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Controversy Over Translating the Bible (from Jerome to the Present), Part I¹

*Rev. Dr. Cameron Alexander MacKenzie presented the following paper on January 19, 2015, at the 2015 LCA Conference in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Part II will be printed in the May 2015 issue of **The Lutheran Clarion**.*

As long as people take the Bible seriously, they are going to translate it. And as long as people take the Bible seriously, they are going to argue about translations! Not many people worry about translations of Homer, Victor Hugo, or Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Experts may complain but nobody riots or burns a book in church. But the former happened in the 5th century and the latter in the 20th when the translation involved was the Bible. Although clearly a long way from our Lord's "new commandment" that His disciples love one another, it is nonetheless a mark of religious vitality – if not of charity – that Christians care enough about the Bible to denounce translations and translators who do not render the Word of God faithfully or, at least, so they think. Whether we are talking about Jerome's Vulgate or the NIV 2011, the first appearance of these versions created controversy. The same has been true with respect to many versions in between. The story of translating the Bible is also the story of controversy in the Church.

Obviously, we are not going to recount the entire history of translation controversies this morning, but we can take a look at a few episodes over the course of Christian history that illustrate the challenges that are intrinsic to Bible translating. The issues include things like text, style, and theology but the common thread is the challenge to tradition, what people are used to, and the underlying suspicion is that changes in "the book" are indicative of changes in the faith. When Christians produce a version of the Scriptures that sooner or later becomes widely used and accepted, people naturally assume that that version of the sacred text *is* the Bible. Thus, the Old Latin *is* the Bible in the 4th century; the Vulgate *is* the Bible in the 16th; and the King James Version *is* the Bible in the 19th. So subsequent translators look like innovators who are departing from the Word of God.

Jerome and Augustine

This situation arose already in the days of St. Jerome (347-

420). When he first undertook his work with respect to the biblical text in response to a request from the Bishop of Rome, Jerome anticipated the criticism that would follow, describing his task as "both perilous and presumptuous." "Is there a man, learned or unlearned," he predicted, "who will not, when he takes the volume into his hands, and perceives that what he reads does not suit his settled tastes, break out immediately into violent language, and call me a forger and a profane person for having the audacity to add anything to the ancient books, or to make any changes or corrections therein?"² As it turned out, it wasn't just violent "language" that characterized the response, it was actual violence.

Jerome began his work with the biblical text as a reviser of the gospels in the Latin New Testament but when he turned to the Old Testament, he eventually decided to start over and translate afresh from the Hebrew. But why? He was convinced that the underlying text that previous translators had used was inaccurate. They had used the Greek Septuagint – a translation of the Old Testament, prepared before the coming of Christ but routinely used by the first missionaries of the Christian faith throughout the Greco-Roman world.³ It became the Bible of the early Church and therefore the basis for translations into the Latin and other languages. So Jerome was rejecting a deeply held tradition – and there were consequences.⁴

No less a figure than St. Augustine (354-430) informed Jerome⁵ about a riot (*tantus tumultus*) that broke out in Oea (Tripoli) regarding Jerome's new rendering of Jonah's plant – the one that grew up and withered at the end of the Jonah story (Jonah 4:6-1). Previous Latin versions had called it a "gourd," Jerome called it "ivy."⁶ Augustine did not discuss the vocables but did raise a critical point that explained the actions of the people. Jerome's word choice, he asserted, was "very different...from that which had been of old familiar to the senses and memory of all the worshippers, and had been chanted for so many generations in the

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church.” This was an early case of the translation traditionalism that I described above: people equated an alteration of the text with an attack upon the Word. So what did the poor bishop of Oea do? After consulting with the Jews about the accuracy of the Greek version underlying the Old Latin, he reverted to the familiar wording “as he desired not to be left without a congregation – a calamity which he narrowly escaped.”⁷

