

**Contemporary Bible Translations:  
Anabaptist Victories  
in the  
New World**

*A Lecture Delivered Before  
the  
Annual Symposium  
on  
The Lutheran Confessions  
at  
Concordia Theological Seminary  
Ft. Wayne, Indiana  
20 January 1999*

**By**

**Theodore P. Letis, BA, M.T.S., Ph.D.  
Director  
The Institute for  
Renaissance and Reformation  
Biblical Studies  
Philadelphia (U.S.A.) and Edinburgh (U.K.)**

**OUTLINE**

- I. Prolegomena
  - A. A Real Problem Exists (e.g. *World Magazine* and *Lutheran Witness*)
  - B. Complications in Addressing the Issues Because of Previous Mishandling

1. Anabaptist Extremists (*Irresponsible Historiography*)
  2. *Christian News* and the Beck Bible (*Irresponsible Sectarianism*)
  3. The Axis of the Not-For-Profit Bible Society Network and the Profit-Making So-Called “Modern Language” English Bible Publishing Industry (*Irresponsible Monopoly*)
  4. The Twofold Phenomena Under Consideration:
    - a. Text Criticism
    - b. Translation Philosophy
- C. The Two Great Ecclesiologies That Are Determinative:
1. Catholic-Preservationism
  2. Primitivist-Restorationism
- II. Catholic-Preservationism:
- A. *Traditio*
    1. Biblical Notion
    2. Roman Notion
  - B. Apostolic Succession
    1. Early Church
    2. Medieval Church
  - C. Polycarp
- III. Implications for Biblical Authority
- A. Three Great Issues Settled in the Fourth Century by Appeal to Apostolic *traditio*
    1. Christology
    2. Canon
    3. Text
  - B. Saint John of Damascus
    1. Augustine (LXX)—*traditio*
    2. Jerome (*Vulgata Latina*)—*traditio*
    3. Ecclesiastical Scriptura
  - G. Erasmus—the Culmination of the Catholic-Preservationist Consensus in the Early Modern Era
  - H. The Protestant Reformation Nurtured on Erasmianism (*ad fontes*): the Triumph of Catholic Consensus
- IV. Primitivist-Restorationism
- A. *Traditio* Almost Always a Corruption of the Original Faith: the Premise of all Non-Catholic Sects and Contemporary Cults—A Journey into Krister Stendahl’s “First-Century Bible Land”
  - B. Gnosticism, Manicheism, Arianism, Montanism, in the Early Church
  - C. Mohammedism, Albigensianism, Paulicianism, in the Medieval Church
  - D. Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Charles Taze Russel at the Turn-of-the-Century, etc. All Claim “True” Apostolic Succession
  - E. Heresiologists Never to be Trusted
  - F. Ecclesiastical Scriptoria Editions of Scripture and Lectionaries not to be trusted
  - G. Modern Advocates of Primitivist-Restorationism
    1. Post-Enlightenment Biblical Historical Criticism
    2. Anabaptist Evangelicals
  - I. Both Communities Begin With the Quest for the Historical Text: the Quintessential Primitivist Impulse Based on the Assumption that the Text Has Been Corrupted (title of Metzger’s text)
  - J. Erasmus the Progenitor of the Primitivist-Restoration Impulse in the Early Modern Era
- V. The Lower Critical Enterprise and the Rise of Historical Consciousness
- A. Erasmus, the Received Text, and His *Annotationes*: The *Comma Johanneum* and I Tim 3:16: Paradigmatic for Text Critical Framework
  - B. The Non-Conformist, Antitrinitarian Communities and the Quest for the Historical Text

- C. The Orthodox (Eastern, Western and Protestant) Uninterested in the Quest for the Historical Text
  - 1. Aland
  - 2. Dogmaticians
  - 3. Confessions
- D. Non-Conformists Begin the Quest in Earnest: Presumed Dogmatic Corruption of the Text
  - 1. Socinianism
  - 2. Unitarianism
  - 3. Cambridge Platonism
  - 4. Deists
  - 5. Isaac Newton
  - 6. Wettstein
  - 7. Joseph Priestley
- VI. Annotations, Paraphrases and Sola Scriptura (Dissertation Research: Thirty Paraphrases)
  - A. Textual Variation Negates Verbal Inspiration
  - B. Textual Variation Suggests Dogmatic Alteration
  - C. Ideology of Harmless Engagement
    - 1. Richard Bentley (18<sup>th</sup> Century)
    - 2. Samuel P. Tregelles (19<sup>th</sup> Century)
- VII. The Evangelical Non-Conformists and the Birth of the Bible Society
  - A. Archbishop Marsh and the Prayer Book
  - B. The *Revised Version* 1881 and Fenton John Anthony Hort's Final Appeal to the Ideology of Harmless Engagement
  - C. Burgon's Response
  - D. James Moffatt's Comments
  - E. The American Response: Warfield and the First Neo-Orthodoxy—The Appeal to Inerrant Autographa
    - 1. Warfield Concedes Corruption  
Warfield Concedes Dogmatic Corruption: Mark 16: 9-20
    - 2. Warfield Advocates a *Reformed* Restorationism With the High Incentive of Inerrancy as the Driving Engine
    - 3. Contrast of Warfield's Restorationist Language with the Language of the Protestant Dogmaticians on Preservationism
    - 4. Results: The Quest for the Historical Text at Princeton Becomes the Quest for the Historical Jesus
- VIII. Warfield's Influence on the Missouri Synod
  - A. Piper Attempts to Retain Catholic Identity
  - B. William Arndt Embraces Warfield's *Reformed* version of Restorationism i.e. the Quest for the Historical Text
  - C. The Quest for the Historical Text Raises a New Historical Consciousness Within the Missouri Synod
  - D. RSV Introduced to the Missouri Synod: Restorationism Officially Endorsed
- IX. Contemporary Situation: Catholic Confessional Communities Seduced by an Extra-Ecclesial, Non-Theological, Anthropological Approach Provided by the Bible Societies
  - A. Bozeman, 19<sup>th</sup> Century Protestantism and the Age of Science
  - B. Nida and Soteriology
  - C. The Inclusive Language Lectionary
  - D. The Inclusive Language NIV
  - E. Bart Ehrman's *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* and the Death of the Ideology of Harmless Engagement (Quote from Lutheran Witness Article)
  - F. Gordon Fee's Sectarianism and the Art of Conjectural Emendation: Restorationism with a Vengeance

- G. The Jesus Seminar and the Admission that the Quest for the Historical Jesus Begins with the Quest for the Historical Text (same methods)
- X. *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*
  - A. Brevard Childs and the Canonical Method
  - B. Most Recent SBL Text Criticism Section Meeting and the Historical Text
  - C. Canonical Approach Post-Critical: Hence, Still Interested in the Earliest Form of the Text but the Church the Final Arbiter with Regard to the Ecclesiastical Form of the Text, i.e. the Canonical Form
  - D. The Ecclesiastical Text the Only *Historical* Text.

