



Lexis

Journal in English Lexicology

5 | 2010

Lexicology & Stylistics

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/lexis/490>

DOI: 10.4000/lexis.490

ISSN: 1951-6215

Publisher

Université Jean Moulin - Lyon 3

Electronic reference

Cynthia L. Hallen and Tracy B. Spackman, « Biblical Citations as a Stylistic Standard in Johnson's and Webster's Dictionaries », *Lexis* [Online], 5 | 2010, Online since 15 October 2010, connection on 01 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/lexis/490> ; DOI : 10.4000/lexis.490



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Biblical Citations as a Stylistic Standard in Johnson's and Webster's Dictionaries

Cynthia L. Hallen¹ & Tracy B. Spackman²

Abstract

Noah Webster's primary source for the first edition of the 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* (ADEL) was Samuel Johnson's 1799 eighth edition of the *Dictionary of the English Language* (DEL). Scholars have made much of the debt that Webster owes to Johnson for entries in the 1828 ADEL. Stylistic analyses have typically focused on the definitions included in the two dictionaries. Far less attention has been paid to the illustrative quotations employed by both authors to exemplify usage. This article focuses on Biblical citations in the letter *S* used by both Johnson and Webster as examples of usage. All citations (both secular and Biblical) under the letter *S* were examined to determine the relative importance of the Bible to the style and content of the dictionaries. Results indicate that though Johnson included more Biblical citations than Webster did, Biblical citations made up a larger proportion of Webster's total citations than they did for Johnson.

In addition to ascertaining frequency of Biblical citations, all Biblical citations shared by both dictionaries were also identified. Results of this analysis confirmed Webster's debt to Johnson, as a great number of Webster's Biblical citations may be found in Johnson's dictionary. A study of the religious convictions of Johnson and Webster is integral to understanding both authors' motivations in constructing their dictionaries. Though both were pious men, Johnson's focus on the Bible was as a great literary work, whereas Webster's focus on the Bible was as a tool for the religious and moral betterment of his readers.

Keywords: Webster Noah – Johnson Samuel – citations – dictionary – Bible – religion

Résumé

Les sources primaires utilisées par Noah Webster pour la première édition de son *American Dictionary of the English Language* (ADEL) publié en 1828 étaient la huitième édition du *Dictionary of the English Language* (DEL) de Samuel Johnson, publié en 1799. La dette de Webster envers Johnson concernant les entrées d'ADEL en 1828 a été mentionnée à plusieurs reprises par les chercheurs. Les analyses stylistiques se sont essentiellement portées sur les définitions dans les deux dictionnaires. Mais il a rarement été fait mention des citations utilisées par les deux auteurs comme exemples ou illustrations. Cet article porte sur les citations pour les mots commençant par la lettre *S*, utilisées aussi bien par Johnson que Webster à titre d'exemples. Nous avons étudié toutes les citations (aussi bien bibliques que non bibliques) utilisées pour les mots commençant par la lettre *S* afin de déterminer l'importance relative de la Bible sur le style et le contenu des dictionnaires. Les résultats indiquent que bien que Johnson ait utilisé plus de citations de la Bible que Webster, les citations bibliques forment une proportion plus importante des citations totales de Webster.

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Toutes les citations bibliques communes aux deux dictionnaires ont non seulement été identifiées, mais nous avons également établi leur fréquence d'usage. Les résultats de cette analyse ont confirmé la dette de Webster envers Johnson, puisqu'un grand nombre de citations bibliques utilisées par Webster se trouvent dans le dictionnaire de Johnson. La prise en compte des convictions religieuses de Johnson et de Webster fait partie intégrante de la compréhension des motivations des deux auteurs en ce qui concerne leurs choix lexicographiques. Bien que les deux fussent croyants, Johnson voyait la Bible comme une œuvre littéraire remarquable, alors que Webster la voyait comme un moyen d'élévation religieuse et morale de ses lecteurs.