It is important to note that Augustine did not direct his criticism of Jerome’s work at the accuracy of his translation but at the text he was translating. Concerns like this one regarding the underlying text of a new translation regularly recur in translation traditionalism. In this case, Jerome was innovating by returning to the Hebrew as the basis for a Latin Old Testament but Augustine was arguing on behalf of the Greek Septuagint. “The latter,” he maintained, “has no mean authority, seeing that it has obtained so wide circulation, and was the one which the apostles used.” From Augustine’s standpoint, Jerome would do the Church a greater favor by correcting the Old Latin by the Greek rather than by continuing to translate afresh from the Hebrew. If Jerome persisted in his project, Augustine could foresee divisions between East and West, each now with its own Bible, as well as local disputes that could not readily be resolved, given the paucity of Hebrew scholarship in the Christian world. Better to stick with the traditional text.⁸

Some years later, when he addressed the same subject in his *City of God*, Augustine took a slightly different tack but was no less dedicated to the Septuagint. Basically, he viewed it as an inspired translation. Acknowledging now that the apostles had cited both Hebrew and Septuagint texts, Augustine understood this as evidence that “the one and the self-same Spirit” had spoken in both.⁹ There were other translations of the Old Testament into Greek besides the Septuagint but, he argued, “the Church has received this Septuagint translation just as if it were the only one” and “from this translation there has also been made a translation in the Latin tongue, which the Latin churches use.” In other words, the Septuagint – as well as translations derived from it – was the Bible of the Christian Church. Jerome, however, was calling this consensus into question by a new translation that made evident discrepancies between the Hebrew and Greek, especially in the form of additions and deletions. So what should be done? Augustine’s answer? Keep them both, “For the same Spirit who was in the prophets when they spoke these things was also in the seventy men when they translated them, so that assuredly they could also say something else, just as if the prophet himself had said both, because it would be the same Spirit who said both.”¹⁰

Not even outright contradictions between the two versions

bothered Augustine. In discussing the fact that in Jonah 3:4, the Hebrew referred to 40 days of repentance for Ninevah but the Septuagint only three, Augustine offered this advice, “The Seventy, interpreting long afterward, could say what was different and yet pertinent to the matter, and agree in the self-same meaning, although under a different signification.” The details of each text mattered far less than the spiritual meaning to be derived from them. Therefore, the reader should “raise himself above the history, and search for those things which the history itself was written to set forth.” In this particular case, Augustine urged readers to understand Jonah’s appeal for repentance in Ninevah as a New Testament appeal to the Gentiles, “In the forty days seek Him in whom thou mayest also find three days – the one thou wilt find in His ascension, the other in His resurrection.” Therefore, at the level of theological meaning, the two versions were in harmony: Both pointed to Christ. That was the important thing. Far from hindering this message, differences between the two, rightly understood, complemented and reinforced the same Christian truth.¹¹

As it turned out, neither church father convinced the other, nor did the Church as a whole either through councils or popes decide between the two. Over the course of decades – centuries even – Jerome’s Old Testament became the accepted text in the Vulgate *but* the books not present in the Hebrew Bible, books therefore named by Jerome “apocrypha [*apocrypha*]”¹² also remained a part of the Vulgate. In other words, the medieval Old Testament consisted of Augustine’s canon but included Jerome’s text.

The Reformation Era

Although these two church fathers disagreed over the text of the Bible, they were in agreement theologically, for example, in their opposition to Pelagianism. But when we consider Bible translating in the era of the Reformation, theological debate becomes the basis for controversy over vernacular Bibles. Arguments over the relative merits of Bible versions addressed issues of text and style within a broader context of correct doctrine, and rightly so, for the

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Thank You Balance-Concord, Inc.

Balance-Concord, Inc., has been a most faithful contributor to *The Lutheran Clarion* in honor of the sainted **Rev. Raymond Mueller** and the sainted **Rev. Edgar Rehwaldt**, both of whom faithfully served the Synod and Balance-Concord, Inc., for many years.

The Clarion is most appreciative of such continued support from Balance-Concord, Inc., as well as the wonderful support of our readers. These contributions make it possible to bring you substantive articles by respected and qualified authors on issues affecting YOUR Synod. Please continue your support. It is both appreciated and needed.

