THE VERNACULAR BIBLE:
REFORMATION AND BAROQUE

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching,
for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.
—2 Tim. 3.16

The Enlightenment Bible grew out of the soil of the Protestant Reformation, whose insistence on first principles—*sola gratia, sola fides, sola scriptura*—put the Bible at the center of the enormous struggles that beset sixteenth-century Christendom. The Reformation made the Protestant Bible the engine of political, religious, and imaginative life, an engine defended and cherished well into the nineteenth century. Even more than *gratia* and *fides*, the Bible powered the very project of Reformation. Whatever the theological controversies that arose around predestination, the value of works, or the priesthood of believers, beneath all these, the Bible lurked, as a force of chaos for many Catholics, a force of righteousness for Protestants. Firmly equated with the Word of God and given seemingly infinite autonomy, the Bible provided a theoretical armature to movements that included violent iconoclasts like Thomas Müntzer, the Lutherans in Wittenberg, and the radical peasants in the forests of southern and central Germany. Within two decades after 1517, biblical authority was the battle cry of a host of new religious movements that together promised to alter forever the complexion of European society. Anabaptism, Calvinism, Spiritualism, Zwinglianism: the list swells with reform movements that claimed as their theological, political, and social inspiration the words of the biblical text. To say "scripture alone" was to deny the efficacy and relevance of the Roman Church to divine matters. To say "scripture alone" was to invest reform and reformers with the very authority of God, before which no human institution—church or state—might stand. To say "scripture alone" was, in short, to set up a tribunal before which unbelievers would be judged. In the new religious order emerging in sixteenth-century Europe, only scripture would, in the words of St. Paul, be needed for teaching, reproof, correction, and training.

But at the precise moment that the Bible shouldered such enormous responsibilities, its authority began to quiver under the load. Even in St. Paul, sixteenth-century readers might have sensed the strains. "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching," Paul wrote in his letter to Timothy.

But did he? For many readers of the new vernacular and scholarly Bibles that populated the period, he did not. Rather he said something somewhat different: "All scripture *inspired by God* is profitable for teaching." Indeed, this second reading would have been the more familiar, since it was taken from the Latin tradition and put into many of Europe's sixteenth-century vernacular Bibles. In Elias Hutter's 1599 Nuremberg polyglot Bible, the Italian, French, and Greek versions embraced the first version, while Spanish, German, and Latin repeated the latter.[1] William Tyndale's 1524 English translation of the New Testament followed the Latin version, but the Geneva and later the King James Bibles followed the Greek. The difference was minor—the presence or absence of the Greek word καὶ ("and")—but the passage meant something quite different in Erasmus's 1516 Greek New Testament than it did in Luther's 1522 German one. What was, in the Greek Bible, a comfortingly secure blanket proclamation of biblical inspiration was, in the German, a distinctly less reassuring profession that only some Scriptures were in fact given by God's hand.[2] If only the truly canonical texts of the Bible were authentic and legitimate, separating the wheat from the chaff became an urgent task. And it was a task made even more urgent when even the fiercest affirmations of scriptural authority, like the words of Paul, turned out to be troublingly ambiguous.

This Greek καὶ was only a token of a problem that had plagued proponents of scriptural authority since the very earliest times. For in the Scriptures, two inescapable yet contradictory qualities were joined. On the one hand, scripture contains, for Jews and Christians alike, the authentic Word of God. From creation, to the giving of the Law, to the prophecies of the Messiah and the last days, the Bible has long supplied the Judeo-Christian world with the knowledge of God. Without it, God would be unknown, his ways a mystery, his laws enigmatic. On the other hand, however, this divine story has been, for millennia, rolled onto sticks, written on papyrus, transcribed onto skin, and enclosed between covers. The Scriptures are a collection of books. They are human artifacts whose integrity has long depended on fallible, forgetful people. In the hands of scribes, new heterodox books might creep into the scriptural canon and new heterodox readings might creep into the text itself. Both profoundly divine and profoundly human, Scripture has usually joined these two qualities in relatively seamless harmony.

Indeed, when the text of the Bible was unremarkable and uncontroversial, as it was for long centuries in the Latin West, the gap between divine and human was nearly invisible. The old joke about the King James Bible—"if it was good enough for Jesus Christ, it's good enough for me!"—works only because the English Bible has become such an ordinary part of religious life as to be virtually

[1] [Elias Hutter], *Novum Testamentum Dni. Nri. Iesu Christi* (Nuremberg, 1599).
[2] Erasmus notes the addition of the conjunction in his annotation to 2 Tim. 3.16 (*Novum Instrumentum* [Basil, 1516]); see also Elias Hutter, ed., *Novum Testamentum* (Nuremberg, 1599).

indistinguishable from the original versions. There was, for medieval Christians (and for many modern ones as well) essentially no reason to suppose that the text of *their* Bible was anything but identical with the Bible itself. But occasionally, the text and canon of the Bible suddenly seems more than ordinary to the faithful. It becomes strange, a document whose qualities need to be investigated and understood. And in these moments, the gap between the Bible's divine content and its human form leaps into view.

Historically, this has been the moment that new translations have appeared. On the one hand, new translations have shined a bright light into that gap between heaven and earth. By calling attention both to the books they produce and to the differences that might lurk between the original and newest versions, scriptural translations have historically forced into the open a set of awkward questions: What happens to the Word of God when it is manipulated by human art? What role can the translation play in transmitting the holiest of knowledge to the unlearned? How can this derivative product be invested with enough power to guarantee its own survival and transmission? On the other hand, however, Christian translations of the Bible have also hidden this gap, building bridges between God's word and human tongues so that they might once more seem unified. Already in the New Testament, Christ metaphorically "translates" the Bible away from the Jews. When he taught the crowds "as one who had authority, and not as their scribes," for example, he proclaimed his independence of the *old* Bible yet grounded his authority on the promise of a new one: "I have not come to abolish [the law and the prophets] but to fulfill them" (Matt. 7.29, 5.17). Christ promised to bridge the gap between a Pharasaic Bible and its divine source. In his own way, Paul too made Christianity into a religion of translation, transferring the Law from Jewish owners to Gentile upstarts. "Mere possession . . . of the Law will not justify any Jew," as Daniel Boyarin put it, and Paul's mission was to transform a too human Bible into a divinely universal text, "a matter of the heart, spiritual, not literal" (Rom. 3.29).[3] In general, the ancient Christian doctrines of *translatio imperii* and *translatio religionis* wrested empire and religions from the pagans and Jews and translated them into "the larger compass of Christian culture," in Rita Copeland's words.[4] In the specific case of the Bible, these moments of translation highlighted its (improper) human form but then quickly overcame it, a bridging of heaven and earth that happened repeatedly in the history of Christianity: in the earliest days, in reform movements like Lollardy, and again, most relevantly, during the Reformation.