Mots-clés : Webster Noah – Johnson Samuel – citations – dictionnaire – Bible – religion

Introduction

The great lexicographers Samuel Johnson and Noah Webster both used citations from great books as a stylistic standard for ascertaining and exemplifying the headwords in their great dictionaries. The title page of Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* explains that the words therein are "illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers." Johnson mentions that he has published the dictionary "for the use of such as aspire to exactness of criticism, or elegance of style" [1799: Preface]. Although he emphasizes that he wants the dictionary to serve as a "glossary or expository index to poetical writers" [1799: Preface] such as Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, his entries include hundreds of citations from the Bible. The English translation of the Bible is one of the great books that Johnson uses as a standard for proper diction. The authors of Biblical passages are among the best writers that Johnson selects for establishing stylistic eloquence.

Building on the traditions of Johnson's lexicography, Noah Webster based his dictionary entries on the stylistic foundation of "a particular examination of the best English Writers, with a view to a comparison of their style and phraseology, with those of the best American writers" [1828: Preface]. Webster concedes that American authors may have "neglected to cultivate taste, and the embellishments of style" [1828: Preface], but he celebrates the genuine idiom of Franklin and Washington. He celebrates the style of Mr. Ames, Mr. Harper, Mr. Barlow, Chancellor Kent, President Smith, and the authors of the *Federalist* as some of the best models of composition that America has produced. Although his preface highlights exemplary American writers, Webster included hundreds of Biblical passages in his *American Dictionary of the English Language*. Alan Snyder [1990: 348] states that Webster's "definitions and definitional illustrations abound with Biblical references."

Both Johnson and Webster were pious men who unabashedly shared biblical citations and other religious material in their works. Certainly their primary intent was to provide lexicographical reference works with stylistic authority; however, they both sought to educate their readers with beyond lexical and stylistic matters. Johnson included citations from the King James translation of the Bible as a way of modeling elegant English usage. Webster had a similar purpose, but he also had a desire to educate on matters of religious faith and morality.

1. Johnson's Dictionary

In 1755, Samuel Johnson published the first edition of *A Dictionary of the English Language*, a two-volume folio work containing approximately 40,000 terms. Johnson used Nathan Bailey's dictionary as a working base for his wordlist and definitions. Allen Reddick [1996: 15] quotes H. B. Wheatley's claim that Johnson's dictionary was:

the first English dictionary that could in any way be considered as a standard, all its predecessors being mere lists of words in comparison. For a century at least literary men had been sighing for some standard, and Johnson did what Dryden, Waller, Pope, Swift and others had only talked about.

Johnson's dictionary reigned as the most authoritative English dictionary for well over a century, seeing a total of eleven revisions.

Many of Johnson's usage examples came from religious texts, especially from the Bible, as well as from secular sources [Chapin 1968] & [Quinlan 1964]. Johnson, in the Preface of the 1755 first edition of his dictionary, states that his usage examples come from writers

“whose works I regard as *the wells of English undefiled*, as the pure sources of genuine diction.” Johnson saw his literary examples as serving two purposes: 1) to exemplify the various “shades of meaning” of his headwords, and 2) to be “useful to some other end than illustrating a word.” Johnson speaks specifically about the selection and incorporation of his numerous usage examples in his 1755 Preface:

I shall not think my employment useless or ignoble, if by my assistance foreign nations, and distant ages, gain access to the propagators of knowledge, and understand the teachers of truth; if my labours afford light to the repositories of science, and add celebrity to *Bacon*, to *Hooker*, to *Milton*, and to *Boyle*. (italics in the original)

Johnson’s vision for his dictionary was not simply as a list of words and their definitions, but also as a work of historical value, one to which “a reader might turn for enlightenment and instruction as well as guidance and direction” [Korshin 1974: 300].

2. Johnson’s Religious Roots

Samuel Johnson, literary man and lexicographer, was born September 18, 1709, the son of a bookseller in Lichfield, Staffordshire. His mother and father were staunch members of the Church of England, relying upon the Bible and the Anglican prayer book for religious instruction. Although Johnson was raised in a pious home, during adolescence he shied away from religion. This religious indifference, however, came to an end while he was attending Oxford College. As quoted in Quinlan [1964: 5], Johnson reports:

I took up “Law’s Serious Call to a Holy Life,” expecting to find it a dull book, (as such books generally are,) and perhaps to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an overmatch for me; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion, after I became capable of rational inquiry.