## I. Prolegomena

### A. A Real Problem Exists:

“Shoddiness can be found easily, in quantity: The road is smooth and it lies close by, but in front of excellence the immortal gods have put sweat, and long and steep is the way out.” So spoke Winston Churchill to his countrymen during the last great European war. As it happens this quote presently appears on the otherwise mundane cover of a brochure put out by the Boston Cigar Cutter Company, but it applies equally to our topic under consideration.

We Lutherans know a little something about excellence: We gave the literary world high-German via Luther’s Bible; we gave the world of art the matchless work of Cranach and Dürer; we gave the music world Bach. But we have, however, fared far worse in the New World Context. This is because American religious culture knows nothing, really, of Continental traditions. Rather, our new world context is the peculiar backyard of that third-wing of the Reformation, the so-called *Radical* reformation, or Anabaptism. This is not a petty sectarian comment. It is a descriptive, sociological assessment. Butler and Noll have each recently documented the dominant principle of radical Anabaptist “democratization” within what amounts to a “sea of faith” on the American landscape. The largest theological seminary---not just in this country, but in the world---is a Southern Baptist seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas, a fair indication of who rules the roost religiously in the New World.

And as a hard core of German theologians and philosophers convinced themselves in the late 30s that their academic pursuits would be best served during the second world war by legitimizing, in various degrees, the ideology of the Third Reich, so we Lutherans have been found, in various degrees, in pragmatic league with the values and practices of the New World Anabaptists. Through sheer dominance they have beat us down until we gave up our German Bible, much of our catholic identity; and the superb classical basis of our parochial educational system.

But make no mistake about it, our crime is no less shameful than that of Kittle, *et al.* during the darks days of the Third Reich, if the implications, for the moment, are less ominous. In fact, all the major in-house discord within the Synod since our spring-cleaning of the mid-Seventies can be traced to the steady drip, drip, drip, of Anabaptist cultural influences, from church-growth debates, to the languishing of the liturgy, to the advocacy of “priestesses in the Church” (to borrow a C.S. Lewis essay title), to our association with *Christianity Today* Evangelicalism--all can be traced to the impact on us by this alien, New World environment in which we find ourselves. But I am here only to address one aspect of this problem: contemporary English translations of the Bible.

We *are* presently in a crisis regarding the vernacular Bible. The Academy has been on a quest for the historical text for nearly two hundred years now, and what we have at present has been demythologized by the Bible societies. All of this while the Church has not even been consulted on either project The Bible is, in fact, no longer in the hands of the Church, to whom the Oracles of God were entrusted, but rather it is in the hands of the Bible landlords who throw up cheap tenement housing, or pretentious high-rises, as the winds of the market dictate. The Academy and the Bible societies now speak *ex cathedra* and the Church listens.

When some one as safe as J.I. Packer, decries from the pages of *World* magazine that the so-called *Inclusive Language NIV* represents: “Adjustments made by what I call the feminist edition [which] are not made in the interests of legitimate translation procedure,” you can be certain we have a problem on our hands. He, of course, later blunted this near prophetic announcement, but that is another chapter in Evangelical politics.

And our own *Lutheran Witness*, in November of last year (1998), offered a gallant but rather weak attempt to sort out the confusion about why we have so many Bibles on the market. In this instance I fear the author simply failed to “grasp the nettles,” to use an apt Scottish turn of expression.

The looming ghost of 16<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic polemics against heretical Protestants putting the Bible “in the language of the people” has come to haunt us here in our New World context. We presently live in a

house of horrors surrounded by the barbarous cacophony of a century's worth of dead Bibles, found in abundance in the graveyards of every used bookstore in the English-speaking world. And their contemporary progeny scream at us from the modern corporate Christian bookstore, "please buy us" so that they might live on the tongue and in the short-term memories of the hapless thousands looking for easy access to the mind of God. They then join their ancient tribe in the dust of unwanted collections like so many old stacks of faded and discarded newspapers. Where is our concept of a *sacred* text?

And yet we have convinced ourselves, or rather, *we have been convinced by*, the architects of this madhouse that we are living in the most chic of surroundings: the cobwebs, the rotting wood, the infestation of vermin, all signal to the modern situation that the Bible, while no longer univocal in its message, or even poetic in its voice, will, at least, no longer frighten away the pagan, but rather, make him feel rather at home. Thank you very much, Professor Nida.

We are in fact that generation who cheered the rebuilding of the second temple only because we have forgotten, or indeed, have never experienced the beauty that was Solomon's. We are, in fact, the modern Philistines, and I mean this in both the Biblical as well as the Nietzsche sense. The sacrifice of the beauty of holiness for contemporary relevance has seemed to us in our muddled judgment a fair exchange. What it is in fact, is a kind of subtle Bultmannianism by the back door--demythologization, *ad populum*. We may have chased Barth away in the 70s, but by parading the NIV into our churches, may I ask, have we not invited Bultmann in to take his place? Bleach-out the pungency of Ancient-Near Eastern patriarchy, and allow the sanitized Bible to speak to us in our own modern, comfort zone.

But where does one begin to offer a kind of *history-of-religions* explanation for this development in the New World context—and make no mistake about it, the reason Zondervan and other American publishers have over 100 modern editions of the English Bible in their past and present catalogues is because this experience *is* unique to the American consumerist *Sitz im Leben*; there is no parallel for this in any other country in the developed world. This is, in fact, a "new world" phenomenon. We begin, as any good historian would, by returning to the old world.

But before I venture into a panoramic-like historical sweep I have to address three problems that stand in our way at the outset, keeping us from getting a fresh grasp of the issues, namely, those groups that have hitherto addressed this subject in a flawed fashion. I have grouped them into three categories:

1. Those who practice *irresponsible historiography*

2. Those who practice *irresponsible sectarianism*

3. Those who practice an *illegitimate monopoly*

*Irresponsible historiography.* The first group are those contemporary Anabaptists who have, illogically, appealed to the old Anglican Bible of the Church of England, strangely enough, to legitimize their peculiar historiography, and in turn, their distinctive ecclesiology.

In the first half of this century a Seventh-Day Adventist wrote a book titled: *Our Authorized Version Vindicated*. Here he argued that the true line of Biblical text transmission took place not amongst the catholic orthodox, whether Eastern or Western, but, rather, amongst those whom Sir Stephen Runciman termed: the *Medieval Manichee*

. These medieval heretics were, for Wilkinson, this Seventh-Day Adventist author, his own brood. The Anabaptists readily adopted Wilkinson's historiography, but rather than see these heretical separatists as early Seventh-Day Adventists, for them they became the faithful remnant of first-century Christianity, i.e. the progenitors of modern American Baptist fundamentalism. Hence, from this skewed historiography an entire community of Anabaptist, internet junkies have arisen claiming the most absurd notions about the honorable Anglican Bible. One woman by the name of Riplinger seems to imply that the *Revised Version* of 1883 was channeled through Westcott and Hort during a seance. She is perfectly certifiable. For her efforts an Anabaptist institution of higher learning gave her an honorary Ph.D. A few years earlier this same institution also gave one of these worthless degrees to a horse belonging to a deceased evangelist. Irresponsible historiography.