For all of the major sixteenth-century reformers—Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anglicans—vernacular translation was the cornerstone of their creeds. "Translations are commanded by God, as Ordinance and constitution of

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[3] Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley, 1994), 94.
[4] Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1991), 103.

Heaven itself," for only through vernacular translation could the Catholic Bible be desanctified and revealed as a contingent text used to serve particular human interests.[5] Translating afresh would release the Bible from the grip of the Catholic Church and, at the same time, allow reformers and their "universal priesthood of believers" to take possession of the Bible and make it once more the divine foundation of their own religious institutions.[6] If Protestant vernacular translation bridged the gap, once again, between heaven and earth, it *also* revealed the very human side of the biblical text that the doctrine of *sola scriptura* could never admit. In contrast to a Bible sanctified by long usage and by the external authority of the Church, Protestant vernacular Bibles were clearly the product of human labor and art. Catholic derision of Luther as the "Pope of the Protestants" got its sting from this very point: as a mere human, what could he really have to do with the divinity of the Bible?[7]

And so, speaking most broadly, the history of the vernacular Protestant Bible had two distinct phases before 1700. First, there was the explosion of translations across Protestant Europe. Over the course of the sixteenth century, every major confession and every major language would come to have at least one translation at its disposal. Roughly bracketed by the two most influential translations of the period—the Luther Bible (1522) and the King James Bible (1611)—this period saw a proliferation of vernacular Bibles. This big bang was followed by a big crunch, however, when the project of biblical translation ground to a halt and a canon of vernacular Bibles was set into stone in the seventeenth century. First, the vernacular Bible was made legitimate and authentic; and then it was fixed into a canon that hid those worrisome human aspects of the Bible. With the big crunch came consequences: texts were fixed, liturgies solidified, catechisms hardened into rigid forms. But most importantly for this book, with the big crunch came a sharp separation between vernacular translation and the chief source of its authority in the sixteenth century: biblical scholarship. This separation was fundamental to the seventeenth-century Bible. And its overcoming was the necessary prelude to the invention of the Enlightenment Bible.

The Authority of the Protestant Vernacular Bible: Germany and England

In the third century B.C.E., on the island of Pharos near Alexandria, a monumental and mythical translation was made. The myth is composed of two

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[5] Richard Capel, *Capel's Remains* (London, 1658), 50.
[6] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Reformation of the Bible / The Bible of the Reformation* (New Haven, 1996), 47.
[7] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300–1700)* (Chicago, 1984), 332.

slightly different stories. In the first, told by Aristeas, the Egyptian King Ptolemy Philadelphus was so impressed by the holiness of the Jewish books that he asked Eleazer the High Priest to send six elders from each Jewish tribe, men "skilled in the law and able to translate." Together these scholars gathered on the island and produced a version of the Bible that so impressed the elders of Israel that they ordered that "it should remain in its present form and that no revision of any sort take place." The translation was preserved forever in the royal library, "imperishable and unchanged." In the second story, told by Philo of Alexandria, Pharos was not a place of calm scholarly exchange, but one of divine rapture. The seventy translators gathered and "sitting . . . in seclusion with none present save the elements of nature . . . they became as it were possessed, and, under inspiration, wrote, not each several scribe something different, but the same word for word, as though dictated by an invisible prompter." The inspired scholars, the "prophets and priests of the mysteries," bequeathed to the world a divine yet vernacular translation, one that had every claim on authenticity and authority. As Judaism passed into the Greek world, its adherents were free to embrace a Bible utterly transparent to the wishes and words of God.[8]

In different ways, both stories reassured that nothing would be lost in translation, not an "iota, not a dot," as Matthew had it (5.18). In one story, this guarantee was assured by scholarship; in the other by inspiration. Both stories, however, were taken up by church fathers like Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Augustine, who together forged a myth of the Septuagint durable enough to shape the Protestant vernacular Bible. Even though reformers like Martin Luther did not think much of the Septuagint or its translators—the latter were "inexperienced and ignorant" and the former "foolish and awkward"—nevertheless the models of translation that these stories offered were irresistible.[9] For the translations that proliferated in the sixteenth century, the Septuagint offered a tantalizing gift, that of authority. Vernacular translation was justified and legitimized by the Septuagint mythology, which promised, in effect, that the divine could infuse a derivative translation, that the vernacular, common tongue could build a ladder to God, and that the holiness of his Word need not be shrouded by an esoteric language. Protestant translators, even if they did not embrace the Septuagint themselves, still revered its methods.

In 1530, for example, German presses invested Luther with the same halo of inspiration that surrounded the Septuagint translators and later the Apostles. Philo's praise of the "prophets" of translation was echoed in a New Testament frontispiece that shaped Luther into the very Apostle Matthew himself (fig. 1). Germany's own apostle—the "thirteenth apostle" as he was later known—sat in

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[8] *Aristeas to Philocrates*, ed. and trans. Moses Hadas (New York, 1951), 115 (translation altered after original), 221, 223; Philo, *De vita Mosis* in *Philo*, trans. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, MA, 1959), 6:467–69.

[9] Martin Luther, *WATr*, 1:1040.

his place of labor.[10] Quills, pens, and books adorned the desk. But the image was dominated by the double representation of Luther's prophetic office. The Holy Spirit shone its light upon the pages of Luther's book, and Matthew's familiar angel looked on in pleasure. Luther the translator was robed in the garb of divinity and his work assured of its direct and transparent access to God himself. This supernatural halo was attractive to German reformers for obvious reasons: in these early days, after all, the Reformation needed all the authority it could get. Indeed, when the first edition of Luther's translation appeared in September 1522, the Reformation as such was barely conceivable and Luther himself was immensely vulnerable. Only sixteen months earlier he had been condemned by Charles V in Worms, retreating ignominiously to the Wartburg castle where, over the course of some ten weeks, he quickly translated Erasmus's 1519 Greek New Testament into vernacular German, that his audience might "seize and taste the pure Word of God itself."[11] Access to this pure Word of God was, in turn, conditioned on the rebirth that Luther experienced in reading Paul, in which the "gate of Paradise" opened and the meanings of Scripture were opened up to him.[12] Because "nobody can understand God or God's word unless he gets it immediately from the Holy Spirit," translation became, for Luther, a theological and prophetic activity.[13] *Sacrae scripturae comes indissolubilis Spiritus Sanctus*—"the Holy Spirit is the indissoluble companion of the Scriptures"—expressed a similar thought, that proper understanding of the Bible can come only to "one redeemed by Christ."[14] Proper biblical translation demanded, in effect, divine presence.