When illness, depression, and life’s disappointments shook his world, Johnson was reminded of the existence of God. From that time forward, he devoted much thought to religious belief and to the disposition of his own heart [Quinlan 1964].

Johnson’s belief in God is evidenced in the many sermons and prayers he wrote in his adult years. Quinlan [1964: 3] suggests that “Johnson himself was probably more devout and certainly better informed on Christian doctrine than most clergymen of his time.” His eloquence of phrase and profound knowledge of doctrine enabled him to write approximately forty sermons for various members of the clergy to give in their Sunday meetings [Quinlan 1964: 86].

Johnson’s piousness can also be seen in the moral tone of his most popular literary magazine, *The Rambler*, for which he was the chief editor and contributor. In launching *The Rambler*, Johnson wrote a prayer expressing dependence upon a higher power:

Almighty God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all Labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly, grant, I beseech Thee, that in this my undertaking thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote thy glory, and the Salvation both of myself and others, – Grant this O Lord for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen. Lord bless me. So be it. [as quoted in DeMaria 1993: 145]

Throughout his life, Johnson wrote prayers in the Biblical idiom, such as this petition he recorded for July 25th, 1776:

O God, who hast ordained that whatever is to be desired should be sought by labour, and who, by thy blessing, bringest honest labour to good effect, look with mercy upon my studies and endeavors. Grant me, O Lord, to design only what is lawful and right; and afford me calmness of mind, and steadiness of purpose, that I may so do thy will in this short life, as to obtain happiness in the world to come, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. [as quoted in Boswell 1924: 64-65]

Johnson included quotations from the King James Bible as he constructed a dictionary based on the usage of the most highly regarded English writers. Shakespeare, Spenser, Dryden, Bacon, Milton, Boyle, and the Bible were stylistic sources that he used “to preserve the purity and ascertain the meaning of our English idiom” [as quoted in Jackson 2000: 3]. Although a review of scholarly literature on Johnson yielded only modest discussion of his religious background, Johnson’s faith is evident, especially in the Biblical citations that permeated his great English dictionary.

3. Webster’s Dictionary

Published in 1828 as a two-volume quarto work, twenty years after he first began working on it, Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* contained approximately 70,000 terms, about 20,000 more than Johnson’s first edition. A large portion of these additional words were scientific and technical terms. The additional words also consisted of terms that were either coined in America or had undergone a slight change in meaning due to uniquely American usage.

Webster’s dictionary was hailed as “a work of great learning and research, comprising a much more full vocabulary of the language than Johnson’s dictionary, and combining many and great improvements with respect both to the etymology and definitions of words” [as quoted in Landau 2001: 73]. Webster’s dictionary became the standard in America, just as Johnson’s had become the standard for English lexicography.

Although Webster admired Johnson’s dictionary and used it as a standard for creating his lexicon, he wanted to make improvements. In the Introduction to his *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Webster pays tribute to Johnson, but also warns the reader of errors:

Dr. Johnson was one of the greatest men that the English nation has ever produced; and when the exhibition of truth depended on his own gigantic powers of intellect, he seldom erred. But in the compilation of his dictionary, he manifested a great defect of research, by means of which he often fell into mistakes. [as quoted in Micklethwait 2000: 172-173]

One of the things about Johnson’s dictionary that Webster criticized was his prolific use of illustrative quotations. Webster held the belief that illustrative quotations were unnecessary in many entries. He felt that definitions should be concise and speak for themselves.

For those instances in which he deemed a usage example necessary, Webster either provided his own or borrowed an appropriate one from Johnson. The following is an example of an instance when Webster provided his own Biblical citation as an alternative to Johnson’s. Using a scripture concordance, we have added the chapter and verse numbers for the citations:

Johnson (SADDLE, v.t.): Def. #1. To cover with a saddle.
I will *saddle* me an ass that I may ride thereon.
2 Samuel [19:26].