*Irresponsible Sectarianism.* Here it is not my intention to stain the good name or efforts of Beck; nor to indulge in polemics regarding the newspaper *Christian News*. But let me just say in brief that Beck's Bible added next to nothing to what we already possess in either the RSV or even the NASV. To claim that to be a Lutheran we must use exclusively a translation produced by a fellow Lutheran is nothing more or less than a rather tasteless sectarianism. The discipline of text criticism has moved on since Beck produced his work. Sectarian options are not a way out of this morass. Irresponsible sectarianism.

Finally, *irresponsible monopoly*. By this I mean to address the entire network of non-profit Bible societies and their relationship to both the academic community as well as to the corporate world. We all know the story about how Rupert Murdock acquired the commercial rights to the NIV, but we know far less about the history of the influence of the rise of Bible societies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which paved the way for such activity. This story I will cover shortly and briefly in this lecture.

For now let me say that since the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Church has abdicated her proper role as witness and keeper of the sacred text and has been happy to allow Evangelical separatists (who for any number of political reasons were the driving influence behind the rise of the Bible society movement) to act as hirelings in Her stead. For this the Church has paid a dear price. So much so that this arrangement appears to most today to be perfectly natural. It is not.

Finally this last subject leads us naturally enough to address the decisive issue that is really at the heart of this topic, the *sine non quo* for understanding what is at stake in this discussion: *ecclesiology*.

There really are only two major ecclesiologies: what I call, *Catholic-Preservationism*, and *Primitivist-Restorationism*. In terms of genus, Lutherans are the former; Anabaptists are the latter. Everyone else is located somewhere in-between on a sliding spectrum. The fundamental tenet of Catholic-Preservationism is the affirmation of *traditio*, that is, the transmission of ecclesiastical tradition. This is to be differentiated from the Roman notion, which illegitimately exalts tradition to a co-equal status with Scripture. This latter notion is not *catholic* Christianity; it is *Romanism*. Making this distinction as to the proper role of tradition in the life of the Church is nothing more nor less than what the Reformation was all about. The phrase *sola Scriptura* was meant to communicate this distinction. It never meant that scripture was to be interpreted in some naked or contextless way—"the Bible alone." Rather, it signified that Scripture was always the norm for what constituted legitimate ecclesial *traditio*.

Nearly every tenet that Romanism has distorted has its legitimate counterpart in a valid actual practice of the early church, such as apostolic succession. This concept guaranteed that there would be a legitimate *traditio* which accompanied the reproduction and use of the sacred text within the matrix of the orthodox (what would become the Nicene) Church. Eusebius gives classic expression to this notion in an account given by Irenaeus about Polycarp:



*Polycarp was not only instructed by apostles and conversant with many who had seen the Lord, but was appointed by apostles to serve in Asia as Bishop of Smyrna. I myself saw him in my early years, for he lived a long time and was very old indeed when he laid down his life by a glorious and most splendid martyrdom. At all times he taught the things which he had learnt from the apostles, which the Church transmits, which alone are true. These facts are attested by all the churches of Asia and by the successors of Polycarp to this day—and he was a much more trustworthy and dependable witness to the truth than Valentinus and Marcion and all other wrong-headed persons.... [H]e stayed for a while in Rome, where he won over many from the camp of these heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that the one and only truth he had received from the apostles was the truth transmitted by the Church.*

I fully realize I am preaching to the choir here but we are not accustomed to applying these *ecclesiological* issues to the subjects of textual criticism and the transmission of the sacred text. If anything our notions of ecclesial import in this area tend to be in another direction altogether and that simply by default. We have deliberate notions of ecclesial implications in this realm but they are distinctly Enlightenment in nature. Note the assumptions found in the very sub-title of the standard textbook used in our seminaries and universities, Bruce Metzger's excellent: *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Oxford University Press, 1992. Its *corruption*? But again, I am getting ahead of myself.

Before we address in what sense the text became “corrupted,” I want to highlight in what way *traditio* functioned amongst the early catholics. There are three areas with profound dogmatic consequences in which *traditio* played a decisive role: In establishing: 1) the canon; 2) orthodox Christology; 3) and the canonical configuration of the Biblical texts. We are all agreed on the legitimacy of the role of *traditio* in the first two instances. We moderns, however, have been conditioned never to think through the last point on the text. All three issues, however, hang together--to establish the boundaries of the canon, is to establish that body of literature from which we derive our Christology; to establish a macro-canon (the books of the Bible), is to establish a micro-canon (the textual form of each book).

The challenge for those who want to make such a claim is the lack of any hard historical account for this last point about the canonical configuration of the text. We know when and how the canon was ratified; we know when Nicaea ruled in favor of Athanasian Christology. But we have not such an account for the establishing of the text. But that it happened, no one who has ever addressed the subject of text-types has ever denied. Just as we

know “Q” existed even though no one has ever discovered it as a document, just so we know the Church made a determination about the micro-canon.

As early as Griesbach it was recognized that the three major texts types were deliberate recensions produced regionally according to various pre-selected criteria. Eventually, Hort referred to the *canonical* form of the ecclesiastically sanctioned recension as the Syrian text, thus locating its geographic domain. He believed it was the result of a two-stage process which culminated in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the very era that saw the triumph of the orthodox canon and Christology. The process that led to the emergence of this form of the text, however, Hort and all of his Enlightenment predecessors believed to have been an essential act of “corruption.” This was well before the modern consensus was in place that both the Church’s judgment on the canon, and Nicaea’s judgment on who Christ was, were both arbitrary and culturally conditioned developments, that is, that these, too, were early corruption’s of primitive Christianity.

The chronology of these events is by no means an accident. The early Enlightenment quest for the historical text, which I know something about since this was the subject of my own Ph.D. dissertation research, was predicated upon the notion of the N.T. text’s essential editorial corruption, not just scribal slips of the pen, and as such laid the groundwork for—indeed, gave the very trajectory to—the later quest for the historical Jesus. It was the detection of corruption at the *micro*-canonal level during the early quest for the historical text, that breed the original hermeneutic of suspicion about the corruption of the canon at the macro level, and consequently opened the door to the quest for the historical Jesus. It was a logical development that next the corruption of all axiomatic theological deductions derived from these defective documents, namely, Nicene Christology, etc. would also be called into question.

This development is what Hans Frie called: *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*. How this happened to Missouri I intend to make some sense of before I finish. But before we get lost in the mire of the history of Biblical criticism lets return to the age of faith.