And yet, in general, the robes of inspiration sat rather uneasily on Protestant reformers. Certainly Luther never declared himself a prophet, and for good reason. Not least he was confronted by, on the one hand, the specter of violent Anabaptists who stressed their personal experience of Christ's presence and, on the other, Catholics who accused him of usurping the rightful authority of the apostolic church. To the right were those who pointedly asked Lutherans, "How do you know that your confession is pious and catholic? Because it pleases you? And because Luther said that your doctrine is divine?"[15] To the left were those who declared that "God writes the real holy scripture with his living finger, not with ink": only *they* rightly heard the "living speech of God" that dwells within the elect.[16] Asserting his own prophetic role would not only have exposed Luther to the Catholic charge of hubris, but it would also have cast him directly into the

[10] Spener, *Theologische Bedencken* (Halle, 1712), 1:275.

[11] WA 10.1.1:728. For Luther's translation at the Wartburg, see Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther* (Minneapolis, 1985), 2:46.

[12] Werner Schwarz, *Principles and Problems of Bible Translation* (London, 1955), 168.

[13] WA, 7:546; see Schwarz's discussion of this (ibid., 171).

[14] Luther, WATr, 5:5904; Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament*, trans. Eric W. and Ruth C. Gritsch (Philadelphia, 1969), 120.

[15] Bartholomaeus Arnoldus de Usingen, *Responsio contra apologiam Philippi Melanchthonis* [ca. 1532], ed Primoz Simonitus (Würzburg, 1978), 413.

[16] Thomas Müntzer, "Prague Manifesto" (longer version) in *The Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, ed. Peter Matheson (Edinburg, 1988), 365.

spiritualist camp that he reviled so consistently throughout his life. For Luther, "false human holiness and fanaticism" was a threat to his reforms and to the princes charged with implementing them.[17]

And so the prophet Luther was a figure overshadowed by that of the scholar Luther, the Philo story playing second fiddle to the Aristeas. Visually speaking, Luther became a belated St. Jerome, as in this 1530 frontispiece to the *Letter on Translation* (fig. 2), a coarse reproduction of Albrecht Dürer's beautiful 1514 engraving of the patron saint of translators (fig. 3). In Dürer's original, Jerome sits in his study, lion and lamb at his feet, books scattered on nearby bookshelves, observed by Christ on his crucifix and the skull on the windowsill. Jerome is at peace, hard at work producing the translation of the Bible that would serve the Latin Church for a millennium. The Luther image differs only slightly. The lamb is missing, the books are without clasps, the crucifix is gone, and an aggressive epigraph gives the image its polemic edge. Most striking, however, is the absence of the halo, which sits atop Jerome's balding head as a guarantee of the presence of God's voice behind the translation. Luther the scholar, in contrast, is alone, comforted only by his pen and books.

This vision of Luther's scholarly office was absolutely crucial in fashioning the authority of the Protestant vernacular Bible. If inspiration was an idol of the rabble, scholarship—in particular, scholarship on the Greek and Hebrew original texts—was the property of the learned and the sober. It was this, ultimately, that lent the Luther Bible much of its gigantic authority—like medieval translators before him, and Lollards in particular, Luther authorized his vernacular version by linking it with the "originary authority that cannot be overtaken," the Word of God itself. Unlike his medieval antecedents, however, he accomplished this not through "exegetical service to an authoritative text," but through scholarship.[18] Even the Catholic scholar Richard Simon acknowledged that the quest for a "version of Scripture . . . more consonant with the originals" was Luther's great innovation. Unlike inspiration, this innovation was only slowly achieved, whatever the stories of Luther's New Testament. Nor was it the labor of one man alone. Like the scholars on Pharos, Luther assembled a court of scholarly assistants, in particular for the translation of the Old Testament, whose challenges he "could not face without [their] presence . . . and assistance."[19] Among his team were Johann Bugenhagen, Matthäus Aurogallus, and, most importantly, Philip Melanchthon, who donated his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew to his less linguistically gifted friend, spending untold hours helping Luther revise and translate both the Old and New Testament.[20]

[17] Luther, *Vorrede auff die Propheten*, in *Biblia, das ist die gantze Heilige Schrifft Deudsch auffs new zugericht* (1545; rpt. Munich, 1972), 2:1160.

[18] Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation*, 225, 222.

[19] Luther, WABr, 2:423.

[20] Johann Mathesius (1504–1565) reports that Luther also relied on Justus Jonas, Caspar Cruciger, George Rörer, Berhard Ziegler, and Johann Forster (*Historien von des ehrwürdigen in GOTT seligen thewren Manns Gottes D. Martin Luthers* [Leipzig, 1621], 154b).

This local court was augmented, of course, by the wider world of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century philologians who devoted their labors to scriptural texts and translations. Erasmus was essential to Luther's success, for example, as were the Dutch humanist's controversial Latin translations and annotations of the New Testament. These annotations were, in turn, closely modeled on Italian humanist Lorenzo Valla's *Collatio Novi Testamenti*, reprinted by Erasmus in 1505. From Erasmus and Valla, the circle of biblical scholarship spread widely over the course of the sixteenth century. Careful editorial work; research on manuscripts; text collations: all of these were part of a collective enterprise that produced such magisterial works as the 1520 Complutensian Polyglot, Robert Stephanus's famous Greek editions of the New Testament (1546, 1549, 1550), and Theodore Beza's nine Greek versions toward the end of the century. And hand in hand with this scholarship was a project of translation, an effort to put this biblical philology into practice. Already in the fifteenth century, Valla had declared that Scripture is "nothing more than the best translation," and his methods of translation—whether in the *Collatio* or in the more influential *Elegantiae linguae latinae*—were always scholarly in nature. The Spanish editors of the Complutensian edition saw their project as a "return to the origins of scripture" in order that the "mouth of God" might be most closely mimicked in translation. And for Erasmus, the project of philological purification was never separated from the effort to produce a translation *fidelius, dilucidius, elegantius.* "Without knowing the shape of the letters, no one can read what is written": for these scholars, the chain that linked letters to words to meaning required circulation between brute philology and subtle translation.[21]

When Luther took up his pen to replace the Vulgate—a translation so long used in the Christian Church as to be indistinguishable from the Bible itself—he already had at hand, then, extraordinarily powerful tools for stamping his text with authenticity. "In proportion as we value the gospel," he wrote, "let us zealously hold to the [Greek and Hebrew] languages."[22] He and his coterie of translators did just that, most notably in the case of Job, where they apparently spent four days translating just three lines.[23] Now, there is no doubt that Luther was deeply distrustful of scholarship for its own sake. But his suspicions of people like Jerome and Erasmus—"follower[s] of Cicero and not of Christ"—did not undermine a fundamentally scholarly approach.[24] Even his insistence that the Bible be written for "the mother in the house, the children in the street, the

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[21] Nancy Struever, *Theory As Practice: Ethical Inquiry in the Renaissance* (Chicago, 1992), 124; *Vetus testamentum multiplici lingua nu[n]c primo impressum* (Alcalá, 1514–17), +iiiʳ. Erasmus in Erica Rummel, *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian* (Toronto, 1986), 89. In general, see Jerry Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton, 1983).