Webster (SADDLE, v.t.): Def. #1. To put a saddle on.
Abraham rose early in the morning and *saddled* his ass. **Genesis 22 [vs. 3].**

In contrast, in the example below, Webster borrowed his Biblical citation directly from Johnson:

Johnson (SNARE, v.t.): Def. #1. To entrap; to entangle; to catch in a noose.
The wicked is *snared* in the work of his own hands.
Psalms [9:16].

Webster (SNARE, v.t.): Def. #1. To catch with a snare; to ensnare; to entangle;
to bring into unexpected evil, perplexity or danger.
The wicked is *snared* in the work of his own hands. **Psalms 9 [vs. 16].**

In his pioneering article, “Noah Webster’s Debt to Samuel Johnson”, Joseph Reed [1962] attempts to show just how prolifically Webster borrowed from Johnson, in spite of the criticisms that Webster raised about Johnson’s dictionary. Reed collated and analyzed all of the entries under the letter *L* from Johnson’s 1799 edition and Webster’s 1828 edition. Reed opted to use Johnson’s 1799 8th edition dictionary because scholars agree that Webster referred to this edition while drafting the first edition of his 1828 dictionary.

Webster’s copy of Johnson’s 1799 edition containing some manuscript notes is located in the New York Public Library. Reed was able to examine this copy during his analysis. Reed’s findings show that approximately one third of Webster’s definitions were copied from Johnson or showed definite signs of Johnson’s influence. Webster cited fewer authorities and provided fewer quotations than Johnson. However, of the total percentage of Webster’s examples found within the subset *L*, 66% were taken from Johnson. More than half of Webster’s illustrations not found in Johnson’s dictionary under the letter *L*, however, were from the Bible and the Encyclopedia. This result prompted Reed [1964: 104] to suggest that “Johnson had quoted liberally from the Bible, but apparently not nearly often enough to please Webster.”

In his 1828 Preface, Webster tells readers the other kinds of improvements that he deemed necessary. Johnson’s dictionary (as well as other extant English dictionaries) lacked modern scientific terms – terms that had been introduced into the language through the great strides made in the field of science during Webster’s lifetime. There was also a paucity of knowledge regarding word etymologies. Webster felt strongly that the orthography of the English language needed improvement. Additionally, America, with its new and varied experiences, needed new terms to describe these distinctly American experiences. Webster states in his Preface that “the principal differences between the people of this country and of all others, arise from different forms of government, different laws, institutions and customs.” Webster wanted a dictionary “suited to the people of the United States.” And, following Johnson’s ambition to honor in print the great writers of England, Webster wanted to “give celebrity” to American authors such as Franklin, Washington, Adams, Jay, and Madison.

Webster’s finished 1828 dictionary was also “an attempt to furnish an American Work which shall be a guide to the youth of the United States” [Preface]. Finally, Webster hoped that his dictionary would prove “a more useful instrument for the propagation of science, arts,

civilization, and Christianity” [Preface]. He wanted his readers not only to have access to linguistic information regarding their language, but also to receive instruction in all aspects of academia and Christianity. Webster propagated Christian belief through the use of Biblical citations as examples of usage in his dictionary.

4. Webster’s Religious Roots

More is known about Webster’s religious background than Johnson’s. Noah Webster was born into a religious family in West Hartford, Connecticut, on October 16, 1758. His ancestral line consisted of Separatists and Puritans who came to America to build new lives based on the principle of religious freedom. Ten years before Noah’s birth, many people in New England had experienced a Great Awakening, a religious revival that spread throughout the country. Even after the revival faded, religion continued to hold high prominence in many homes of the new American republic.

The Websters were Congregationalists, and young Noah’s parents saw to their children’s religious and moral upbringing. Webster and his siblings worked long hours in the fields, prayed several times a day, faithfully attended church meetings, and obeyed the laws of the Sabbath [Shoemaker 1966]. Webster’s education before age fourteen “was limited to the ‘nurture and admonition of the Lord’” [Shoemaker 1966: 7]. During the late eighteenth century, New England grammar schools and textbooks emphasized religious and moral teachings over the secular.