We have lost a sense of a sacred text. What we have now is “the Bible of your choice”—no authoritative sacred text. As a little reminder of how the Judaeo-Christian Bible use to be regarded prior to the Enlightenment one need only take the measure of modern Islamic practice and belief. The followers of Mohammed never experienced an “Enlightenment” in the way that we in the West did. For them the Holy Qu’ran is still a medieval document—a *sacred* text. One does not read the Qu’ran

in translation, because it was verbally dictated by the Angel Gabriel in Arabic. Hence, it is only authoritative in its original Arabic dress. Therefore, even young Islamic students being taught the Qu'ran must learn Arabic. We don't even require our catechumens to memorize Luther's smaller catechism any longer. I hope everyone can appreciate why a good Islamic holds modern American Christians in such contempt. You dare to attempt to proselytize a follower of Mohammed and the first question they put to you is: "which of your many Bibles is the correct one."

Let's allow John of Damascus, one of the most revered of the Greek Orthodox fathers to remind us of what it use to be like to regard *our* Bible as a sacred text. It was the Eastern Father, St. John of Damascus (c.675-c.749), who placed together as objects of veneration (προσκύνησις--literally bowing down to), the holy books, relics and icons, arguing that a "relative worship" was due to "objects dedicated to God, such as the holy Gospels and other books, for they have been written for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come."<sup>1</sup> For St. John Damascene, not only was Holy Scripture put in the same category with the sacred icons as an object worthy of veneration, the text itself was seen as a *verbal* icon which functioned in the same way as a *pictorial* icon. In his words,

*...visible things are corporeal models which provide a vague understanding of intangible things. Holy Scripture describes God and the angels as having descriptive form.... Anyone would say that our inability immediately to direct our thoughts to contemplation of higher things makes it necessary that familiar everyday media be utilized to give suitable form to what is formless, and make visible what cannot be depicted, so that we are able to construct understandable analogies. **If, therefore, the Word of God, in providing for our every need, always presents to us what is intangible by clothing it with form, does it not accomplish this by making an image using what is common to nature and so brings within our reach that for which we long but are unable to see?***<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>St. John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images: Three Apologies Against Those Who Attack the Divine Images* (1980:10; 86). For an excellent introduction to St. John of Damascus's teaching on Icons consult, George D. Dragas, "St. John Damascene's Teaching about Holy Icons," in *Icons Windows on Eternity: Theology and Spirituality in Color* (1990: 53-72).

<sup>2</sup>St. John of Damascus (20).

With this understanding of the Bible as, indeed, a verbal icon, it is easy to understand how part of the veneration of Scripture would include retaining a fixed form of the Scripture text, just as innovation in the reproduction of icons was taboo.

Furthermore, this iconographic reverence for the Scripture took on a further tangible expression in the liturgy. The four Gospels particularly were the most elaborately produced manuscripts:

Unquestionably the most sumptuous manuscripts of any part of the Scriptures produced in the middle ages...the copies of the four Gospels [were] bound in one volume, frequently with splendid covers of ivory and metal work. The Gospels were regarded with particular veneration by the faithful, and an eighth-century writer compares the entry of the gospel book of Mass to the entry of Christ himself (Wormald CHB 2:326).

Furthermore,

*High esteem for the word of Christ is seen not only in the care and wealth expended on the writing, decorating and binding of the Gospel book, which began with the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon civilizations, but also in the fact that, with the sacramentary or the missal, it was allowed to rest on the altar.... Gradually the carrying of the gospel book to the ambo developed into a formal procession.... To the procession were added, at times, a cross bearer and a cleric carrying a cushion upon which the book was placed during the reading.... After the Gospel, the book was handed round by the subdeacon to the attendant clergy for veneration by a kiss (van Dijk CHB2:229-230).*

It is exceedingly important that one grasp the significance of what is being described here. The existential Bible, those ecclesiastical editions which from the fourth century onward, which were reproduced in cathedral and monastic scriptoria, were regarded as *the sacred text*. There was no post-Enlightenment bifurcation between some scientifically pristine autographic form of the text and that which *functioned* as sacred Scripture in the very life of the Church. The latter was the only authoritative sacred text, with apostolic sanction at the root of its transmission process. It is the extant text that is revered, not imaginary archetypal *autographa*.

Furthermore, ecclesiastically sanctioned translations served the Church well and were used in opposition to non-approved rivals. Recall the debate between Augustine and Jerome regarding the authority of the LXX. On this Augustine employed his formidable rhetorical talent in defense of this Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible:

The seventy translators enjoyed so much of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in their work of translation, that among the number of men there was but one voice.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, in his *De civitate Dei XVIII*: 42-43, he insisted further that,

the agreement in the words of their versions was marvellous, amazing, and plainly inspired by God... There was such a unity in their translations that it was as if there had been one translator; for in truth there was the one Spirit at work in them all. And this was the purpose of their receiving such a marvellous gift of God; that in this way the authority of those Scriptures should be emphasised, as being not human but divine.... The Church has accepted this Septuagint as if it were the only version.... For the very same Spirit that was in the prophets when they uttered their messages was at work also in the seventy scholars when they translated them.... The task of translation was achieved not by servile labour of a human bond-servant of words, but by the power of God which filled and directed the mind of the translator.<sup>4</sup>

To this day the LXX serves as the translation of the Hebrew Bible regarded as authoritative by the Eastern Church.

And when the kind of confusion which we are experiencing today arose in the Western Church in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century regarding the Latin New Testament, because, in Jerome's judgment, "there were almost as many [Latin] versions as codices," to put a stop to this anarchy Pope Damasus commissioned Jerome to produce one, authoritative Latin translation of the Bible and this he did. Later, of course, the Council of Trent canonized a late version of Jerome's work and ranked it above that of all extant Greek and Hebrew codices. But again, this is a matter of ecclesiology: the true church will have the true Bible, even if this amounts to exalting a translation over the original sources. Here we have yet another example of a good principle gone wrong in the hands of late medieval Romansim.

---

<sup>3</sup> A.D.R. Polman, *The Word of God According to St. Augustine* (Grand Rapids, 1961), p. 185.

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans* trans. by H. Bettenson (London, 1972), pp 820-821. Here Augustine also makes a veiled criticism of Jerome, first referring to him as "a man of great learning and a master of all three languages," who has "translated these Scriptures into Latin not from the Greek but from the Hebrew," but then goes on to say in the next paragraph, "Nevertheless, it is the judgment of the churches of Christ that no one man should be preferred to the authority of so large a body of men [i.e. the LXX translators] chosen for this important task by Eleazar, the high priest at the time" (p. 821). For a brief treatment of Jerome's work on the *Vulgata Latina* and the criticism he received see, J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies* (London, 1975), pp. 86-90; 153-170. For a more extended treatment of Jerome's contribution to Biblical studies see, A. Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford, 1993).