[22] Pelikan, *Reformation of the Bible*, 50.

[23] Martin Luther, "Sendbrief vom Dolmetchen," in WA, 30.2, 636.

[24] Schwarz, *Principles and Problems*, 202.

common man in the market," did not.[25] For Luther, like all of the philological scholars of the period, research on original texts preceded idiomatic translation. When Luther argued that in Ps. 68 "the mountain of God is a *Basan* mountain, or a mountain of fat," should be translated as a "fruitful mountain"—lest the German reader imagine a mountain "smeared with lard or dripping with fat"— he wanted to ensure a good German text but one grounded in the historical usage of the Hebrew language.[26] And this research was the key to the authority of Luther's vernacular text, forging the link between it and the original Word of God. Authenticity, transparency, legitimacy: all of these were granted through the medium of scholarship.

The German desire to ensure the authority of their vernacular Bible was mirrored in England. The English Reformation's first translator, William Tyndale, framed his mission in broadly generous terms. His was only one possible translation, he wrote in 1534, and should "any man find fault" with it, "it shall be lawful to translate it themselves." More poetically, his Bible was "born before its time, even as a thing begun rather than finished." But such generosity threatened to expand the Bible into a kaleidoscope of interpretations, as Tyndale clearly saw: "if it were lawful . . . to every man to play Bo-peep with the translations that are before him, and to put out the words of the text at his pleasure and to put in everywhere his meaning . . . that were the next way to establish all heresies."[27] The vernacular Bible must be able, John Foxe later wrote, to prove "the process, order, and meaning of the text; for else . . . these enemies of the truth would quench it again, either with apparent readings of sophistry . . . or else juggling with the text."[28] The "medicine of Scripture" was only powerful insofar as it was pure and authoritative.[29]

Purity and authority might, in a familiar way, derive from scholarship, which would provide the "one simple literal sense whose light the owls can not abide"[30] Or it might, as John Foxe had it, have been "stirred up of God" himself.[31] In either case, early English reformers, like their German counterparts, yearned for a Bible capable of legitimating itself. But as William Tyndale found out first hand, the vernacular Bible in England was dependent on another source of authority—one with no less a connection to the Septuagint tradition—namely, the power of a King. Where Luther's works could not find authenticity in princely power (because princely power was so fundamentally contested in the Holy Roman Empire), the history of the English vernacular Bible was

[25] Luther, "Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen, 30.2:637.

[26] WA, 38:12. Even the "Sendbrief," the strongest affirmation of "free" translation, held itself to the standard of historical Hebrew and Greek usage—see WA, 30.2:639.

[27] William Tyndale, *The New Testament* (1534; rpt., Cambridge, 1938), 3, 612, 16.

[28] John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, ed. Stephen Cattley (London, 1838), 5:118.

[29] William Tyndale, *Five Books of Moses* (1530; rpt., Carbondale, Il, 1967), 7.

[30] Ibid., 3.

[31] Foxe, *Acts*, 5:119.

inseparable from the history of the Crown. This became particularly clear after Henry VIII's 1534 Act of Supremacy, when the church was formally wedded to the monarchy. Although German translations were egg on the face of Charles V, still they posed little direct threat in the highly decentralized political environment of the Holy Roman Empire. Unsanctioned English translations were, in contrast, political dynamite. If the Bible stood *apart* from the king, the Bible stood *against* the king. Whatever his intemperate faults in dealing with the Protestants, Thomas More was surely correct to see the connection between Tyndale's translation and potential sedition. Tyndale's "false translation" moves "people to their own undoing to be disobedient and rebellious to their sovereigns, in affirming that they be not nor [*sic*] cannot be bound by any law made by men," More chided. In encouraging the people to cling to their Bibles, he argued, Tyndale set them in a collision course with their king.[32] And in a way, Tyndale knew this. His last words, as Foxe reports them—"Lord! open the King of England's eyes!"—called for the King to submit to the will of God and to the message of reform.[33]

Indeed, the king was the linchpin, just as he had been at Pharos. The Septuagint was, after all, created at the whim of a king who put it "in [his] library along with other books" that it might remain forever unchanged.[34] In England, the king was less decisive, but nonetheless he played a key role in producing the authority of the vernacular Bible. As early as 1534, talk was in the air of a sanctioned translation, one that would quash the "public wrangling over the Catholic faith," and in 1535, one appeared from the pen of Miles Coverdale.[35] Although Coverdale's Bible was largely a reprint of Tyndale's, the dedication to Henry surrounded the Bible with such a comfortable air of princely power that it no longer posed a challenge to the laws of the realm. As Coverdale put it, this Bible granted "kings and princes" the very authority of God. By releasing Scripture into the "mother tongue," kings were free to "reclaim . . . their due authority, which [the pope] falsely has usurped so many years" and to rule the people now unchallenged. "As there is nothing above God," he declared, "so is there no man above the king in his realm."[36]

While the progress of Protestantism in England stuttered through the sixteenth century, the English Bible remained in flux. The Geneva Bible, executed by the Marian exiles between 1557 and 1560, was begun without the sanction of a king. Scholarship—and especially the scholarly environment of Geneva,

[32] Thomas More, *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More* (New Haven, 1973), 8.1:33.

[33] Foxe, *Acts*, 5:127.

[34] Aristeas, *Letter*, 115.

[35] S. L. Greenslade, "English Versions of the Bible, 1525–1611," in *CHB*, 3:147.

[36] Miles Coverdale, dedicatory epistle to *The Bible: That Is the Holy Scripture of the Olde and New Testament* (1535; rpt., Kent, 1975), 34.

"the store of heavenly learning and judgment"—was its foundation, and the scores of annotations that dotted its pages encouraged, as David Norton has noted, the "close study rather than continuous reading" of the biblical text.[37] Through "learning and godliness," the editors of this Bible gathered "brief annotations on the hard places" in order to clarify obscure words and difficult passages, so that, in the end, they might "set forth the purity of the word and right sense of the holy Ghost." Nor was the content of the notes exclusively theological, as the maps of the Holy Land and images of the Hebrew artifacts surely testified. With the ascent of Elizabeth, however, the Bible was once again safely ensconced in the bosom of the monarchy. Just as God inspired the ancient builders of the Temple, the Geneva translators declared, so too would "he endow your grace . . . with a principal Spirit, that you may . . . command things necessary for this most holy Temple," especially the Word of God in vernacular form.[38]

Between 1560 and 1611, the Geneva Bible dominated the English market.[39] By the early seventeenth century, however, it had begun to be seen as "destructive of the person and power of Kings."[40] Underlying the royal demand for a new Bible was a particular fury about the Geneva text's scholarly annotations, annotations that, as Archbishop William Laud complained, were "used to ill purposes" and were, in the words of James, "very partial, untrue, seditious."[41] James's translators did not, of course, reject scholarship *tout court*. Indeed, from the initial call in 1604—when John Reynolds asked the king to sanction a new translation more "answerable to the truth of the Original"—scholarship was essential to the King James Bible (KJB).[42] As a project of academic labor, there were few that could compare with this Bible, built on the labors of fifty-four translators divided into six companies each charged with separate portions of the Bible. But scholarship by *itself* did not play the legitimating role it had with the Geneva Bible. Instead, the text drew its power from the proclamation of the king, who sanctioned it and gave it life.