Open Letter to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Dear *Clarion* Readers, Members of Synod and Members of Member Congregations,

Below is the wonderful confessional message from Synodical President Harrison relative to what a Synodically rostered teacher has advocated and is now being allowed to stand without consequence because of a decision made in a District of the Synod.

Regarding a recent decision of a panel not to proceed with charges regarding a public false teacher in the LCMS*

When a public teacher on the roster of Synod can without consequence publicly advocate the ordination of women (even participate vested in the installation of an ELCA clergy person), homosexuality, the errancy of the Bible, the historical-critical method, open communion, communion with the Reformed, evolution, and more, then the public confession of the Synod is meaningless. I am saying that if my Synod does not change its inability to call such a person to repentance and remove such a teacher where there is no repentance, then we are liars and our confession is meaningless. I do not want to belong to such a synod, much less lead it. I have no intention of walking away from my vocation. I shall rather use it and, by the grace of God, use all the energy I have to call this Synod to fidelity to correct this situation.

Matt Harrison

* Posted at the LCMS Witness, Mercy, Life Together web site (<http://wmltblog.org>) on January 26, 2015.

Simply put, the Synod is once again at a defining point as an "orthodox" church body. The Board of Directors of Lutheran Concerns Association calls upon the presidents of every District of Synod, of every Synodical institution of higher learning and every regent thereof as well as every member of every elected board/commission to publicly indicate their unqualified support for President Harrison in his statement above or resign their position forthwith. It is time to be as bold in the secular world of today as Luther was at the Diet of Worms: "Here I stand....." We are in GOD'S CHURCH, not a secular semi-religious philosophical organization or in a governmental legislative body where too often the accepted practice in actuality truly is flim-flamming constituents.

LCA Board of Directors,
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¹⁴ "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
Joshua 24:14-15 ESV

translators of those times readily acknowledged that they undertook the task of translation in order to advance a theological agenda.

“...theology and the printing press gave dramatic impetus to the production of vernacular Bibles in the 16th century. And not surprisingly, Martin Luther was at the source and center of this development.”

Consider Luther, for example. Once he had recovered the Gospel in the Scriptures, Luther was of no mind to abandon it for the opinions of others no matter how powerful or prestigious they might be. Moreover, the new technology of Luther's day made it possible for more people to have the Word of God in their own language

than ever before. Luther was by no means the first to translate the Bible into German. There were at least fourteen editions of the German Bible in print before Martin Luther.¹³ Nonetheless, it is still the case that theology and the printing press gave dramatic impetus to the production of vernacular Bibles in the 16th century. And not surprisingly, Martin Luther was at the source and center of this development.

We cannot understand the success of Luther's reformation movement apart from the new technology of his day. Although Luther was himself an impressive personality, it is hard to imagine the Reformation without the printing press. By printed works in the vernacular, especially pamphlets, the catechism, and the Bible, Luther communicated directly with ordinary people who embraced his faith and made it their own.¹⁴

Given Luther's basic beliefs about the Bible, *viz*, that the Scriptures alone are the source and standard for Christian doctrine and practice¹⁵ and that every Christian is responsible for knowing and applying the Scriptures,¹⁶ it is not surprising that Luther and his colleagues produced and promoted Bibles in the language of the people. Although the Reformer had published a few translations of biblical material before 1522, it was not until he was at the Wartburg that he actually undertook the project that would last him the rest of his life, putting the Word of God into the German tongue. It was a collaborative effort, of course. Nevertheless, Luther was its driving force and the one person more than any other responsible for its accomplishment.¹⁷

As noted above, the German Bible was already in print before Luther undertook the task, but previous editions were based on the Latin Vulgate. Luther wanted something different – and better – a Bible based upon the original languages and translated into an idiom that ordinary Germans could understand. Moreover, unlike his predecessors, he had access to printed editions of both the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament as

well as grammars and lexicons, Latin translations, and philological commentaries to help in understanding.¹⁸

