, noted above.

Chart 2²⁵:

The Apostolic Council (Acts 15)	Jesus' letter to the church at Thyatira (Revelation 2)
v. 28—μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν βάρος, πλὴν τῶν ἐπ' ἀνάγκης τούτων	Rev 2:24b–25a—οὐ βάλλω ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἄλλο βάρος, πλὴν ὃ ἔχετε κρατήσατε

Yet in order for Jesus' statement to make sense as an intertextual allusion, the *contexts* must be similar. Significantly, both Jesus' letter to the Thyatira Christians and the Apostolic Council are concerned with Christian ethics, more narrowly *Gentile* Christian ethics. Furthermore, the Apostolic Council prohibits *immorality* and *idolatry* (the latter is narrowed a bit in v. 29 as εἰδωλοθύτος, *food offered to idols*), the very two issues that Jesus himself focuses on in Rev 2:24. In addition, both the Apostolic Council and Jesus himself in his letter see their message as mediated through the Spirit. Thus we have three points of contact within the broader context of each text, of which the first two are especially significant.

Chart 3:

The Apostolic Council	Letter to Thyatira
Acts 15:20—ἀλλὰ ἐπιστεῖλαι αὐτοῖς τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων καὶ τῆς πορνείας καὶ τοῦ πνικτοῦ καὶ τοῦ αἵματος. [cf. 15:29 and 21:25, εἰδωλοθύτων . . . καὶ πορνείας and εἰδωλόθυτον . . . καὶ πορνείαν, respectively]	Rev 2:20b–21—καὶ διδάσκει καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς ἐμοὺς δούλους πορνεῦσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα. Καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτῇ χρόνον ἵνα μετανοήσῃ, καὶ οὐ θέλει μετανοῆσαι ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς.
Acts 15:28a—Ἐδοξεν γὰρ τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι, καὶ ἡμῖν, . . .	Rev 2:29—Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

In light of this, it is inexplicable that Osborne could argue that “. . . there is no hint in the context [of Rev 2] of apostolic teaching.”²⁶

Four key points can thus be made in defense of an allusion to Acts 15: 1. At least a significant likelihood exists that ὡς λέγουσιν points forward rather than backwards in Rev 2:24, which would necessitate looking for somebody or some group that had previously made a similar point to that which Jesus made; 2. It cannot be proved conclusively that “the deep things of satan” is either a statement by the heretics or Jesus' parody of the statement, since this assumes precisely the point under consideration, whether or not ὡς λέγουσιν points forward or backward; 3. Key points of Rev 2:24–25 resemble Acts 15:28 lexically; 4. The activities that Jesus wishes the Thyatira Christians to avoid are identical to two of the four practices that the Apostolic Council wishes Gentile Christians to avoid.²⁷

²⁵ Once again, I am following the text of the *SRGNT*. There are a few textual variants, but none that affect my argument.

²⁶ Osborne, *Revelation*, 163.

²⁷ And, as noted below, “things strangled” and “blood” are probably both closely linked to εἰδωλόθυτος.

4. Counterpoints

A thorough lexical argument in support of “no other burden” as a reference to Acts 15:28 has hitherto been lacking. For those skeptical of the idea, however, Isbon T. Beckwith’s argument takes pride of place and has clearly influenced others (most prominently Osborne and Thomas). Beckwith states,

After ἄλλος with a negative, instead of the usual construction *i.e.* the gen., ἢ, πλήν with the gen., etc., an independent clause is sometimes found introduced by πλήν, . . . That gives the simplest explanation of the present case; *i.e. other than* that contained in the clause introduced by πλήν. *Burden*, then, is not the proper rendering of βάρος, which, like its adj. βαρύς, does not always denote something to be burdensome, but often what is *weighty*, or *important*, . . .²⁸

Regarding the use πλήν, Beckwith gives key examples from older literature, to which might be added both Mark 12:32 and Josephus, *War* 1.451 [alt. 1.23.2] where we see examples of πλήν introducing a phrase (though not a clause) that interacts directly with ἄλλος a few words earlier.