During the sixteenth century, then, the Protestant Bible across Europe was under pressure, unstable, and changeable. As the fundamental theological and political bedrock of the Protestant faiths, the Bible had to be extracted from its Catholic superstructure. The tools of extraction were common ones: first of all, scholarship; second, princely power; and third, most unusually, inspiration. Scholarship and inspiration provided internal legitimation of the biblical text,

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[37] *CHB*, 3:156; David Norton, *Bible As Literature*, 81. On the Geneva Bible notes, see also Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London, 1993), 56ff.

[38] *The Bible and Holy Scriptures Contayned in the Olde and Newe Testament* (1560; rpt. Madison, WI., 1969), iii^{r-v}, ii^{v}.

[39] Lloyd E. Berry, introduction to ibid., 14.

[40] Hill, *English Bible*, 58.

[41] Norton, *Bible As Literature*, 92; Hill, *English Bible*, 64.

[42] *CHB*, 3:164.

guaranteeing the living connection between the contemporary vernacular Bible and the apostolic church that Protestants so venerated. Political power provided external legitimation of the biblical text, guaranteeing the living connection between Bibles and the authority vested in kings since Paul himself proclaimed the divine origins of princes (Rom. 13). All of them, however, contrived to set the Bible free, as Protestants saw it, from the shackles of the church, enabling it to function as the wellspring of their own faiths. The amount of intellectual energy invested in this Bible can be seen in the number of translations produced: in Germany, Luther's Bible was printed in new editions and versions for over twenty-five years, with significant revisions in 1534, 1535, 1536, 1539, 1541, 1545, and 1546, for a total of some 430 printings in his lifetime.[43] In Switzerland, the Zürich Bible was born in 1524, reprinted extensively throughout the century, and supplemented by the German Reformed Piscator translation in 1601. In England, major English revisions or new translations were issued in 1535, 1537, 1539, 1560, and 1571. The Dutch established their own authoritative text in 1618 with the States Bible. And the French 1535 Geneva Bible was continually revised until 1588.[44] The big question is, then, Why did it all stop? For if the sixteenth century staged the greatest proliferation of Bibles in the previous history of the church, the seventeenth century was a period of incredible stagnation. Across Protestant Europe, most strikingly in Germany and England, the seventeenth century saw few if any new translations. After 1611, no new translations in England. After 1545, no new Lutheran translations. After 1601, no new Reformed German translations. In the seventeenth century, the impulse to write new vernacular translations essentially died. Why?

THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY VERNACULAR CANON

Perhaps the answer is a simple one: the old translations were working fine. Why work so hard to replace a perfectly good thing, one might ask. But in truth, scholars repeatedly suggested revision over the course of the century; they called for new translations and condemned the old ones. Of course, for Catholics like Thomas Ward, the King James Bible was by nature "corrupt and false," because it used the originals—"corrupted and poyson'd . . . with [the] false and abominable *Doctrines*" of Arians and other ancient heretics—to veer

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[43] On Luther's editions, see Hans Volz, "Luthers deutsche Bibelübersetzung," in the *Anhang* to: *D. Martin Luther: Die gantze Heilige Schrifft* (Frankfurt, 1972), 41–113. For a chronology of publications and revisions, see Heimo Reinitzer, *Biblia deutsch: Luthers Bibelübersetzung und ihre Tradition* (Wolfenbüttel, 1983), 114–27.

[44] On the English Bible chronology, see F. F. Bruce, *The English Bible: A History of Translations* (New York, 1961). On English Bible versions, see Gerald Hammond, *The Making of the English Bible* (New York, 1983).

away from Latin Vulgate.[45] But even mainstream Protestants, who had little in-
terest in Catholic hesitations, acknowledged that as the "two Testaments are
the two paps of the Church," their translation should be ever revised: "No
Translation is absolutely perfect, but it may and ought more and more to be
perfected."[46] From the more rigorist Protestant line came more rigorist criticisms
of the mainstream Bibles, especially the King James. Thus Robert Gell loudly
called in 1659 for the "vindicat[ion] of the holy Scripture from false transla-
tion, and mis-interpretation." An "exact and perfect *translation* of the holy
Bible" is paramount, he believed, for the truths of the current translation were
often "rejected, and cast into the *Margent*" or, in smaller editions, discarded en-
tirely.[47] The argument for quality looks flimsy in the face of such discontent.

Protestant translation ended not just because its results were good, then, but
because they were useful. They were useful at stopping the process of transla-
tion itself, stopping a process very hard to end once begun. Already in the early
sixteenth century, Luther saw the perils of unfettered translation, predicting
that his version would be "thrown under the bench" or buried in a deluge of
second-rate efforts.[48] "Anabaptists overthrow all translations," wrote another
critic concerned that, once the bond between church and Bible was severed,
anyone might style themselves a translator.[49] This threatened textual abandon
cast a shadow across the vernacular Bible, not only menacing the translations
created in the heat of Reformation zeal, but also the divine aura of the Bible
itself. The principle of *sola scriptura* only functions if we know what the *scrip-
tura* actually says: if there is no consensus about the *scriptura*, the principle has
little weight. More translations meant, in short, more disagreement about
God's real language. Reformers of later generations thus looked back on their
originary Bibles less as gifts "in the language of the day, [of] the most imper-
ishable monuments of the earliest centuries," as Leopold von Ranke wrote
some three hundred years later, but instead as a powerful religious canon, heavy
artillery in the fight against Catholicism.[50] And so a Bible like Luther's was
forged into an authoritative text, a text "accepted as normative for the religious
life of a community," a text on which were conferred awesome powers of moral,
political, and religious regulation. Just as the Judeo-Christian canons were both
"closed" with the "withdrawal of prophetic revelation" in the ancient world,
so too was the vernacular canon closed as the sixteenth century drew to its end.[51]

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[45] Thomas Ward, *The Errata of the Protestant Bible, or, the Truth of their English Translations examin'd* (London, 1688), a1ᵛ, c2ʳ.