Webster’s mother was the great granddaughter of William Bradford, Governor of Plymouth Colony and self-taught linguist. Webster’s granddaughter, Emily Ellsworth Fowler Ford [1912: 8], described Bradford as having a “heroic mind, trained by severe study and filled with the rewards of scholarship”. Following the tradition of education from his mother’s side, Noah made the decision at age fourteen that he would attend college. Accounts are given of his father finding him under a tree with a Latin grammar, instead of out in the field plowing. Realizing the intellectual bent of his young son’s mind, Noah’s father hired the Reverend Nathan Perkins as a tutor. Noah continued his preparatory studies with the Reverend Perkins until his departure for Yale College in 1774.

Webster’s moral and religious training continued at Yale College since the principal mission of the institution of this college was “to educate Persons for the work of the Ministry” [as quoted in Shoemaker, 1966: 11]. Webster graduated with a bachelor’s degree in 1778 and was awarded a Master of Arts degree three years later in 1781. Those who did not choose a life in the ministry after graduation from Yale carried their religious education with them into whatever profession they chose [Snyder 1990].

Common Sense moral philosophy was the reigning philosophy taught at Yale during Webster’s time there. This philosophy espoused the belief that common sense and reason are attributes given to humankind by God, and both powers could and should be used to explain the truths of revelation [Snyder 1990]. Webster’s Yale education introduced him to new concepts:

It did not erase the religious instruction of his childhood; rather, it sought to enhance arguments for Christian orthodoxy through rational means. [Snyder 1990: 24]

Webster “left college as an independent thinker and investigator of religious creeds. The very nature of his intellect made him an analyzer and discoverer, and he could no more accept

religious truths at second hand than he could accept philological dogmas” [Ford 1912: 34]. Webster left college an educated and rational thinker.

After his graduation from Yale College at twenty years old, Webster experienced a period of intense uncertainty. Left to fend for himself, Webster struggled to know what direction his life should take and which profession to pursue. It was in this confused state of mind that the young Webster discovered the writings of the English lexicographer, Samuel Johnson. After reading a piece in Johnson’s literary magazine, *The Rambler*, Webster realized the moral direction his life should take, and he resolved to lead a religious life from that point on [Snyder 1990]. Concerned about the disintegration of the ideals for which he and fellow patriots had fought in the Revolutionary War, Webster was ready for a spiritual reawakening and a significant shift in his religious beliefs. In the spring of 1808, he turned from politics to religion and found an answer to all problems: “belief in an omnipotent God” [Rollins 1980: 107].

Many of Webster’s New England neighbors had participated in the Second Great Awakening, a religious revival that occurred in New England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Webster’s wife and two oldest daughters participated in the enthusiastic evangelical meetings of the Calvinist minister Moses Stuart in the New Haven area. Greatly alarmed, Webster tried to persuade his family to attend the highly rational and authoritarian Episcopal Church. He feared that religious differences would weaken family ties, reporting that “extreme reluctance against a separation from my dear family in public worship filled my mind with unusual solicitude” [as quoted in Rollins 1980: 113]. When his attempts to persuade family members failed, he became even more troubled.

Finally, Webster’s two daughters came to him for counsel regarding the new religious ideas that had impressed them. So Webster began to study the Bible in earnest, “with a special view toward comprehending certain of the doctrines which he had felt [...] were against reason” [Ford 1912: 35]. He began a serious investigation of the creeds of the Episcopal and Congregational churches. Webster also turned to Moses Stuart, who helped him realize that there were fewer differences between these churches than he had originally thought. Still, his mind was in turmoil, and he wrestled with religious concerns. Then one day, after an intense mental and spiritual inner struggle, peace came. He tells of the conversion in a letter he wrote to his brother-in-law, Thomas Dawes, dated December 20, 1808:

The impressions however grew stronger till at length I could not pursue my studies without frequent interruptions. My mind was suddenly arrested, without any previous circumstances of the time to draw it to this subject as it were fastened to the awakening and upon my own conduct. I closed my books, yielded to the influence which could not be resisted or mistaken and was led by a spontaneous impulse to repentance, prayer and entire submission and surrender of myself to my maker and redeemer. My submission appeared to be cheerful and was soon followed by the peace of mind which the world can neither give nor take away. [as quoted in Rollins 1980: 113]

Webster’s conversion was profound and lasting. After 1808, Rollins writes, “God occupied the center of everything Webster thought and wrote” [1980: 54]. The concluding paragraph of the Preface to the *American Dictionary of the English Language* reads:

To that great and benevolent Being, who, during the preparation of this work, has sustained a feeble constitution, amidst obstacles and toils, disappointments, infirmities and depression [...] I would present the tribute of my most grateful acknowledgements.