Finally, both the Western as well as the Eastern orthodox branches of the church had their ecclesiastically sanctioned scriptoria for producing editions of the sacred text for use in the universities and in the liturgical life of the Church. The idea of some medieval traveling entrepreneur, a 12<sup>th</sup> century Rupert Murdock if you will, walking into the deanery of a cathedral attempting to sell some pedigreeless Biblical manuscript to the dean of the cathedral, lacking the ending of Mark, or lacking the account of the women taken in adultery, is absurd in the extreme. The Church, from the acceptance of Christianity in Constantine's reign, when fifty Bibles were commissioned by him to fill the need required by the Church's new-found status, to the dawn of the Reformation, the Church was indeed, to quote from the 39 Articles of the Church of England, "the witness and keeper of Holy Writ."

The Reformation changed everything and the key figure in this momentous transition was not Luther; it was not Calvin; it was not Tyndale; it was the Roman Catholic Dutch humanist, Desiderius Erasmus.

Erasmus, while brought up in the ways of the Brethren of the Common Life and deposited in a monastery at an early age, found himself outside of the institutional and theological establishment. His love was for primitive Christianity—pre-Nicene, Origenic Christianity. He lived, breathed, and had his being in the early church fathers and the Greco-Roman classical traditions. With the help of Lorenzo Valla he discovered that the late medieval version of the *Vulgata* was in major conflict with the extant Greek editions of the Byzantine Church which he had read in his travels across Europe to the major libraries that held such MSS. Hence, his decision to produce a published edition of the Greek N.T.—not a *critical* edition mind you, though he certainly had the materials to do so as his *annotationes* bear witness—was primarily driven by a primitivist-restorationist ecclesiology. This is ironic in that Erasmus never abandoned Rome formally, though he did in his heart, so to speak. Erasmus was more of an Anabaptist in his sentiment though he remained within the Roman fold; while Luther was decidedly catholic, though he abandoned Rome altogether.

Nevertheless, the recension of the Greek N.T. that Erasmus gave the world was essentially that which arrived at the age of printing from the late medieval scriptoria of the Eastern Orthodox Church—the Greek *Ecclesiastical Text*. Hence, in Erasmus, in spite of his own instincts in another direction indicated by his *Annotationes* we have in his work the culmination of the catholic-preservationist consensus, from which all the Reformers were nurtured. For Erasmus and the Reformers who were all, to the man, indebted to Erasmus's humanistic endeavors—and on this point the sublime work of Lewis Spitz has made a lasting and decisive contribution—*ad fontes* did not mean, back to the *historical* Greek and Hebrew editions, but back to the sanctioned *ecclesiastical*

editions produced by monastic scriptoria and synagogue. This is because they knew of no such distinction between the *historical* text, and the text of *faith*, to use an analogy from *Leben Jesu Forschung*. Aland has captured this sense beautifully in all of its simplicity:

*...it is undisputed that from the 16th to the 18th century orthodoxy's doctrine of verbal inspiration assumed...[the] Textus Receptus [i.e. Erasmus's recension], It was the only Greek text they knew, and they regarded it as the 'original' text.*

This was the tangible result of the catholic-preservationist principle up to the Reformation. And surely one of the most striking features of this ecclesiology is that of a marvelous continuity from early Nicene, through medieval, to Reformation catholicism on these three vital issue of Christology, canon, and text.

#### IV. Primitivist-Restorationism

Within the parallel universe of the other major ecclesiology, Primitivist-Restorationism, all is reversed: black is white; up is down; orthodoxy is heresy; heresy is orthodoxy. *Traditio* is nearly always a corruption of original “Biblical Christianity.” The only era that has something to say to us authoritatively is the first century. This is the realm Krister Stendahl calls “First Century Bible Land.” Another word for this is *Biblicism*. No creed but Christ; no confession but the Bible.

Every major attempt in the early church to appropriate the Christian message outside of the communities under orthodox episcopal authority was predicated upon the notion that the catholics had distorted, or “corrupted” the original teachings of Christ or of the apostles. Whether it was Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Arianism, Montanism, Nestorianism, etc., the premise was the same: Only these marginal groups, these *extra ecclesia* had the true *traditio* with which to unlock the authentic meaning of the first-century and the primary documents of the original Christian community. During the long millennium of the Middle Ages it was Mohammedism, Albigensianism, Paulicianism, etc. that made the same claims of primacy. At the turn of this century, particularly in the new world context, it was Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Charles Taze Russell, who all claimed a recovery of the lost *traditio* of the early church.

Moreover, the contemporary consensus amongst those moderns convinced that catholic Christianity was purely the result of a culturally conditioned blight of power politics and patriarchalism, is that the heresiologists of the early church were always liars. When treating the various threats to catholic Christianity, Irenaeus, Origen, Hippolytus, *et al.*, always distorted the views of those they were opposing, thus unfairly stacking the deck in their favor. Moreover, these “fathers” of the church in their zeal to defend their Hellenistic speculations about who Christ was “corrupted” the N.T. text, making certain that it was *their* orthodoxy that was found in the inspired documents themselves.

Professor Bart Ehrman, the leading N.T. text critic in America today, published a book a few years back while I was finishing up my Ph.D. at the University of Edinburgh. Here he sets forth the first systematic explanation for how this corruption, which Metzger alludes to in the title of *his* book, took place. It is simply the most important work in the area of N.T. text criticism published in the second half of this century. It is titled: *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: the Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (OUP, 1993). This work makes clear in a comprehensive way what other text critics since Hort could only hint at, namely, that the text of the New Testament has been altered for dogmatic purposes, as early as the second century, and that by the orthodox.

An indication of how out of touch the author of the article appearing in the November 1998 issue of the *Lutheran Witness* is with the current discipline of New Testament text criticism can be found by contrasting his remarks with those of Ehrman in his *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. And it is here where we will begin to find our answer as to why the Missouri Synod has succumbed to Anabaptist values in this area of Bible translations: The *Lutheran Witness* author said the following about the doctrinal significance of the differences in the various textual renderings of the many modern translations:

*Let me make one further comment about this whole matter of different manuscript readings.... [I]n no case is any doctrine of the Christian faith affected by any of these variant readings.*

The author's meaning is clear enough. No doctrine is ever affected by the many different readings of the many modern Bibles. Now let's hear the world's leading authority on this very same subject: Bart Ehrman says the following:

*The textual problems we have examined affect the interpretation of many of the familiar and historically significant passages of the New Testament: the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke, the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, the baptismal accounts of the Synoptics, the passion narratives, and other familiar passages in Acts, Paul, Hebrews, and the Catholic epistles. In some instances, the interpretations of these passages were understood by scribes who "read" their interpretations not only out of the text but actually into it, as they modified the words in accordance with what they were taken to mean.... Naturally, the same data relate to the basic doctrinal concerns of early Christians—theologians and, presumably, laypersons alike: Was Jesus the Messiah, predicted in the Old Testament? Was Joseph his father? Was Jesus born as a human? Was he tempted? Was he able to sin? Was he adopted to be the Son of God at his baptism? At his resurrection? Or was he himself God? Was Jesus one person or two persons? Did he have a physical body after his resurrection? And many others. **The ways scribes answered these questions affected the way they transcribed their texts. And the way they transcribed their texts has affected, to some degree, the way modern exegetes and theologians have answered these questions** (pp. 276; 281-82, n. 11).*

Here Ehrman has stated just the opposite of what the author of the *Lutheran Witness* article maintains. Here Ehrman tells us that everything from whether Jesus was the messiah, to whether or not he was virgin born, or if Joseph was really his father, to his deity, to his resurrection, has been affected by scribal alteration in the N.T. manuscripts. How could our *Lutheran Witness* author be so out of touch with the facts?