Up until 1521 and his great confession before the Diet of Worms, Luther had neither time nor opportunity for such demanding work as translating the Bible; but afterwards, when his prince, Frederick the Wise, had him taken off to the Wartburg for safekeeping, Luther began the task. Starting in December 1521, with the New Testament, he completed a German translation from the Greek by the time he returned to Wittenberg in March of 1522. With the help of Melanchthon and others, the work was revised and then transmitted to the printers for publication in September 1522.¹⁹

And this was just the beginning. With the New Testament now being published, Luther and his Wittenberg colleagues turned to the Old and published it in parts as they completed them, the Pentateuch coming out in 1523 and the last of the prophets in 1532. Only in 1534 did a complete Luther Bible finally appear, and it was a magnificent achievement. Beautifully printed and illustrated, this work opened up God's Word to the German reader as never before. Here the pious layman could read the entire narrative of God's revelation from the story of creation all the way through the book of Revelation with its visions of the end times. And when he didn't understand something, he had Luther's prefaces and notes to help him!²⁰

Prior to Luther's death, twelve more editions of the entire Bible appeared in Wittenberg. In addition, between 1522 and 1546, there were at least 22 official editions of the New Testament; and outside of Wittenberg, more than 250 editions of the Bible and portions thereof appeared during the same period. One scholar has estimated that during Luther's lifetime a half a million complete Bibles or parts of Bibles were printed in the German tongue.²¹ It's no wonder then that Luther's German influenced the development of the German language, for it seems that everyone who could read German was reading Luther's German during these years!

Of course, there were those who did not like what they read, and so, as was true of Luther's other works, his Ger-

DEAR FAITHFUL CLARION READER,



In some past years at about this time the LCA treasury has started running low on funds.

LCA can sure use your help!

Reflect five minutes on the content of Rev. Dr. MacKenzie's and District President Sattgast's articles in the context of our society today and you will see how **The Lutheran Clarion** continues to focus on presenting and upholding the truth of God's Holy Word.

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man Bible also received its fair share of criticism. The motivation was primarily theological, for those who opposed Luther's Bible also opposed his theology.

Ironically, however, by the time of the Reformation the translation traditionalists were lining up behind that same version – more or less²² – to which Augustine had initially taken exception on account of its innovations.²³ That, of course, is how traditionalism works: given enough time, what was once a novelty becomes such an integral element in the lives of people that they cannot imagine doing without it. Something that has stood the test of time has thereby demonstrated its value. Furthermore, when it comes to the Bible, traditionalists are wary that attacks upon a venerable version are the consequence of a new theology, i.e., advocates of a new biblical text are rejecting the old doctrine as well as the old version. And sometimes they are correct. This is a very important point, so permit me to repeat it. Sometimes traditionalists are correct in their fears that a new translation means advancing a new doctrine. This certainly was the case in the 16th century.

If we look, for example, to one of Luther's earliest critics, Jerome Emser,²⁴ who not only criticized Luther's New Testament when it first came out but also published a version of his own in 1527,²⁵ we find that he placed his specific criticisms of Luther's Bible into the context of a general charge that Luther was a heretic. By the time the September Bible appeared in 1522, Emser had already written against Luther – and Luther against Emser.²⁶ Not surprisingly, the papal apologist was not enthusiastic about Luther the translator. According to Kenneth Strand, Emser viewed Luther's work as that of a man already found guilty of heresy. "Why then," Emser asked, "should we Christians accept so quickly the New Testament translation of one individual and especially of an openly declared heretic [*von einem offenbaren erklerte kerzer*]?"²⁷ Emser went on to indict Luther for departing from the traditional Latin text prepared by Jerome at the request of a pope and used by the Church for over a thousand years, and for failing to translate the text literally. Instead, he claimed, Luther had omitted words, letters, and entire sayings and had translated in a confused manner. What's more, Luther had also accompanied the biblical text with heretical glosses and introductions. In other words, for Emser, Luther's "New Testament" was just one more attempt by a heretic to advance his own false views of religion. Departures from the traditional text also indicated departures from traditional doctrine.