To this end, Christian doctrine from the Bible was infused into Webster's dictionary, particularly in the illustrations of his headwords. Micklethwait [2000: 186] agrees that

Christianity is to be found in the dictionary in meanings and definitions, in quotations from the Bible and in Webster's own sentences illustrating the use of words.

Webster's belief in God became a theme resonating throughout his works, especially in the Biblical citations of his great dictionary.

5. Biblical Citations in Both Dictionaries

Both Johnson and Webster included numerous quotations from the Bible to exemplify the various senses of the headwords in their dictionaries. Given the prolific number of Biblical citations employed in their respective dictionaries, a comparative study is warranted. The collection of the data for this article involved searching entries for the letter *S* in electronic versions of Noah Webster's 1828 first edition of the *American Dictionary of the English Language* (ADEL) and Samuel Johnson's 1799 eighth edition of the *Dictionary of the English Language* (DEL). Our analysis enabled us to calculate the number of Biblical citations compared to other source authors in the letter *S*, to inventory all of the Biblical citations included in Johnson's and Webster's definitions, and to identify how many of Webster's Biblical citations may have come from Johnson's.

5.1. Authorities Cited

In the letter *S* of the 1799 dictionary, Johnson cited 296 different authors as illustrations for definitions, while Webster cited 378 different authors. Both lexicographers frequently cited the Bible, Dryden, the Encyclopedia, Milton, Shakespeare, and Swift. Shakespeare was the first most cited author in Johnson, and the second most cited author in Webster. The Bible was the fifth most cited source of the 296 different sources used by Johnson for illustrative purposes, and the Bible was the third most cited source in Webster's 378 sources cited for illustration.

Table 1 below shows the importance of the Bible as a source of citations relative to the other sources cited by both Johnson and Webster:

	Johnson	Webster
Total # of all citations	14064	6237
# of sources	296	378
Most cited sources	1. Shakespeare (2814) 2. Dryden (1153) 3. Milton (1061) 4. Swift (523) 5. Bible (522)	1. Encyclopedia (684) 2. Shakespeare (578) 3. Bible (512) 4. Dryden (443) 5. Milton (289)

Table 1. Citations included as examples in Johnson's and Webster's dictionaries

Johnson used 14,064 author citations all together for the letter *S*, while Webster used 6,237 author citations in the letter *S* for the 1828 dictionary. In other words, Johnson used more than double the amount of author citations overall.

5.2. Biblical Citations

Johnson and Webster used a similar number of Biblical citations to illustrate the various usages of the headwords listed under the letter *S*. Of the 14,064 illustrative citations given by Johnson, 522 citations were culled from the Bible. Of the 6,237 citations given by Webster, 512 were taken from the Bible. As was found by Kusujiro Miyoshi [2007] in his study of Biblical citations in the letter *L*, Johnson included more Biblical citations per headword (1.78) than did Webster (1.21). Even though Johnson had more Biblical citations by token, Webster had a much higher percentage of Biblical citations overall in entries for the letter *S*. For Webster, the Bible comprised 8.2% of all of citations in the subset studied. For Johnson, the Bible comprised 3.7% of all of his citations.

Table 2 below is a summary of the citations from each Biblical book cited by both Johnson and Webster.