Beckwith’s argument must not be glossed over quickly, and it is a pity that in the nearly 100 years since no commentator has considered the Greek syntax here as closely as he has. Nonetheless, Beckwith’s argument cannot overturn the strong possibility of an allusion to the Apostolic Council for two reasons. First, granting Beckwith’s syntactical argument that πλήν probably or at least possibly introduces a clause to contrast with ἄλλο βάρος does not exclude the possibility of an intertextual allusion. In other words, as we shall argue, “no other burden” may simultaneously evoke memories of the Apostolic Council’s decision (that Gentiles are not under the Torah) while at the same time reminding the Christians at Thyatira that they are nonetheless under Jesus’ and the Apostles’ teachings (“what you have”).²⁹ Like the Gentile believers in Acts 15, the Anatolian Christians Jesus addresses in Acts 2 simultaneously face the temptation of libertarian license (Rev 2:14) but also potential persecution from Torah-observant Jews (Rev 2:9). A reminder of the Apostolic Council would be very relevant at multiple levels, as will be argued in the next section.

Secondly, Beckwith does not at all consider whether ὡς λέγουσιν is more likely to point forward or backward, which should certainly factor into one’s interpretation. If it points forward, then as noted one has no other option but to suggest that Jesus is referring to the Apostolic Council. Once again, there is no reason then why “no other burden except” cannot simultaneously function as an allusion to Acts 15:28 while linking to “what you have” (*i.e.*, Apostolic doctrine).³⁰

From a different angle, Osborne brings up the objection that “. . . one must wonder what the ‘no other burden might be’—the other two elements of the apostolic decree, abstaining from blood and the meat of strangled animals?”³¹ Oddly enough, some have indeed argued this very

²⁸ Beckwith, *Apocalypse of John*, 470.

²⁹ Regarding this latter point, see Beasley-Murray, *Book of Revelation*, 92; and Morris, *Revelation*, 73 (“nothing is to be added to the revelation given in Scripture”).

³⁰ I feel that Beasley-Murray goes a bit too far when he sees in the phrase “the traditions they received in their baptismal instruction (cf. Rom. 6:17, 1 Th. 4:1, 2 Th. 3:6ff., and the common tradition reflected in the New Testament letters)” (*Book of Revelation*, 92). Nonetheless, that “what you have” refers to the broad category of apostolic teaching seems a likely suggestion, since the context of Jesus’ letter to Thyatira deals with *teaching* (v. 20, διδασκω; v. 24, διδασχί).

³¹ Osborne, *Revelation*, 163.

point.³² This would, however, bring up the odd situation of Jesus saying, “Do not fornicate or go after idolatrous perversions, but you may eat food with blood in it and deal with things strangled” (whatever that latter point may be), thus undermining both the Apostolic decree and the Noahic covenant. However, this is by no means a necessary interpretation.³³ To the contrary, one could make a strong case that both “blood” and “that which has been strangled” are subsumed under the expression “that which has been offered to idols,” and left out for the sake of conciseness.³⁴ If that is the case, then there is no reason to assume that Jesus’ “what you have” would not also include James’ “these necessary things” from Acts 15:28. In the end, “Christ is placing on them no other burden (βάρος) than what was placed on gentile Christians in general by the apostolic decree of Acts 15:28.”³⁵

Finally, Thomas argues, “Similarities to the earlier Jerusalem decree could be accidental. (Hort; Beckwith; Mounce). The fact is, the faithful in Thyatira were not perplexed because of a restriction of their Christian freedom by the earlier conciliar action. This was probably the furthest thing in their minds (Beckwith).”³⁶ Yet what is at stake in Jesus’ letter to the church at Thyatira is *the boundaries of Christian behavior*. Since Jesus has had to forcefully remind them that all forms of immorality and idolatry are off limits, surely it makes sense to remind them that the limits are set by the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles (“what you have [received]”), rather than the Torah. After all, church history has taught us that the reaction against licentiousness can quickly turn to legalism. To reiterate: a clear delineation of the ethical boundaries (Apostolic doctrine rather than Torah) is certainly appropriate in this context as a reminder to Anatolian Gentile Christians.