Obviously, we are not going to agree with Emser's characterization of Luther's work as heretical, but we must acknowledge the fundamental accuracy of his charge regarding Luther's agenda. The Reformer was using his translation of the Scriptures to promote his own understanding of Christianity over against others, and in fact, he was quite open and honest about it. At the outset of the Preface to his New Testament, Luther complained about "many unfounded [*wilde*] interpretations and prefaces" that

have resulted in no one knowing what is "gospel or law, New Testament or Old." This situation required a biblical text with notes and prefaces to rescue the common man from "his former delusions" and to guide his reading so that, as Luther argued, "he may not seek laws and commandments where he ought to be seeking the gospel and promises of God."²⁸

The Gospel, in particular, became the theme of Luther's preface, because it was the ultimate purpose for which God had given the Scriptures. "See to it," Luther wrote, "that you do not make a Moses out of Christ, or a book of laws and doctrines out of the gospel, as has been done heretofore and as certain prefaces put it, even those of St. Jerome. For the gospel does not expressly demand works of our own by which we become righteous and are saved; indeed it condemns such works. Rather the gospel demands faith in Christ: that he has overcome for us sin, death, and hell, and thus gives us righteousness, life, and salvation not through our works, but through his own works, death, and suffering in order that we might avail ourselves of his death and victory as though we had won it ourselves."²⁹

This understanding of the Bible's purpose led Luther to value some of its books more highly than others. In particular, Luther treasured the Gospel of John, 1 Peter, and the epistles of Paul, especially Romans. Regarding these, Luther writes, "In them...you...find depicted in masterly fashion how faith in Christ overcomes sin, death, and hell, and gives life, righteousness, and salvation. This is the real nature of the gospel."³⁰

But if Luther ranked some books of the Bible high on his list, there were others for which he had far less appreciation, and in fact, in his 1522 preface, he calls James "an epistle of straw." Why would Luther say such a thing when elsewhere he writes, "I praise [James] and consider it a good book, because it sets up no doctrines of men but vigorously promulgates the law of God"? But that is just the point, compared to others like Romans, James falls short not for what it says but on account of what it does **not** teach, i.e., "the Passion and resurrection and office of Christ and to lay the foundation for faith in him."³¹ For Luther, the Law is not enough. God gave us the Scriptures for the sake of the Savior.

But what about the traditional Latin text of the Bible? Emser also criticized Luther for departing from the Vulgate in his German Bible. Although Luther did not address this question in his New Testament preface, for some years he had already been assessing the Vulgate by means of the

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original language texts.

In his early lectures on Romans (1513-15), he referred frequently to the Greek and at times used it to correct the Vulgate.³² Likewise in his early publication on the Penitential Psalms (1517), he admitted to using Reuchlin's translation from the Hebrew for the text of his commentary in addition to the Vulgate.³³ Then in the very first of the 95 Theses, he implicitly faulted the Vulgate in comparison with the Greek. For in his subsequent defense of the statement, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' [*poenitentiam agite*] [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance," Luther argued explicitly "first from the Greek word *metanoieite* itself, which means 'repent' [*poenitentiam agite*] and could be translated more exactly by the Latin *transmentamini*, which means 'assume another mind and feeling,...have a change of spirit [emphasis mine].'"³⁴

Later, on more than one occasion, Luther clearly expressed his appreciation for the biblical text in the original languages. For example, in his advice *To the Councilmen of Germany that They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools* (1524), Luther wrote that "it was not without purpose that God caused his Scriptures to be set down in these two languages alone – the Old Testament in Hebrew, the New in Greek. Now if God did not despise them but chose them above all others for his word, then we too ought to honor them above all others."³⁵ Not surprisingly, then, for his German Bible, Luther translated the New Testament Greek and the Old Testament Hebrew.³⁶

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In the May issue of the *Clarion*, Dr. MacKenzie continues with Luther's translation and his defense thereof. Luther inspired the first English translations which ultimately led to the modern era and everything that has brought about, including the feminism influence. Dr. MacKenzie will continue to explain how text, style and ideology (theology) influence the translations.