The fact of the matter is he is laboring under an ideological commitment that is part of the Evangelical legacy from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During the English Enlightenment Deists and antitrinitarians, such as Socinians and Unitarians were inconveniently bringing to the attention of the orthodox this sticky matter of textual variants.



Richard Bentley, an orthodox text critic working on his own edition of the Greek N.T. at the time, gave an answer to this challenge that has echoed down to our *Lutheran Witness* author. He said in effect to his Deist antagonist that choose as he would from the mass of available manuscripts, rather, have a nave choose, and no matter which manuscript he lights upon, the very worst of the lot, all of the tenets of the Christian faith will be found there.

Now this worked for most of the churchman of the day even though Bentley knew he would loose this bet if actually put to the test. You see the greatest mind of the day, a physicist by the name of Isaac Newton, has just written a treatise where he documented his discovery of “Two Notable Corruptions of Scripture.” They were the three heavenly witnesses in I John 5, and the reading “God was manifest in the flesh” of I Tim. 3:16. These textual corruptions led Newton to the following conclusion:

*By these instances it's manifest that the scriptures have been very much corrupted in the first ages & chiefly in the fourth Century in the times of the Arian Controversy. And to the shame of Christians be it spoken the Catholics are here much more guilty of these corruptions than the heretics.... The Catholics ever made the corruptions (so far as I can yet find) & then to justify & propagate them exclaimed against the Heretics & old Interpreters, as if the ancient genuine readings & translations had been corrupted.... All which I mention out of the great hatred I have to pious frauds, & to shame Christians out of these practices (Newton 1961:138-139)*

Bentley knew of Newton's text critical work and realized that on the basis of these two variants Newton was confirmed in his antitrinitarianism. And yet Bentley publicly maintained in the heat of polemical debate that no doctrine whatsoever was ever affected by textual variation. I call this stance the ideology of harmless engagement because that is just what it is—an ideological projection, rather than a reality.

This ideology was taken up once again in the mid-nineteenth century by the Plymouth Brethren disciple, Samuel P. Tregelles in a book titled, *An Historical Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament*, another propaganda piece meant to calm the fears of the pious. It was taken up one final time by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Princetonian, B.B. Warfield. Warfield gave a new twist to his attempt to domesticate of the threat of textual variation to the doctrine of verbal inspiration. He now claimed that no matter the state of the extant text, it was, after all, only the *original* text that was authoritative at any rate! This was completely out of step with his own 17<sup>th</sup> century confessional standards as well as out of step with his own continental Reformed dogmatic consensus (as it is with Lutheran dogmatics as well—see Robert Preus) which argued that the extant edition was infallible. And to this innovative adjustment he added a new theological term borrowed from astronomy, “inerrancy,” rather than use the traditional term of “infallibilitas.”

Hence, on this point Warfield became a genuine restorationist, because if he vested final authority in the autographs alone, one must now go on a search for these lost standards before one can have full inerrancy. The

implications for this were nothing short of remarkable. In his quest for the historical text Warfield was quite willing to give up the earliest resurrection account from the earliest Gospel as a fabrication.

So Warfield abandoned any defense of the existing manuscripts and strictly in order to win the argument, shifted his defense to *only the original manuscripts* (which were beyond the scrutiny of his critics, you see). Hence, in Warfield's own words, he had no intention of any longer defending the existing Bible as had his forefather's and hence would not

*assert that the common text, **but only that the original autographic text was inspired.** No "error" can be asserted, therefore, which cannot be proved to have been aboriginal in the text.*

Furthermore, he now claimed that science, rather than the church, would now present us, at some future date, with this "original" text:

*The inerrant autographs were a fact once; **they may possibly be a fact again,** when textual criticism has said its last word on the Bible text. In proportion as they are approached in the processes of textual criticism, do we have an ever better and better Bible than the one we have now*

Science will be the means of their "restoration":

*The autographic text of the New Testament is **distinctly within the reach of criticism** in so immensely the greater part of the volumes, that we cannot despair of restoring to ourselves and the Church of God, His Book, word for word, as he gave it by inspiration.*

Furthermore, Warfield's confidence in science to do this was boundless:

*So far from the Bible being less subject to criticism than other books, we are bound to submit its unique claims to a criticism of unique rigor. **Criticism is the mode of procedure by which we assure ourselves that it is what it claims to be.***

So the conclusion we are drawn to by *this* ecclesiology is that nearly all post-apostolic tradition is *corruption* (i.e. creeds, confessions, patristic consensus about definitions of orthodoxy and heresy), and that only the first century is normative, Stendahl's "First Century Bible Land."

Ironically enough, today this is the platform of both the discipline of contemporary historical Biblical criticism, as well as that of contemporary Anabaptist-Evangelical ecclesiology. Both communities assume the essential corruption of post-apostolic Christianity, beginning in the second century and reaching its full expression

in the seven ecumenical creeds. Hence, it is no surprise that primitivists from the Anabaptist-Evangelical community find the quest for the historical text as necessary to *their* project, as is the quest for the historical Jesus for the Biblical critics. But in reality, both projects are merely different steps in a single progression leading to the same goal: to reprimatinate first-century traditions, predicated upon the notion that the Church has corrupted first her documents, and then her theology, and then covered up both facts by creating a false history of the events. It makes perfect sense, therefore, that these religious as well as academic restorationists should be driven by the same noble motivation to obtain this original primitive tradition: only a restoration of first-century realities can save us from this present disaster.

You see, there is a moral imperative here. We are not simply dealing with another set of options in this wondrous age of pluralism. For both groups, this project is driven by a *moral* imperative, not simply an abstract academic interest. From whichever of these two vantage points one begins, either the religious or the academic the certainty upon which they are founded is that there is corruption here and it must be set right! Primitive-Restorationism.

Certainly it is clear enough that this principle is in place amongst these non-catholic, non-confessional groups. But what does that really have to do with catholic, confessional, Lutherans? Well, in light of what happened to Missouri in the post-war era leading to the great exile of the 70s, surely this story touches us at some point. This primitivist-restorationist principle must have entered our ranks at some point. And so it did, via the academic community. What I am arguing today is, however, that we are under threat from the same infiltration, only in this phase it is from the Anabaptist-Evangelical sector.