C. The Background of the Apostolic Council and Its Relevance for Rev 2:24

To further explore that question of *why* the Apostolic Council is relevant for Jesus’ letter to Thyatira, a brief examination into the background and theology of the Apostolic Council is necessary. The Council originated in reaction to what appears to be two different groups³⁷ in Acts 15:1 and 5 united by a similar message: the necessity of Torah for Gentile Christians. “Those from Judea . . . apparently meant that one *cannot* be a Christian without first becoming a Jew because the Kingdom of God is inseparably bound to Israel as a race, culture, and religion.”³⁸ Consequently, what was at stake is precisely what it means to be a true Christian. Circumcision (as a hendiadys for the entire Torah) was being demanded both for salvation and for sanctification. The question, then, was this: does one have to be a Jew to be a Christian?

In response, the Apostolic Council clarifies and solidifies the true nature of Gentile Christianity. James declares “that God is doing something new in raising up the church; it is an

³² E.g., Swete (*Revelation*, 46) states, “The rest of the prohibitions imposed in the year 49–50 (ἀπέχεσθαι . . . αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν) are not reimposed. . . . Contrast this wise concession with the exacting spirit of the Pharisees: Mt. xxiii. 4 . . .”

³³ Pace Thomas (*Revelation 1–7*, 229), who argues that if “no other burden” is a reference to Acts 15 (a point which he contests), then “With this identification of *baros*, the adjective *allo* (‘another’) points to the other two parts of the apostolic decree, . . .”

³⁴ On the link between the three, see Bock, *Acts*, 505–06.

³⁵ Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 266.

³⁶ Thomas, *Revelation 1–11*, 229.

³⁷ On this point, see Hyung Dae Park, “Drawing Ethical Principles from the Process of the Jerusalem Council: A New Approach to Acts 15:4–29,” *TynB* 61.2 (2010): 275.

³⁸ J. Julius Scott, Jr., “The Church’s Progress to the Council of Jerusalem according to the Book of Acts,” *BBR* 7 (1997): 219.

event of the last days and therefore the old rules of the Jewish religion no longer apply: . . .”³⁹ Indeed, the Apostolic Council, with its central place in Acts, “forcefully highlights a theological message, that God’s purpose for the Gentiles is salvation without circumcision.”⁴⁰ Thus, “When Acts 5, and the Apostolic Decree in particular, are examined in relation to the whole of Luke-Acts, it becomes apparent that for Luke another ethic, one based on the messianic status of Jesus, has replaced the Mosaic law as the imperative which is incumbent on both the believing community and the world at large.”⁴¹

Luke assigns the Apostolic Council a pivotal role in his narrative, and thus its significance for Gentile Christianity as a whole must not be minimized. Furthermore, the decrees of the Apostolic Council “were not merely suggestions.”⁴² To the contrary, “The form of the words that is used, ‘it has been resolved,’ [Acts 15:9] is authoritative enough: it was a form widely used in the wording of imperial and other government decrees.”⁴³ F. F. Bruce’s statement here is supported by the use of the 1st person κρίνω in Nebuchadnezzar’s decree of LXX Daniel 3:96 [English 3:29].

Yet despite declaring the Gentile Christians to be free from the Torah, James adds four behaviors that they are to avoid. The four prohibitions in Acts 15:20 are “idolatrous pollutions, fornication, that which is strangled, and blood.” These are reiterated in v. 29 with two changes: (1.) the substitution of εἰδωλοθύτων (“things offered to idols”) for τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων, and (2.) the alteration of the order so that “fornication” comes last.⁴⁴

A divergence of opinion exists on what, precisely, the four prohibitions are based on. Most scholars would either argue the Noahic covenant of Gen 9:4⁴⁵ or rules for Jewish proselytes given throughout Leviticus 17:7–19:26.⁴⁶ In addition, of those four prohibitions, πνικτός (“that which is strangled”) has especially caused difficulty for interpreters.⁴⁷ The best solution,

³⁹ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1980), 253.