- 1 An earlier version of this essay appeared in *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 53 (2013):15-41.
- 2 Jerome to Damasus, 383 A.D., Preface to the Four Gospels, NPNF, Ser. 2, 6:485-86. PL 29:col. 525. http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/main/jerome/preface_to_four_gospels.shtml (accessed 12/26/14).
- 3 *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online Academic Edition*, s.v. "Septuagint." Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 2014. Web 24 Dec. 2014. <http://academic.eb.com/EBchecked/topic/535154/Septuagint>. For more details, see F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 43-50, and Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 50-78.
- 4 Jerome defended his preference for the Hebrew in a number of places, among them prefaces to books of the Bible that became a part of the medieval Vulgate. For him, the Septuagint was a translation that contained errors ranging from copyists' oversights (Pref. to Job, NPNF, Ser. 2, 6:491) to translators' deliberate mistakes, perpetrated for theological reasons (Pref. to the Pentateuch, NPNF, Ser. 2, 3:516). See H. F. D. Sparks, "Jerome as Biblical Scholar," in P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1: *From the Beginnings to Jerome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 530-32, and Adam Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholar, and the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 41-72.
- 5 For the "back and forth" of the two fathers over the question of which Old Testament text, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 217-18, 266-67, 270-72. For their correspondence more generally, see Carolinne White, "Introduction," in *The*

Correspondence (349-419) Between Jerome and Augustine of Hippo (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 1-10.

- 6 The Hebrew word is קִיָּוִן. The LXX translates it κολοκύνθη ("gourd"); the Old Latin *cucurbita* ("gourd") and Jerome *hedera* ("ivy"). Incidentally, the ESV and NIV 2011 just use "plant" (although in Jonah 4:6, the latter adds "leafy"). I did not have access to the Old Latin but see <http://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/13868/what-was-jeromes-defense-for-translating-the-hebrew-word-%D7%A7%D6%B4%D7%99%D7%A7%D6%B8%D7%99%D7%95%D6%B9%D7%9F-kikayon-in> (accessed 12/26/14).
- 7 Augustine to Jerome, 404 A.D., Letter 71, NPNF, Ser. 1, 1:327. (PL 33:cols. 241-43. <http://www.augustinus.it/latino/lettere/index2.htm>. Accessed 12/23/14.). See also Jerome's correspondence with Augustine: Jerome to Augustine, 404 A.D., Letter 112.22 (White, 136-37; PL 22:cols. 930-31) and Jerome to Augustine, 404-405 A.D., Letter 115.1 (White 142-43; PL 22:col. 935). The *Patrologia Latina* is available electronically at http://books.google.com/books?id=IRERAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed 12/27/14). See also Kelly, 266.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 NPNF, Ser. 1, 2:387. PL 41:col. 605.
- 10 NPNF, Ser. 1, 2:386. PL 41:cols. 603-604.
- 11 NPNF, Ser. 1, 2:387. PL 41:col. 605.
- 12 Pref. to Samuel and Kings, NPNF, Ser. 2, 6:490.
- 13 M. Reu, *Luther's German Bible* (Columbus, OH: The Lutheran Book Concern, 1934; reprint, St. Louis: CPH, 1984), 27-39.
- 14 This has often been remarked upon. An excellent work that demonstrates just how effectively Luther employed the printing press is Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994). For a much broader look at the ways in which the printing press facilitated the transformation of western civilization (including religion) in the early modern period, see Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
- 15 E.g., "We ought to see that every article of faith of which we boast is certain, pure, and based on clear passages of Scripture." *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), LW 36:107 (WA 6:560.27-29).
- 16 E.g., "We ought to march boldly forward and test all that they do, or leave undone, by our believing understanding of the Scriptures...it is the duty of every Christian to espouse the cause of the faith, to understand and defend it, and to denounce every error." *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate* (1520), LW 44:135-36 (WA 6:412.29-31, 37-38).
- 17 Eric W. Gritsch, "Luther as Bible Translator," in Donald K. McKim, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 62-72.
- 18 See Brooke Foss Westcott, *A General View of the History of the English Bible*, 3rd ed., rev. William Aldis Wright, reprint ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998), 126-29, for a brief description of what was available for original language biblical studies at the time of Luther. For a more detailed discussion, see Basil Hall, "Biblical Scholarship: Editions and Commentaries," in S. L. Greenslade, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3: *The West from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1963), 38-93.
- 19 Willem Jan Kooiman, *Luther and the Bible* (Phil.: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 90-95, 118-21.
- 20 Kooiman, 131-63, 174-77.
- 21 Kooiman, 178.
- 22 What made it out of the Middle Ages was not exactly Jerome's work. See Raphael Loewe, "The Medieval History of the Latin Vulgate," G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *The Cambridge History of the English Bible*, vol. 2: *The West from the Fathers to the Reformation* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1969), 102-54.
- 23 This became evident already at the time of Erasmus's first publishing the Greek New Testament and accompanying Latin translation (1516) when his opponents reacted against him and asserted the primacy of the Vulgate. See Jerry H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 199-211.
- 24 For Emser's biography, see Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, 4 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v. "Emser, Hieronymus." There are more extensive treatments in Heribert Smolinsky, *Augustin von Alvelde und Hieronymus Emser: Eine Untersuchung zur Kontrovertheologie der Frühen Reformationszeit im Herzogtum Sachsen* (Münster Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1983), 24-47, and Kenneth A. Strand, *Reformation Bibles in the Crossfire: The Story of Jerome Emser, His Anti-Lutheran Critique and His Catholic Bible Version* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1961), 21-34.
- 25 *Das new testament nach lawt der Christlichē kirchen bewertē text, corrigirt und widerumb zu recht gebracht* (Dreszdēn: Wolfgang Stöckel, 1527). This appeared in the same year as Emser's death. Based largely on Luther's first German New Testament, Emser's version has been examined by Strand, 61-73, and Heinz Bluhm, *Luther Translator of Paul: Studies in Romans and Galatians* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 133-53, 507-36.