Two factors have influenced Missouri toward a restorationist ecclesiology: the adaptation of Warfield's quest for the historical text, which always culminates in the quest for the historical Jesus. And the relegating of all Bible production and circulation to Bible societies beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Francis Pieper, who was a contemporary of Warfield's stood his ground within confessional Lutheran ranks and would not give way to the restorationist mentality. One could say he was catholic in his stance on the text. The following are his judicious statements on the subject:

*...[I]n the seminary we can use the various modern critical editions and the textus receptus side by side without any difficulty. Even if we did not have the results of modern textual criticism and had to rely solely on the textus receptus, on which practically all of Luther's translation and the Authorized Version are based, the Christian Church would not be poorer in the knowledge of the divine truth. What the Church lacks in our day is not a reliable text of the Bible, but the faith in the sufficiently reliable text ( Pieper, vol.I, p. 340).*

You see how very different is Pieper's stance to that of Warfield—no claims that unless we have *autographa* we have no real Biblical authority. Rather, his stress is on our lack of belief in the message of the text handed down to us by the Church, the *Ecclesiastical text*.

But by the time Warfield's seduction of Princeton into the quest for the historical text came to stop in the quest for the historical Jesus--1929 was the year Princeton was reorganized so as to accept the so-called "higher criticism"--William Arndt had made certain that Missouri was now also involved in Warfield's quest. In an article he had published in the *Concordia Theological Monthly* in 1934, he now abandoned any idea of an ecclesiastically preserved text and provided Missouri academics and students with the rules with which they, too, could now join in the quest for the historical text. On the first page of this essay the title of B.B. Warfield's manual on N.T. text critical technique is prominently displayed. And here we also hear the echo of Warfield's influence on Arndt:

*In general, we must remember that this discussion has nothing to do with the doctrine of inspiration, because it was only the original autographs that were inspired and covered by the divine promise of infallibility. The copies present the inspired text to the extent to which they reproduce the original.*

And there is the rub—to the extent that they reproduce the original. This is the post-Enlightenment bifurcation introduced by Warfield at Princeton. It demands that we go on a perpetual quest for the *historical* text and as long as autographic certainty is in doubt, inspiration is in doubt, and your guess is as good as mine as to how the original read.

Hence, by 1947, with the arrival of the RSV where Mary is no longer referred to as a virgin in the book of Isaiah, but as a young maiden, Missouri was now ready to also engage the quest for the historical Jesus. A new historical consciousness had arrived.

## **THE BIBLE SOCIETIES**

With the rise of the British and Foreign Bible Society in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (1804) we discover something without precedent in the history of the Church. An organization made up primarily of non-conformist evangelicals who were in keen opposition to the established Anglican Church of England, which was, of course responsible for producing and licensing the English Bible since the days of Coverdale. This *extra ecclesiam* Bible society movement was clearly a rival not only to the theology, liturgy, traditions and interpretation of the Bible of the Church of England, but they were even responsible for removing the apocrypha from the established, the *Authorized Version*, which had appeared in Luther's German Bible and every English Bible since Wycliffe! It was their strategy to circulate the Bible like an evangelistic tract, with no ecclesiastical associations whatsoever. The Bible minus all *traditio*.

In response to this development Bishop Herbert Marsh, then Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, wrote a not so popular treatise against the Bible Societies. Prof. Marsh was, perhaps the most critically informed

churchman in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He is characterized in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* in the following terms:

*The early years of his episcopate were marked by controversy arising from his anti-Evangelical measures and his refusal to license clergy of Calvinist beliefs. His profound and extensive erudition, his clear and active mind, his belief in the Establishment [of the church], his ideal of rigid uniformity in matters of doctrine and liturgical practice, and his capacity for business made him the foremost English bishop of his age.*

A significant figure in the tumultuous period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and one whom I suspect might feel right at home on this campus.

In his treatise, *An Inquiry into the Consequences of Neglecting to give the prayer book with the Bible Interspersed with Remarks on Some Late Speeches at Cambridge and other Important Matter Relative to the British and Foreign Bible Society*, 1812, he let it be known that the work of the Bible Society was anything but helpful to the cause of the established Church of England:

*Whoever objects to the British and Foreign Bible Society is invariably asked: Where is the **harm** of giving away a Bible? I will answer therefore by saying, **None whatever**. In the contrary, the more widely the Scriptures are disseminated, the greater in all respects must be the good produced. Having answered **this** question, and, as I hope, to the satisfaction of every member in the Society, I beg leave to ask in my turn; Where is the **harm** of giving away a Prayer Book?... Can it therefore be a matter of **indifference**, whether the poor of our establishment are provided with **Prayer Books**? Do we perform our duty, do we properly provide for their **religious instruction**, if we provide them only with the Bible, and leave them **unprovided** with the **Prayer Book**?... When we further consider, that there is at present hardly a town, or even a village, which is not visited by illiterate teachers, who expound the Bible with more confidence than the most profound theologian, it becomes **doubly** necessary, if we would preserve the poor of the establishment in the religion of their fathers, to provide them with a safeguard against the delusions of **false interpretation**. And what better safeguard **can** we offer than the **Book of Common Prayer**, which contains the doctrines of the Bible, according to its **true** exposition; in which those doctrines are applied, throughout the prayers and collects, to the best purposes of religion, and are condensed in a manner, which is intelligible to all, in that excellent formulary the Church Catechism?*

Substitute the TV evangelist for the itinerant preacher, the Book of Common Prayer for Luther's Small Catechism, and these are the kinds of questions we should also be asking in our contemporary situation.

\*\*\*\* Currently the Bible societies, which are bound to no confessional standards, and not the Church, provide us with our notion of canon, text, and even our theological understanding of the text. The cross-cultural communications experts and social anthropologists in the employ of the Bible societies have become of new scribes and exegetes. We accept from *their* scriptoria, *their* judgments on canon, text and interpretation. A classic example can be found in one of Eugene Nida's examples of how the content of Biblical theology should be modified for purpose of communicating to the non-churched a consumer friendly Gospel. E. A. Nida, the American Bible Society's former Executive Secretary for Translations and the major proponent of the dynamic-equivalence theory, gives an example showing why a major tenet of historic Christianity—perhaps its very foundation—such as the dogma of the substitutionary atonement of Christ, should be exchanged for a concept that would be more readily understood in a given culture:

*One of the most common interpretations of the atonement has been substitutionary, in the sense that Christ took upon Himself our sins and died in our place as a substitutive sacrifice. This interpretation, true and valuable as it may be for many, is not communicable to many persons today, for they simply do not think in such categories... [T]he presentation of the Atonement in terms of reconciliation is more meaningful, since in this way they can understand more readily how God could be in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.<sup>5</sup>*

This example deals with translation. What about the canonical form of the text. Gordon Fee provides us with a most telling example of where we are headed once we begin the quest for the historical text.