⁴⁰ Timothy Wiarda, “The Jerusalem Council and the Theological Task,” *JETS* 46.2 (June 2003): 245.

⁴¹ M. A. Seifrid, “Jesus and the Law in Acts,” *JSNT* 30 (1987): 40.

⁴² Charles H. Savelle, “A Reexamination of the Prohibition in Acts 15,” *BibSac* 161 (Oct-Dec 2004): 466.

⁴³ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 299 (note that Bruce clearly sees this passage referred to later by Jesus’ letter to Thyatira); cf. also Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: 15:1–23:35*, vol. 3 of 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 2259.

⁴⁴ The list occurs a third time in Acts, in 21:25 when James expresses concern over the rumors that Paul may be teaching *Jews* to abandon the Torah (v. 21); “fornication” is kept in the last position, but “blood” now precedes “that which has been strangled.”

⁴⁵ E.g., Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 296; Keener, *Acts*, 3:2263 (Keener notes the strong Rabbinic tradition that Gentiles would be held accountable for the “Noahic laws”); Zachary K. Dawson, “The Book of Acts and *Jubilee* in Dialogue; A Literary-Intertextual Analysis of the Noahide Laws in Acts 15 and 21,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 13 (2017): 25, 39–40 (and assumed throughout the article); and Todd R. Hanneken, “Moses Has His Interpreters: Understanding the Legal Exegesis in Acts 15 from the Precedent in *Jubilees*,” *CBQ* 77 (2015): 705 (interestingly, Hanneken argues that Acts 15 draws on the Noahic prohibitions as further “explicated by *Jubilees*”; Dawson’s article pushes back at Hanneken’s thesis).

⁴⁶ E.g., Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 506; Stewart Custer, *Witnesses to Christ: A Commentary on Acts* (Greenville, SC: BJU, 2000), 222; and thoroughly defended by Terrane Callan, “The Background of the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25),” *CBQ* 55.2 (April 1993): 284–97.

⁴⁷ A. J. M. Wedderburn states, “In any consideration of the purpose and meaning of the Decree the vexed problem of the meaning of πνικτός looms very large” (“The ‘Apostolic Decree’: Tradition and Redaction,” *NovT* 35.4 [1993]: 379).

however, sees this is as somehow linked to both “blood” and pagan cultic ritual, since an animal killed via strangling retains its blood.⁴⁸

Charles Savelle has provided a helpful survey of the strengths and weaknesses of both the “Noahic” view and the “Leviticus” view of the prohibitions, as well as the view that “rabbinic teaching” may have formed the background of the prohibitions. Savelle ultimately concludes, “Rather than seeking a single source of the prohibitions, it seems preferable to see each of them as contributing something to the origins of the prohibitions.”⁴⁹ In addition, Savelle argues that ultimately all four prohibitions are linked to pagan cultic activity, with the result that “Gentile Christians were being asked to refrain from activities that even *resembled* pagan worship, thereby avoiding even the appearance of evil.”⁵⁰ The fact that in each list (Acts 15:20, 15:29, and 21:25), despite other variations, either τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων or εἰδωλοθύτων always comes first may support this point.

If Savelle is generally correct, then one can understand why “blood” and “that which has been strangled” are not mentioned in Jesus’ letter to the church at Thyatira. It is not that Jesus is repudiating two out of the four prohibitions; it is simply that both are subsumed under the broader term εἰδωλόθυτα (Rev 2:20), of which Jesus disapproves (the context of cultic offerings are the most likely places that one would eat an animal with blood still in it). It was simply not necessary to mention them again once the broader category of “things offered to idols” was condemned. One may assume that Jesus’ reference to “what you have” in Rev 2:25 may include the Apostolic teaching regarding “these necessary things” (Acts 15:28).