	Johnson	Webster
Total # of Biblical citations	522	512
# of Biblical books cited	54	56
Average # of citations per headword	1.78	1.21
# of New Testament citations	138	184
# of Old Testament citations	384	328
Most cited books: New Testament	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acts (23) 2. Matthew (18) 3. Luke (18) 4. Hebrews (8) 5. John (8) 6. Mark (8) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Matthew (36) 2. Luke (19) 3. Acts (17) 4. Hebrews (14) 5. John (11)
Most cited books: Old Testament	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Genesis (44) 2. Psalms (43) 3. Exodus (37) 4. Isaiah (36) 5. Job (32) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Psalms (47) 2. Genesis (45) 3. Proverbs (29) 4. Isaiah (28) 5. Exodus (25)

Table 2. Biblical citations found in Johnson's and Webster's dictionaries

Johnson extracted his citations from 54 books of the Bible, whereas Webster drew his from 56 books. Johnson quoted somewhat more heavily from the Old Testament (384 citations versus Webster's 328 citations), whereas Webster quoted somewhat more heavily from the New Testament (184 citations versus Johnson's 138).

Of *S* headwords whose definitions included illustrations from Biblical citations, there were 154 headwords common to both Johnson and Webster. Given the common practice of lexicographers to borrow from predecessors in the construction of their own dictionaries, the question may well be asked as to how many of the Biblical citations Webster included as examples of usage for the 154 shared headwords were identical to those included by Johnson. In other words, one may wonder the degree to which Webster simply copied the Biblical citations of Johnson in the construction of his own dictionary.

For example, Noah Webster uses the same biblical citations as Johnson for the headwords SACRIFICE (Exodus 3:18, 13:15), SAD (Matthew 6), SADDLE (Genesis 22), and SAFE (Phillipians 3:1). Johnson has biblical citations for the headwords SAIL SANG, SAW, and SCORCH, but Webster does not use any biblical citations for those entries. Webster uses biblical citations for the entries SABAOTH, SABBATH, and SACKCLOTH, whereas Johnson has citations from other sources such as the Common Prayer Book and Shakespeare instead. Johnson has no entry for SADDUCEAN in the 1799 DEL, so Webster provides his own Biblical citation for that headword in the 1828 ADEL.

5.3. Webster's Biblical Borrowings

For Johnson, there were 341 verses used as examples for the various meanings of the 154 shared headwords. For Webster, there were 346 verses used as examples for the 154 shared headwords. There were 179 identical verses used as examples for the 154 shared headwords. In other words, Webster appears to have borrowed approximately 52% of Johnson's Biblical citations for those headwords they shared. Fifty-two percent of the Biblical citations included by Webster as examples of usage were found in Johnson's dictionary, indicating Webster's extensive borrowings from Johnson. Though the data indicates Webster may well have borrowed approximately half of his Biblical citations from Johnson, given the long history of borrowing in lexicographical practice, these findings are not too surprising.

6. Biblical Citations in Both Dictionaries

Lexicographers have acknowledged the prolific number of Biblical citations in Johnson's and Webster's dictionaries. In his published doctoral dissertation, Kusujiro Miyoshi [2007] devotes one chapter to a comparison of Biblical citations found in entries under the letter *L* in both Johnson's and Webster's dictionaries. In Miyoshi's analysis of the Biblical citations from both dictionaries, 182 Biblical citations were found in Webster's dictionary, whereas 270 Biblical citations were found in Johnson's. Miyoshi suggests that the surprising number of Biblical citations found in Johnson's dictionary casts some doubt on the idea held by many scholars that Webster sought to increase the religious content in his dictionary beyond that found in Johnson's (see, for example, Reed [1962]). According to Miyoshi, this relatively small number of Biblical citations in Webster's dictionary indicates the Bible as a source was not as important to Webster as Reed and other scholars claim.

However, one thing Miyoshi does not discuss is the fact that Webster did not have nearly as many citations, Biblical or secular, in his dictionary as Johnson. Therefore, having fewer biblical citations does not necessarily indicate the Bible to be less important to Webster. Based on his analysis of the Biblical citations found within the entries under the letter *L* in both Johnson's and Webster's dictionaries, Miyoshi [2007: 99] draws the following conclusion regarding Webster's incorporation of Biblical citations:

Webster quoted from the Bible mainly for the purpose of improving English usage among Americans.

Miyoshi's does not mention that Webster incorporated Biblical citations in his dictionary for the religious and moral improvement of his readers.