In his massive work, running to nearly a thousand pages, titled: *God's Empowering Presence: the Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, 1994, we have what Fee himself might well regard a his *magnum opus*. Here Fee flies high his Pentecostal colors interwoven with profound and substantive scholarship. But it is a very interesting text critical excursus found in this work that I want to highlight. On pages 272-281 Fee provides us with one of the boldest arguments for the viability of *conjectural emendation* one will find in all the literature dealing with text critical matters. Fee's point is that the reading in I Cor. 14:34-35, regarding women keeping silent in the churches, "...is almost certainly not by Paul, nor does it belong to this argument. This means of course, that it offers no help in our search for the place of the Spirit in the Pauline experience of Christ and in his theology," (p. 281). In short, this prohibition against women speaking in Church, which traditionally has been seen as a proof text against priestesses in the Church, was a corruption on the part of later, patriarchal orthodox scribes who wanted to make certain their power base was safe from the intrusion from, Fee might add, women believing themselves to be empowered by the Spirit to preach.

---

<sup>5</sup> Eugene A. Nida, *Message and Mission* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1960), p. 59.

Now because Fee is one of the leading N.T. text critics alive today, an authority on John's text and patristic citations in particular, his argument carries a good bit of weight within the discipline. But were he not an Evangelical Pentecostal, who believes *a priori* that women should be ordained to the priesthood his argument might carry even more weight. Were he an Greek Orthodox priest making such an argument I might feel more inclined to take seriously what he has to say on this passage. As it stands, to appeal to the weakest of all arguments—a conjectural emendation, a guess really, with no documentary manuscript evidence to speak of—must strike even the most disinterested as rather tendentious. And of course, it is.

My final example of where the Bible societies have left us, now that they have us, the Church, in their vortex. The so-called *Inclusive Language NIV*. I will not go into the history of this Bible since it is still a fresh item well documented by *World Magazine* (bless their souls for being the first institution to take on Zondervan in their near 30 year history of having everything their own way regarding the NIV. I want to dispel the notion that what they did with this Bible was harmless and did no injustice to the text nor the Church. I want to do this by comparing and contrasting what the *Committee on Bible Translation* who produced both the NIV and the Inclusive Language edition say about the goal of this translation, with what the Inclusive Language Lectionary Committee said in the introduction to their Biblical text, produced by the National Council of Churches back in 1983. First the NCC's Lectionary, which refers to "Our Mother who art in Heaven" and to the Son of Man as "the Human One."

*The Inclusive Language Lectionary Committee...revised only in those places where male-biased or otherwise inappropriately exclusive language could be modified to reflect an inclusiveness of all persons (preface, p. 2).*

Now the Inclusive Language NIV:

*...it was recognized that it was often appropriate to mute the patriarchalism of the culture of the biblical writers through gender-inclusive language when this could be done without compromising the message of the Spirit.*

First allow me to observe that this is the flimsiest of criteria: "the message of the Spirit," rather than the actual wording of the text? What community subjectively makes *that* decision to everyone's satisfaction? Secondly, note that both publications aim to do away with illegitimate first century patriarchalism from which they believe the N.T. authors suffer. The NCC lectionary is a little more thorough-going than is the NIV, actually altering traditional and Biblical male gender pronouns and nouns for God and Jesus, while the NIV holds back here. But what is to say that with barriers coming down and dialogue proceeding apace that in a few years hence, NIV translators might agree with their NCC counterparts and suddenly realize that the "message of the Spirit" has been compromised by male terms for God and Christ. There simply is no one in charge.

## **RECLAIMING THE BIBLE FOR THE CHURCH**

To borrow the title from a most appropriate book title, we simply must reclaim the Bible for the Church, taking it away from the new Bible landlords. This must be accomplished in two fields: 1) that of text criticism; 2) and dominance of the non-theological, anthropological, and ideological agenda of the Bible societies.

Regarding the first realm, the canonical method can help cure this insatiable need to continue this futile search for the historical quest. This artificial craving can be defeated by rediscovering our original orthodox paradigm of Biblical authority given to us by our Lutheran dogmatic tradition as wonderfully distilled to us Robert Preus Edinburgh Ph.D. dissertation, *the Inspiration of Scripture*. Once we rediscover that it was always the extant text, contrary to Arndt, that was the locus of Biblical authority and never the *autographa* we are a long way down the road to recovering our senses. We then need to take very seriously Brevard Childs program for canonical exegesis. This approach validates in a wonderful way the final form, or, if you will, the ecclesiastical recensions as the only form of the text that can provide us with anything like a Biblical theology. Finally, sober look at the history of the quest for the historical text would certainly be enough for all but the specialist to abandon this task as flawed by design. I have been a regular participant at the Society of Biblical Literature N.T. text criticism section for over 15 years this past years topic was the most gripping to date. “What do we mean by original text? The consensus was that it is impossible to re-pristiniate the original, and Eldon Jay Epp even recommended that the best we can come up with are various expressions of the “canonical” text.

With regard to the Bible societies, we need to take more seriously the history of the English Bible and the various *theological* criteria that have historically informed this most sacred of tasks. Do we even teach such courses in our universities and seminaries any longer. In Great Britain, David Daniell, almost single-handedly has been waging a war against the contemporary English Bible landlords through the platform of the Tyndale Society and by means of a modern spelling edition of Tyndale’s Bible. Others such as Gerald Hammand, and Ward Allen, genuine authorities in the Renaissance Bible, have also been on this crusade. It seems the literary community has always felt the loss of the Renaissance Bible tradition with a keener pathos than the jaded and punch-drunk contemporary culture chasers within the American religious community—how very ironic!

I close with words from one of the most prophetic of 16<sup>th</sup> century Lutherans, William Tyndale, in his introduction to the laymen who would read his English Bible, as the very sacred text itself:

*Then go to and read the stories of the bible for thy learning and comfort, and see every thing practiced before thine eyes: for according to those examples shall it go with thee and all men until the world’s end. So that into whatsoever case or state a man may be brought, according to whatsoever example of the bible it be, his end shall be according as he there seeth and readeth. As God there warneth ere he smite, and suffereth long ere he take extreme vengeance, so shall he do with us. As they that turn, are there received to mercy, and they that maliciously resist perish utterly, so shall it be with us. As they that resist the counsel of God perish through their own counsel, so shall it be with us until the world’s end. As it went with their kings and rulers, so shall it go with ours. As it was with their common people, so shall it be with ours. As it was with their spiritual officers, so shall it be with ours. As they had among them false prophets and true, and as their false persecuted the true: and moved the princes to slay them, so shall it be with us until the end of the world. [And] As there was among them but a few true hearted to God, so shall it be among us...*