We cannot, of course, discount the original context of the Apostolic Council’s decree nor fail to consider how the state of the church might have changed in 60 years. In Acts 15, “The idea seems to be that keeping the prohibitions would be spiritually and relationally beneficial. By keeping the prohibitions, Gentile Christians would be in harmony with the Holy Spirit, the Jerusalem church, and other Jewish believers.”⁵¹ Most likely Jewish-Gentile relations *within the church* were less of an issue in AD 90 than earlier, since by then surely the church was predominantly Gentile and quickly approaching the “parting of ways.”⁵²

Having said that, the significance of the Apostolic Decree (including the prohibitions) for the later church must not be downplayed. At stake is not merely cordial relations between Jews and Gentiles, but rather the ethical boundaries of Christian conduct. James and company decisively declared that for Gentiles such boundaries are *not* set by the Torah, but rather by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The four prohibitions remind Gentile Christians of the fact that

⁴⁸ See *Acts*, 505–6; Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 296; Savelle, “Reexamination of the Prohibition in Acts 15,” 456–7. Also, Wedderburn (“Apostolic Decree,” 387–88) helpfully discusses how, in light of ancient Greek magical texts “the soul of an offering strangled is offered to demons intact.” In other words, there is demonic association in the act of strangling an animal. Finally, for a minority position that “things strangled” refers to the pagan practice of smothering babies that had been exposed to die, see David Instone-Brewer, “Infanticide and the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15,” *JETS* 55.2 (June 2009): 301–21.

⁴⁹ Savelle, “Reexamination of the Prohibition in Acts 15,” 461.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 464–5; cf. 468.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 467.

⁵² The fact that the Apostolic Decree was concerned with relations between Jews and Gentiles is reinforced by James’ odd statement in Acts 15:21 (see Marshall, *Acts*, 254). Interestingly, a textual variant arose in v. 20 in later manuscripts, demonstrating that the later church forgot the original Torah-oriented context of the four prohibitions (by interpreting “blood” as a reference to murder, for example). See the helpful discussions in Marshall, *Acts*, 253–4 fn1 and Savelle, “Reexamination of the Prohibition in Acts 15,” 450.

anything linked to immorality and idolatry is off-limits.⁵³ The Gentile Christians did not resist James' prohibitions, and they did not consider them "overly burdensome"; to the contrary, they "rejoiced" (15:31) over and embraced them.⁵⁴

Decades later, the church at Thyatira faces its own issues that necessitate a reminder of the Apostolic Council. The city of Thyatira, founded by Seleucus I of the Seleucid dynasty, "was situated in the mouth of a long vale which extends north and south connecting the Hermus and Caicos Valleys."⁵⁵ Thyatira, though generally "average" compared to the other Anatolian cities Jesus addresses, was nonetheless marked out by the prominence of bronze-working guilds.⁵⁶ Jesus' self-description as ὁ ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρὸς καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλακολιβάνῳ seems specifically tailored to deal with a church existing in a city marked by the presence of bronze-working guilds.⁵⁷ Even Jesus' self-designation as "the Son of God" (2:18, surprisingly unique in Revelation) may be meant as a counter to Apollo Tyrimnaeus' designation as the "son of Zeus," a god who may have been connected with the trade guilds.⁵⁸

The presence of these guilds explains the pressure that would have been felt by many Christians to theologically compromise; guild feasts were not neutral from a religious standpoint, but rather the place where syncretism dominated⁵⁹, a syncretism which Jezebel strongly encouraged just like her OT counterpart.⁶⁰ Consequently, one must not be surprised by the appearance of εἰδωλόθυτος in Jesus' rebuke (since "the feasts of such bodies as trade-guilds" would have naturally included food offered to idols).⁶¹ In addition, mixed in with all this would be the constant specter of the imperial cult.⁶²