[46] Edward Leigh, *Critica Sacra*, 4th ed. (London, 1662), a2ʳ.

[47] Robert Gell, *An Essay Toward the Amendment of the Last English Translation of the Bible* (London, 1659), c3ʳ, b3ʳ.

[48] Luther, WATr, 5:469.

[49] Capel, *Capel's Remains*, 29.

[50] Leopold von Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation* (Leipzig, 1933), 2:49.

[51] G. W. Anderson, "Canonical and Non-Canonical," in *CHB*, 1:117, 127.

The great success and irony of the sixteenth century, then, is that it invented the tools of biblical decanonization at the same time as it instituted a new vernacular biblical canon. Indeed, translation was crucial to both, not just threatening the normative canon, but also reconstituting it by conferring authority onto the original texts.[52] Canonized translations offered reformers a good answer to questions raised by Catholics perplexed by Protestant bibliolatry. By consolidating the tradition in a single text, reformers retroactively invested their Bibles with the attributes of tradition. This new stability implied that the canon was in fact closed, that the original text was original, archetypal, and complete in itself. "In the matter of religion, all novelty should not only be rejected but also detested": this might seem an odd sentiment for a preface to a sixteenth-century Protestant Bible, but it was not.[53] Protestant translations were not innovations, in the minds of their creators, but rather reconstitutions of an original text.

Protestants stood in a venerable tradition in this respect, since translators have done the same thing throughout the history of the Bible. The first real definition of the Old Testament canon is found in the apocryphal book Sirach, in a prologue written around 130 B.C.E. not by the work's ostensible author, Jesus Sirach, but rather by its translator (from Hebrew into Greek). The clearest demarcation of the corpus of "the law, and the prophets, and the other books of our fathers" that became the Old Testament canon came, in other words, not from within the Hebrew tradition, but rather from outside, from the Egyptian Jews "living abroad" who needed to be "prepared in character to live according to the law" (prologue).[54] Aristeas, for his part, wanted the Septuagint to resolve issues of textual conflict within the Old Testament canon by establishing a finally authoritative version. In the face of the variant texts of the Hebrew Bible that competed in the second century B.C.E., the Septuagint tried to produce an authoritative version, tried to end the enormous difficulties, as Aristeas saw it, posed by those Hebrew laws "committed to writing somewhat carelessly."[55] Translations were—already in the earliest periods—a tool to establish retroactively the authority of the very tradition from which they derived.[56]

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[52] This function can have a strongly political valence; see Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley, 1992).

[53] Calvin's preface to *La Bible, qui est toute la saincte escriture du vieil & du Nouveau Testament* (Geneva, 1588), ii[r].

[54] See P. Kahle, "Problems of the Septuagint" in Jellicoe, ed., *Studies in the Septuagint*, 74; Roger Beckwith, "Formation of the Hebrew Bible," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading, and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Jan Mulder (Philadelphia, 1988), 51–52.

[55] D. W. Gooding, "Aristeas and Septuagint Origins: A Review of Recent Studies," in Jellicoe, ed., *Studies in the Septuagint*, 370ff.; Aristeas, *Letter*, 111.

[56] Hence Jerome's simultaneous interest in translation and the canon; Jerome, "Praefatio," *PL*, 28:600–601. See also E. Earle Ellis, "The Old Testament Canon in the Early Church," in *Mikra*, 675ff.

The Reformation was no different. Sixteenth-century translations made the past relevant to the present in order to give it the force of tradition. It was this dialectical relationship with the past that made the history of the biblical canon so intriguing to the reformers. Indeed, one of first pieces of Protestant biblical scholarship was Andreas Karlstadt's 1520 investigation of the canon, which remarked that since "new German bibles are going to be printed," the faithful had better know which ones were divine and which not. Translation helped to make this distinction clear to the reading public in a mechanical fashion. Reformers, Karlstadt thought, should either exclude apocryphal books from the translations altogether, or else mark them clearly as nonauthoritative.[57] Like Karlstadt, Luther focused his attention on the nature of the biblical canon. Not only did he define the books that would count as canonical—the Greek and Hebrew original Scriptures—but he also very actively determined the limits of this canon. He excluded the Latin Bible, of course, but he also rejected some apocryphal books in his Bible translation—1 and 2 Esds., for example, were no better than the tales of "Aesop or even more common books"—and even actively challenged the usual canon of biblical books.[58] In particular, Luther singled out James, Jude, the letter to the Hebrews, and Revelations as outside the inspired canon: Paul did not write Hebrews; Revelations was particularly subject to "stupid" and fantastic interpretations because of its odd idiom; and James was plainly not the work of an apostle.[59] He then physically marked their dubious status by demoting them to the end of his new vernacular Bible. Reformed translation was, in short, both scalpel, used to cut away large hunks of the medieval past, and soldering iron, used to weld the present to the apostolic period in a new configuration called authoritative tradition.

The sixteenth-century vernacular Bible represented, in other words, both a successful break with tradition *and* a successful consolidation of a new tradition. The canon was briefly opened, and then decisively closed. In Germany, Lutherans invested Luther's Bible with the same divine attributes that they gave to Luther himself. Grammarian Johann Clajus's praise of Luther's Bible as the direct product of divine inspiration—"the Holy Spirit, who spoke pure Hebrew through Moses and the other prophets, pure Greek through the Apostles, also spoke German through its chosen instrument, Martin Luther"—was directly paralleled by the worshipful attitude of preacher Matthias Hoe von Hoenegg, who named Luther the "holy wonder worker," the "doctor of all doctors, in the secular arts as well as Scripture," a "*physicus, metaphysicus, astronomus, mathematicus*," a holy man and scholar.[60] In the same vein, popular broadsheets called him

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[57] Andreas Karlstadt, *Welche bucher Biblisch seint* (Wittenberg, 1520), Aii^r, Bii^r. See also Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (Neukirchen, 1969).

[58] Luther, WABi, 12:291.

[59] See the respective prefaces to Hebrews, James, and Revelations, WABi, 7:345, 385ff, 407ff.

