

From “the Gospels” Glossary

LOGOS. /. WORD

“Logos can mean merely “statement” or “speech,” but it also has lofty philosophical uses, especially in the opening of the Book of John, where it is probably connected to the Stoic conception of the divine reasoning posited to pervade the universe. The essential connotation here is not language but the lasting, indisputable, and morally cogent truth of numbers, as displayed in correct financial accounting: this is the most basic sense of logos. “True account” is among the translations that can be justified on occasion. Also, logos appears sometimes to be related to the important *dabar* or “spoken word/matter/thing” of the Hebrew Bible: it can be the truth or commandment God imparts to his prophets or in his law. But the Greek words *rēma* and *rēthen* (both meaning “spoken thing”) seem to function more reliably in this way than logos does. Logos is not capitalized in the Nestle-Aland text, so my various renderings are not capitalized either; in any case it would be impossible for me to distinguish for certain in every case how special the word is.”

BEGINNING

This is a tricky term when it is *archē*, which can indicate “firstness” in the sense of authority and governing leadership. At the opening of John’s Gospel, for “instance, the stately word “inauguration” (echoing similar connotations of a Hebrew word in Genesis 1) seems warranted.”

BIRTH; GIVE/BE BORN

The relevant Greek verbs are complex, and one of them is ambiguous. *Gennaō* concentrates on the biology of birth. *Tiktō* shares with agriculture the idea of production and is concerned with obtaining heirs and prolonging a family, clan, nation, or whole chosen people. But *ginomai* means “be,” “become,” and “come into being,” including “be born,” an ambiguity sometimes wittily exploited.”

GRACE

This is from the Latin *gratia*, meaning (basically) “gift,” “favor,” “goodwill,” or “mercy,” or something with a natural “appeal,” or “thankfulness”: the original Greek word, quite close to the Latin in its meanings, is *charis*. The English word has been heavily abstracted. For this translation, a variety of words for kindness, and for the proper responses to kindness, seems more useful than our theologically overwrought “grace.”

Excerpt From

The Gospels

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<https://books.apple.com/us/book/the-gospels/id1519669236>

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