Indeed, it is quite possible that Anatolia in general and Thyatira specifically offered a truer test of the Gentile Christian's ability to cling to the Apostolic Council's decree than Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia (Acts 15:23), especially during the reign of Domitian. While Jewish-Gentile relations *within* the church were no longer as significant an issue, the council was about more than that: it "also determined the limits of participation in Greco-Roman culture and worship," limits that Jezebel was determined to stretch.⁶³ Hemer aptly summarizes the significance of Jesus' response to Jezebel:

⁵³ One should also remember that, years before the Torah was given to Moses, the Lord himself established a reason for not eating blood: the blood contains the life of the flesh (Gen 9:4).

⁵⁴ Savelle, "Reexamination of the Prohibition in Acts 15," 466, 467.

⁵⁵ W. M. Ramsay, *The letters to the Seven Churches of Asia and Their Place in the Plan of the Apocalypse* (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1905), 316–7.

⁵⁶ See the helpful discussions in Ramsay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, 329; and Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, The Biblical Resource Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 108–17.

⁵⁷ Ramsay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, 329.

⁵⁸ Hemer, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, 116; Osborne, *Revelation*, 157.

⁵⁹ Hemer, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, 111, 120.

⁶⁰ Allan J. McNicol, *The Conversion of the Nations in Revelation*, LBTS 438 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 107–8.

⁶¹ Hemer, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, 120; cf. Osborne, *Revelation*, 156–7.

⁶² In just a few short years, Pliny the Younger (governor of the region of Bythinia and Pontus in Asia Minor) will utilize worship of the emperor's image as a test of whether or not one was a true Christian (see *Letters* 10.96–97).

⁶³ Leithart, *Revelation 1–11*, 176.

Presumably Jezebel argued that a Christian might join a guild and participate in its feasts without thereby compromising his faith. He was initiated into a superior wisdom. He knew the idol was nothing and he could not be defiled by that which did not exist. Pauline phrases insisting on the Christian's liberty from the law might be pressed into service: our letter replies in the terms of the Apostolic Decree to which Paul, according to Acts, had assented. This was just such a *modus vivendi* as was required, but Jezebel's version contravened its accepted principles. The local situation favoured the accommodation of incompatible beliefs and practices: the letter insists on individual devotion to a Lord who searches the hearts of men and demands a consistency of life.⁶⁴

In light of that, it is worth asking: in an era when the entire New Testament canon was probably not yet accessible to all churches, what could Jesus refer to that would directly deal with Jezebel's excesses while also reminding the Thyatiran church of their continuity with the rest of apostolic Christianity that sprung out of the events recorded in Acts? The answer seems obvious: The Apostolic Council had already set the boundaries of what was acceptable for Gentile Christians, and as far as Jesus is concerned, those in Thyatira would do well to remember it.

D. ὥς λέγουσιν and Translation Style

We now return to the original issue that prompted the writing of this paper: an entire paragraph was omitted in Walvoord's revised commentary apparently due to a change in the base translation. This raises significant questions as to the interplay of interpretation and translation, which will be briefly explored.

As noted on the chart below, the vast majority of translations consulted prefer to see ὥς λέγουσιν as modifying that which precedes it.

Chart 4: Bible translations on ὥς λέγουσιν—backward pointing or forward pointing?

Geneva: "neither have known the deepness of Satan (as they speak) I will put upon you . . ."	Ambiguous [?]
KJV: "which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you . . ."	Backward (as indicated by the semi-colon)
NKJV: "who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you . . ."	Ambiguous
RSV: "what some call the deep things of Satan"	Backward
ESV: "what some call the deep things of Satan" ⁶⁵	Backward
NASB: "who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place . . ."	Backward
NIV: "Satan's so-called deep secrets"	Backward

⁶⁴ Hemer, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, 123.