[60] Johann Clajus, *Grammatica germanicae linguae* [1578], in *Die deutsche Grammatik des Johannes Clajus*, ed. Friedrich Weidling (Strassburg, 1894), 4. Matthias Hoe von Hoenegg, quoted in Reinitzer, *Biblia deutsch*, 35–36.

the "natural son of the beloved Apostle Paul," a hyperbolic praise mirrored in the comment of sixteenth-century preacher Johann Draconites that "when he read Luther's German Bible, he did not know whether Moses or Luther were more learned."[61] Luther's German, for enthusiasts like Draconites, was properly apostolic, just as authoritative as the most sacred texts in the Christian tradition. When Johann Friedrich Mayer proved in his *Apocalyptic Luther* that Luther was "the Angel flying in the Heavens carrying the Eternal Gospel" (Rev. 14.6–7), we have to assume that the text Luther carried was his own Bible translation.[62]

In England, there was no thirteenth apostle to carry the weight of a canonical text. And still the vernacular Bible was largely sacrosanct. Even those interested in vernacular revisions were convinced of the need for a stable textual center: Puritans, for example, wanted to preserve a canonical text against the anti-biblical ravings of the Quakers and various splinter groups and stressed the need to prevent "other Scriptures, or another gospel" from replacing the canonical one.[63] The committee gathered during the Commonwealth to revise the KJB called it "the best of any translation in the world."[64] Others were equally unrestrained. William Kilburne, in a polemic against the monopoly on Bible printing held by Henry Hill and John Field, called the KJB "the national and common Evidence of our Religion . . . an *Elysian flower* of Supremacie."[65] More cagey but just as confident in the KJB was Bishop Edward Wettenhall, who believed that "our Translations have, or may have, all the Senses the present Original can bear, and besides them, any which the Antient Versions or Glosses can probably affix to the Originals."[66] Despite his interest in revisions, there is little doubt that when the scholar Edward Leigh wrote that "translation openeth the window, to let in the light; breaketh the shell, that we may eat the Kernel; putteth aside the Curtain, that we may look into the most Holy place," he was thinking of the KJB.[67] "Our Bible is the Word of God," declared one Puritan divine emphatically. And after 1644, no more new editions of the Geneva Bible were published, at home or abroad, effectively making the KJB into the English Word of God. The translation project that had begun a century earlier had, for the time being, ground to a halt.

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[61] For broadsheets, see John Roger Paas, *The German Political Broadsheet, 1600–1700* (Wiesbaden, 1986), vol. 2, plates 273–77. Draconites quoted in Gustav Georg Zeltner, *De novis bibliorum versionibus Germanicis non temere vulgandis C. E. Triller: & H. J. Reitzii, rationes potissimum sub examen vocans* (Altdorf, 1707), 25.

[62] Johann Friedrich Mayer, *Lutherus apocalypticus* (Leipzig, 1677), 57; for an earlier version of this story, see Johann Bugenhagen, *Eine Christliche Predigt uber der leich . . . des Ehrwirdigen D. Martini Luthers* (Wittenberg, 1546).

[63] For Puritan anti-radicalism, see Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge, 1982). Jessey quoted in Norton, *Bible As Literature*, 98.

[64] Norton, *Bible As Literature*, 97.

[65] William Kilburne, *Dangerous errors in several late-printed Bibles* (Finsbury, 1659), 15.

[66] Edward Wettenhall, *Scripture authentick and faith certain* (London, 1686), 32.

[67] Leigh, *Critica sacra*, A3ᵛ.

Scholarship and the End of Translation

This new immobility in the Protestant Bible was enabled by a strict separation of scholarship from the vernacular Bible. As we saw, scholarship on the Bible in the sixteenth century was intimately entwined with the project of building a new vernacular text. Not only were scholars themselves involved with every phase of these translation projects, but scholarship—philological scholarship in particular—in a more abstract sense was also a key part of the authentication apparatus that gave the new translations legitimate title to the Word of God. But in the seventeenth century, the heyday of antiquarian biblical scholarship, translation became a sideshow. Biblical scholars conducted their work largely if not entirely on the original texts, published their results in a scholared Latin, and expended much energy in producing scores of concordances, dictionaries, and commentaries. But one thing they did not do was translate the Bible again.

Instead, seventeenth-century biblical scholarship cut itself off from the vernacular Bible. In Germany, where philological scholarship was largely moribund during the period, the "strongly doctrinaire side" of Lutheranism took over.[68] Lutheran scholars appointed themselves representatives of a new orthodoxy, the so-called Lutheran scholasticism, which declared the canonical and authentic Scriptures the center of their dogmatic systems. Johann Gerhard, the prince of the scholastics, opened his widely read and imitated *Loci theologici* (1610–1621) with such a declaration: "we believe in the canonical Scriptures because they are canonical Scriptures, that is, because they were given by God and ordained immediately by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; we do not believe in them because the Church has sanctioned them."[69] Only Scripture, not the church, or its authority, or its tradition, was necessary for salvation. To make this polemical point systematic, scholastics rigorously defined the nature of the biblical canon. What were relatively minor questions for the early reformers—the question, for example, of the Hebrew vowel points and their inspiration—assumed "doctrinal status" for Protestant orthodoxy as it developed a dogmatic scholarship largely hostile to historical and textual investigations.[70] At the same time, orthodox theologians, beginning with the hardline Matthias Flacius Illyricus and his 1567 *Clavis Sacrae Scripturae*, began to develop a new science of biblical hermeneutics with the so-called *analogia fidei*, or analogy of faith, as its central principle.[71] The *analogia fidei*, and post-Reformation biblical interpretation more generally, had

[68] Ernst Troeltsch, *Vernunft und Offenbarung bei Johann Gerhard und Melanchthon* (Göttingen, 1891), 27.

[69] Johann Gerhard, *Loci theologici* ([Geneva], 1639), 11.

[70] Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford, 2003), 151.

[71] On the development of hermeneutics, see Werner Alexander, *Hermeneutica Generalis: Zur Konzeption und Entwicklung der allgemeinen Verstehenslehre im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1993) and Peter Szondi, *Introduction to Literary Hermeneutics* (Cambridge, 1995).

a historical and scholarly component—Flacius Illyricus was himself a historian of some note—yet took the "unity of Scripture" as its fundamental assumption.[72] Biblical passages were ultimately explicable only with reference to a priori dogmatic principles—textual problems demanded not historical but doctrinal solutions. When *hermeneutica* became a neo-Latin topic of analysis in the early seventeenth century, its principal pioneer was Johann Conrad Dannhauer, a Protestant orthodox theologian who determined that since "all ways of knowing are parts of logic" and "interpretation is a way of knowing," hence "interpretation is a part of logic."[73] The "logic" of the Bible was—to the mind of Lutheran orthodoxy—its doctrine, which in turn was rooted solely in the original languages of the biblical texts. One important consequence of this neo-scholastic theological tradition, then, was the exclusion of translation from the domain of serious scholarship. "Only the Hebrew text for the Old Testament, and Greek for the New, are authentic," declared Gerhard, since only the "prophets in the Old Testament and the evangelists and apostles in the New Testament" were truly "God's amanuenses."[74] Translations were thus useful but needed, as theologian Johann Quenstedt said, "hypothetically," not "absolutely."[75] Because authentic doctrine resided only in the canonical, original language books, translations were fundamentally unnecessary for dogmatic theology.