- 26 See Smolinsky, 221-309, David V. N. Bagchi, *Luther's Earliest Opponents: Catholic Controversialists 1518-25* (Minn.: Fortress, 1991), 73-74, 86, 90, 95-96, 102, 135-38, 153, 207-08, and 230-33.
- 27 As quoted in Strand, 38, but for the original see Emser's, "Vorrede," *Auss was gründ und ursach Luthers dolmatschung uber das nawe testament dem gemeinen man billich vobotten worden sey* (Leipzig: Wolfgang Stöckel, [1523]), alii^v. I consulted the microform copy that is available in the IDC collection, *Flugschriften des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts* (Zug, Switzerland: Inter Documentation Co., 1979), Fiche 318-21, No. 1-905. Emser wrote another critique of Luther's Bible, his *Annotaciones Hieronymi Emser uber Luthers naw Testament gebessert und emendirt* (Dresden: [Emserpresse], 1524). In this paper, I have based my summary of Emser's criticism on Strand's work.
- 28 LW 35:357 (WA DB 6:2.2-11).
- 29 LW 35:360 (WA DB 6:8.3-11).
- 30 LW 35:362. For German original, see http://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Lutherbibel#Das_Newe_Testament_Deutsch (accessed 12/29/14).
- 31 LW 35:395, 396. For German original, see [http://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Lutherbibel/Jakobus_\(1522\)](http://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Lutherbibel/Jakobus_(1522)) (accessed 12/29/14).
- 32 For examples of Luther's correcting the Vulgate by means of the Greek, see LW 25:386, 427-28, 492, 501 (WA 56:395.25-26; 435.11-12; 498.29-499.2; 507.4-6). According to the index (LW 25:534) of the English translation to the 1515-16 lectures on Romans, there are 58 references to the Greek text just in Luther's glosses.
- 33 WA 1:158.8-10.
- 34 LW 31:83-84 (WA 1:530.16-17, 19-22).
- 35 LW 45:359 (WA 15:37.17-22). Luther's respect for the originals was closely connected to his view of Scripture's inspired origins. See Mark D. Thompson, *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand: The Relation of Authority and Interpretive Method in Luther's Approach to Scripture* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004), 141-46.
- 36 According to Kooiman, 91 and 131, this meant Erasmus's 2nd edition (1519) of the Greek New Testament (along with Erasmus's translation into Latin) and the Brescia printing (1494) of the Soncino edition of the Hebrew (1st ed. 1488).