⁶⁵ Ironically, the ESV has prided itself on retaining ambiguity when possible, though as we see here it is inconsistent (other inconsistencies are pointed out by Rodney J. Decker, "The English Standard Version: A Review Article," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 8.2 [Fall 2004]: 26–27, though I would note that I see much more value in Leyland Ryken's book *The Word of God in English* than Decker does in his review, and that like Decker, I have much respect for the ESV).

NLT: “‘deeper truths,’ as they call them—depths of Satan, actually”	Backward
NET: “the so-called ‘deep secrets of Satan’”	Backward
Douay-Rheims: “who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will not put . . .”	Ambiguous
Louis Segond: “les profondeurs de Satan, comme ils les appellent, je vous dis:”	Backward
Gute Nachricht (1997): “und die so genannten ‘Tiefen des Satans’”	Backward
Luther-Übersetzung (1984): “und nicht erkannt haben die Tiefen des Satans wie sie sagen: Ich will nicht noch eine Last auf euch werfen;”	Probably backwards ⁶⁶
Shinkai Yaku: “ <i>karera no iu satan no fukai tokoro . . .</i> ”	Backward

To take ὡς λέγουσιν as referring to what precedes is certainly a legitimate interpretive option. As demonstrated, ὡς λέγουσιν can point backwards or forwards, and it is no sin to make an interpretive decision in such cases, though this writer would have preferred that more English translations had been willing to “break the mold” and interpret it as pointing forward (e.g., “As they said, I will place on you no other burden . . .”).

However, since the Greek expression is somewhat ambiguous, a strong case can be made that a translation should strive to keep the ambiguity, thus allowing for either interpretation (or perhaps both simultaneously).⁶⁷ To a certain degree, one could call such a translation that retains the original positioning of ὡς λέγουσιν a more *literal* translation, though this should not necessarily be viewed as a commentary on the value, especially moral value, of any translation.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, a translation which can retain the *structure* of the original Greek, especially when altering the discourse structure might produce a different meaning or eliminate a possible meaning, might be viewed as preferable to those which do not.

⁶⁶ I am grateful to my German-speaking friends David and Gabi Barnhart for help analyzing Luther’s translation here. Most likely the “wie sie sagen” points backwards, and that which comes after the colon would then be the content of the point Jesus is making to them.

⁶⁷ A point ably defended by C. John Collins, “What the Reader Wants and the Translator Can Give; First John as a Test Case,” in *Translating Truth: The Case for Essentially Literal Bible Translation*, eds. Wayne Grudem, et al (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 99–101.

⁶⁸ That “literal/literalness” is still a useful term (*if properly defined*) in translation studies can be seen by its use in secular translation studies such as Giuseppe Palumbo, *Key Terms in Translation Studies* (London: Continuum 2009): 49, 70; and Katharine Reisch and Hans J. Vermeer, *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action: Skopos Theory Explained*, trans. Christiane Nord (Manchester, UK: St. Jerome, 2013), 30. We would, however, do well to remember Eugene A. Nida’s statement that “The differences between literal and free translating are, however, no mere positive-negative dichotomy, but rather a polar distinction with many grades between them (*Toward a Science of Translation: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964], 24).

Palumbo (*Key Terms*, 49) appropriately notes that “‘Literal’ is an ambiguous term”; nonetheless, Palumbo goes on to state, “Literal translation is a translation strategy or technique involving a choice of TL [Target Language] equivalents that stay close to the form of the original while ensuring grammaticality in the TL . . .” (*Key Terms*, 49).

Yet herein lies the problem. It is not at all clear as to whether or not the potential referential ambiguity of ὡς λέγουσιν can be retained in any language, including English, without sacrificing something else, such as clarity. Translation often involves a tradeoff.⁶⁹ In English, setting off “as they say” with commas (“ . . . deep things of satan, as they say, I will put upon you . . .”) might retain the referential ambiguity, but this writer is under the impression it would probably favor a reading that pointed to “deep things of satan.” In Japanese, on the other hand, to put *karera no iu* (or *karera no iu tōri*) in an ambiguous position would, I believe, be flat-out impossible; the translator must clarify what the expression refers to, or risk an utterly nonsensical rendering.