7. Selection for Moral Education

One reason Webster may have selected alternative Biblical citations was his desire for the 1828 dictionary to serve as a source of moral education. Webster's copy of Johnson's 1799 edition includes a black mark next to an example from Swift for the word LAME (v.t.): 'If you happen to let a child fall, and *lame* it, never confess.' Considering this an illustration of child negligence and therefore a poor moral example, Webster omitted this example in his own dictionary under the entry for LAME and includes only the name of Dryden as an alternative authority [Reed 1962: 99].

The following examples used to illustrate similar definitions given by both authors for the headword SHORT evidence Webster's extensive borrowing, but may also indicate his intent to select examples of usage of a more didactic cast:

Johnson (SHORT, adj.): Def. #3. Not long in time or duration.
They change the night into day: the light is *short*
because of darkness. **Job 17 (vs. 12).**

Webster (SHORT, adj.): Def. #2. Not extended in time; not of long duration.
The triumphing of the wicked is *short*. **Job 20 (vs. 5).**

Both authors give examples from Job. However, it appears that Webster rejected Johnson's citation in favor of another, more instructive verse in Job, a verse that carries a clear moral message.

Future research might explore some additional reasons why Webster selected alternative Biblical citations. Also instructive would be a triangulated study of Johnson's dictionary, Webster's dictionary, and Murray's *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), looking specifically at the historical existence and significance of Biblical citation as a lexicographical or literary tool. Webster frequently expounded upon his definitions, offering a Christian context, so a study of the faith-based commentaries in Johnson's and Webster's entries could prove enlightening. In addition, it would be of interest to study the historical use of Biblical citation and faith-based language in the editions following Webster's death in 1843. A preliminary search of editions of the dictionary following Webster's death indicates that, by as early as the 1847 edition, Biblical citations began to be removed. Such a study might reveal which citations were removed in each edition and offer potential explanations for the removal of Biblical citations from the dictionary.

The inclusion of Biblical citations by both Samuel Johnson and Noah Webster accomplished the goals set by both for their dictionaries. For both men, the Bible was central to their personal religious beliefs, as well as the success of their dictionaries. However, despite their common convictions in the Bible as the word of God, their dictionaries were to serve different purposes. Johnson's dictionary was to serve as a literary anthology, whereas Webster's was to function as a pedagogical tool for the moral education of the citizens of a new nation. For Johnson, the Bible was primarily an authority to be referenced for stylistic uses of terms defined in his dictionary. For Webster, the Bible was an authority referenced to teach moral precepts. He believed in the power of words, and the power of The Word [King James Bible: John 1:1]. In this sense, Webster's dictionary was to be an evangelical tool, whereas Johnson's dictionary itself was a literary work.

Noah Webster wanted to emulate Johnson's great dictionary, but he wanted to make it greater in quantity and quality. Lexicographical similarities and differences in Johnson and Webster are apparent in the first definition of their corresponding entries for the noun STYLE:

- Johnson:** STYLE. n. [*stylus*, Latin.] 1. Manner of writing with regard to language. Swift.
- Webster:** STYLE, n. [L. *stylus*; D. and G. *styl*; It. *stile*; Sp. *estilo*; Fr. *style* or *stile*; Gr. *στυλος*, a column, a pen or bodkin; from the root of the Teutonic *stellen*, to set or place.] 1. Manner of writing with regard to language, or the choirs and arrangement of words; as, a harsh style; a dry style; a tumid or bombastic style; a loose style; a terse style; a laconic or verbose style; a flowing style; a lofty style; an elegant style; an epistolary style. The character of style depends chiefly on a happy selection and arrangement of words. *Proper words in proper places, make the true definition of style.* Swift. *Let some lord but own the happy lines, / How the wit brightens and the style refines!* Pope.

Webster expands Johnson's etymology. He begins with Johnson's basic definition and expands it. He includes the citation by Swift, but he adds the actual passage, and then he adds a citation with a passage from Pope.

Webster followed Johnson's method of using citations to establish stylistic authority, but he wanted to emphasize comparative etymology, so he reduced the number of overall literary and Biblical citations in the *American Dictionary of the English Language*. He incorporated many of Johnson's Biblical citations in the 1828 ADEL, but he deleted some, altered some, and added new ones, especially for the new entries that he included as he expanded the size of the dictionary corpus.

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