Encouragement for a New Year

The below article, by South Dakota District President, Dr. Dale Sattgast, is from the South Dakota District News, January 2015.

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." Heb. 10:23-25

Dear Friends in Christ,

Just a few weeks ago, we observed the end of the Church Year and the beginning of Advent. A theme that accompanied these observances was that the Day of the Lord — the end of time and Jesus' return — is drawing near.

As God's people, we wait patiently for that day. At the same time, we watch with anticipation. Your pastor may have explained that our watching is like someone standing on tip-toes, with neck outstretched and eyes squinting to help that person see as far as he or she can, anxious to see the first glimpse of the arrival of a long-awaited loved one. The Loved One we're waiting and watching for is Jesus!

The very last prayer of the Bible is simply these three words: "Come, Lord Jesus!" For us who are baptized, whose sins are forgiven by Jesus' death on the cross and who are assured of our hope of heaven and our own resurrection from the dead because of Jesus' resurrection, the last prayer of the Bible is our prayer. As good or bad as things might be in this life, what awaits us when Jesus

comes again is far superior (see Rom. 8:18 and John 14:1-3)!

So why, since we're not at the end of the Church Year or the calendar year, am I talking about the Day of the Lord and Jesus' return? The answer is easy. The new year provides us with an opportunity to make new or renew old commitments. And the words of Hebrews 10 provide excellent encouragement for us as we await Jesus' return.

First, Verse 23: *"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful."* God repeatedly promises His people that He is with us always (Joshua 1:5; Matt. 28:20), will never leave nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5b), will strengthen us in our times of need (Is. 41:10) and will work all things for our good (Rom. 8:28). There's even the promise that absolutely nothing in all creation can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:39).

Can we imagine walking away from Him and His faithfulness to us? Sadly, some have. My prayer is that we will never waver in holding fast to our faith and confession of hope, regardless of the circumstances of the coming year or years of our lives!

Second, Verse 24: *"Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works."* Salvation is by grace alone through faith in Christ. That's clear from the Bible (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6). But God also desires that our lives as His beloved people be filled, even overflowing, with love, mercy and good works, reflecting our faith and His marvelous love for us (1 Corinthians 13; Eph. 2:10, 5:1; 1 John 4:7-27).

Attitudes are contagious. If you're around a cheerful person, it's hard to let the curmudgeonly side of our personality show. When our attitudes and actions are motivated by faith and God's love for us, others cannot help but see that. And it has its effect. *"Let your light shine before others,"* Jesus says, *"so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."* That's good counsel as we enter into a new year!

Finally, Verse 25: *"...not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."* This verse is often used as a reminder to be faithful in worship. And that's appropriate. But do you see the other part about encouraging one another? Not nagging! Not making others feel guilty! But encouraging!

One of the greatest things we can do for others is to encourage them. For those who are believers, encourage them to hold fast to their faith, to seek and see God's love, forgiveness, faithfulness and power in their lives and to be faithful in their worship. And for those who are outside of the household of faith, encourage them by sharing the Good News of the God and Savior who has made an eternity of difference in our lives, both now in this new year and forever.

In Christ, Pastor Dale Sattgast

"... nothing ... except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."
1 Cor. 2:2 • 2 Cor. 3:4-6 • 2 Tim. 1:8-12

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