Yet even if ambiguity is achievable, one must still ask whether or not stylistic smoothness should trump interpretational ambiguity. In other words, is retaining *both* interpretive options preferable if the result is a slightly more awkward style? The answer is not clear, and will ultimately depend on the *skopos* of the translator.⁷⁰ In other words, does the goal of the translator place more emphasis on readability or on interpretational options? Any critique of a translation, then, must take into account the translator’s *skopos* and how consistently he or she follows that stated *skopos*.

If ambiguity is impossible, then obviously an interpretive decision must be made.⁷¹ At this point, Rev 2:24 provides an excellent case study as to why caution should be exercised. An overly-hasty assumption that ὡς λέγουσιν goes with what precedes may cause the reader (and, by extension, the preacher’s congregation) to miss another layer of theological significance, namely the continuity between Jesus and his apostles. Once again, the point of this paper is not to audaciously “determine” the right translation; rather, the point of this paper is simply to provide “food for thought” in regard to the intertwining of translation and interpretation.

E. Conclusion

While commentators have traditionally been split on the issue, the majority of modern translations seem to favor the idea that ὡς λέγουσιν refers back to “the deep things of satan.” Nonetheless, a strong case can be made that the phrase points forward to “no other burden.” This would mean that Jesus cites the Apostolic Council both in continuity with his own teaching and as a rebuke to those straying into syncretism under Jezebel. To such people in Thyatira, Jesus declares, “This issue has already been dealt with. You would do well to follow the Apostolic Council’s decision from sixty years ago.” In other words, one can appreciate a unity and

⁶⁹ As Reiß and Vermeer state, “[I]f a translator emphasizes *one* aspect of the source text, he will have to suppress others” (*Towards a General Theory of Translational Action*, 38). Indeed, Cicero famously bemoaned the fact that “If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth, and if compelled by necessity I alter anything in the order or wording, I shall seem to have departed from the function of a translator” (trans. by H. M. Hubbell and cited in Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 4th ed [London: Routledge, 2014], 54).

⁷⁰ *Skopos* is Greek for “goal” (Phil 3:14) or “purpose” (Josephus, *War*, 1.7 [0.3]). Reiß and Vermeer write, “The highest rule of a theory of translational action is the ‘*skopos* rule’: any action is determined by its purpose, i.e., it is a function of its purpose or *skopos*” (*Towards a General Theory of Translational Action*, 90). For a helpful discussion regarding both *skopos* theory and foreignization *vis-à-vis* Bible translation, see Andy Cheung, “Foreignising Bible Translation: Retaining Foreign Origins When Rendering Scripture,” *TynB* 63.2 (2012): 257–73.

⁷¹ An example of this elsewhere in Scripture, where an interpretive decision *must* be made, would be James 4:5, where whether or not one capitalizes “Spirit/spirit” will determine which interpretation one favors. There is no way to translate this in modern English in a way that preserves ambiguity.

Finally, for a lighter look at the possible consequences of trying to translate an ambiguous statement, see the article [Author redacted], “Mokusatsu: One Word, Two Lessons,” *NSA Technical Journal* 13.4 (1968): 95–10.

continuity between what the Apostles said (λέγουσιν) and what Jesus says (λέγω) in Rev 2:24, a theological message that continues to be relevant 2,000 years later.

Revelation 2:24 provides an excellent test case for the intertwining of translation and interpretation. How one renders ὡς λέγουσιν, both lexically and positionally, has the potential of suppressing an interpretive option. Nonetheless, this does not mean that one can decisively determine a “correct” translation, since other factors such as the *skopos* of the translation and the syntax of the target language must weight in. What should be expected, however, is the careful consideration of all interpretive options by both the translator and the preacher.

Appendix: Commentaries Consulted for Chart 1

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- Williamson, Peter S. *Revelation*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015.