Cut loose from scholarship, and from the mainstream of theological investigation, the vernacular text became a popular Bible, sanctioned principally in the domains of practical theology, preaching, confessing, and so on. As a "treasure of the church," the Luther Bible contained everything necessary for salvation and provided a text in which "even the simplest, indeed even children from childhood on can hear clearly the voice of their God."[76] When Abraham Calov said that "no nation can hear God speak so true in their Bible as we Germans," he meant quite literally *hear*, in sermons, teachings, and conversation. *Study* of the Bible on the other hand was to be conducted in "good Latin texts, in observations and scholia," and confined to the original language versions.[77]

[72] Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and Its Humanist Reception* (New Haven, 1997), 97–98. See also Wilhelm Dilthey, *Hermeneutics and the Study of History* in *Selected Works*, ed. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton, 1985), 4:35ff. On Flacius's historicism, see Gregory Lyons, "The Art of History in Reformation Germany," (Ph. D. diss., Princeton University, 2003).

[73] Alexander, *Hermenutica generalis*, 53. See also H. E. Hasso Jaeger, "Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Hermeneutik," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 18.1 (1974): 35–84.

[74] Gerhard, *Loci*, 36; Robert Preus, *The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study in the Theology of the Seventeenth-Century Lutheran Dogmaticians* (London, 1955), 54. See also Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism: A Study of Theological Prolegomena* (St. Louis, 1970).

[75] Johann Quenstedt, *Theologia didactico-polemica* (Leipzig, 1702), 227.

[76] Johann Friedrich Mayer, preface to Martin Luther, *Biblia, das ist/die gantze Heilige Schrifft Alten und Neuen Testament* (Ratzeburg, 1690),)(5ᵛ.

[77] Abraham Calov, *Kurtzer Entwuff Etlicher Ursachen/daß die Neue Helmstädtische Biebel/Derer Abdruck angefangen/nicht zu publicieren* (Altdorf, 1710), §XVII, e1ᵛ.

What was true in Germany held for England as well, where Anglicans and Puritans alike pursued the paths of scholarship without touching the vernacular versions. Bishop Wettenhall was no less patronizing to the unlearned than Calov: "I say still: *Keep to your English Translation,* good people: *keep to what you are.* Your *English Bibles* to you, are the *surest word of Prophecy and Gospel too,* that you can meet with. . . . Accurate even to the envy of other Nations."[78] Like the Germans, the English too were trapped between the "superstitious Romanists" and the "fiery Novellists," as the scholar Brian Walton had it.[79] But unlike the Germans, English (and indeed Dutch) scholars did not pursue their researches under the hegemony of dogmatics. Instead, they were foremost in investigating the lands, peoples, and customs of the ancient Jews, and were intrepid in their explorations of Near Eastern languages and cultures. Scholars like Hugo Grotius, Gerhard Vossius, Samuel Bochart, Edward Stillingfleet, John Selden, and many others pushed biblical scholarship to new dimensions in northern Europe, and in doing so, helped to transform it into one of the most vibrant areas of research in the seventeenth century. New chairs in oriental literature were founded in English universities; scholars collected and documented manuscripts and published their findings in Latin translation. New textual monuments—from the enormous London Polyglot to the late-century compilation of biblical scholarship, the *Critici sacri*—were built. And new areas of research were delimited, among them sacred botany, sacred zoology, and sacred numismatics.[80]

But despite the enormous effort expended in antiquarian biblical scholarship, the vernacular Bible remained in stasis. In the first instance, the annotations that had accompanied the Geneva Bible were removed in 1611, purging it of an irritatingly antimonarchical rhetoric but also displacing scholarship entirely from the text of the vernacular Bible.[81] The new KJB very consciously had no annotations, not in order to make the Bible cheaper but in order to make it less controversial. During the Commonwealth, the Geneva Bible was left unannotated. Although Parliament did recommend a new set of scholarly notes based on the "candor and ingenuity" of the Dutch annotations to the States Bible, these notes were never attached to the text. Instead, they were published separately, a virtual allegory for the relations between scholarship and translation during the period.[82] Notes were available to those who cared, but scholarship was no longer intrinsic to the translation project.

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[78] Wettenhall, *Scripture Authentick*, 53.

[79] Walton quoted in Peter Miller, "The 'Antiquarianization' of Biblical Scholarship and the London Polyglot Bible (1653–57)," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62 (July 2001): 471.

[80] For an introduction to biblical antiquarianism, see *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 3 (2001); also Deborah Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley, 1994); D. C. Allen, *The Legend of Noah* (Urbana, IL, 1949), and Arnold Williams, *The Common Expositor* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1948).

[81] On the Geneva Bible as a radical text, see Hill, *English Bible*, 64–65.

[82] Theodore Haak, *The Dutch Annotations Upon the Whole Bible* (London, 1657), b2ʳ. These notes were commissioned by a group of divines from the Westminster Assembly.

Beyond the stasis of the vernacular, furthermore, even the text of the *original* Bible was largely static during this period, in spite of the prodigious efforts of biblical scholars to re-create the world of the ancient Jews and Christians. Antiquarian scholarship had the potential both to erode and to buttress the authority of Scripture and, at various times, served both functions. At a time when the authority of the Bible was challenged by radical philosophers, libertines, English revolutionaries, Quakers, and Jews, this scholarship provided new, historically nuanced foundations for biblical customs and practices, even as it applied to the Bible the same techniques of analysis brought to all texts and thus began to dispel some of the sacred aura surrounding the biblical manuscripts.[83] The polyglot Bibles that this scholarship produced were aimed at recreating the "reading . . . generally received into the Church of Christ" in the early years of Christianity but at the same time were very effective at revealing the errors that marred the face of Scripture.[84] But whatever the insights it shed on the nature and history of the Bible, all of this antiquarian scholarship was of no use in reconstructing the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments. In particular, the New Testament entered into a virtual textual coma during the period. Whereas the Old Testament was subject to the critical scrutiny of researchers—some, indeed, wished to discard the Hebrew versions altogether in favor of the Septuagint or the Samaritan Bible—the New Testament was to slumber alone.[85] Confessional reasons were probably behind this absence of research among Protestants. While Catholics "fearlessly engaged in the detailed study of the biblical texts" (without ever actually producing new editions!), Protestants were afraid that such researches might show the unclarity of the text and erode its ability to provide authentic theological truths.[86] Whatever the cause, however, the stasis of the seventeenth-century vernacular Bible mirrored the stasis of the Greek New Testament. The new stability was given textual form by the librarian at Leiden University, Daniel Heinsius, whose 1633 edition of the New Testament assured its readers that *textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum* (thus you have the text accepted now by all) and became the so-called *textus receptus* of the New Testament.[87] This Greek text was reprinted innumerable times in centuries to come and its authority became proportional to

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[83] For this argument, see Martin Mulsow, "John Seldens *De Diis Syris*: Idolatriekritik und vergleichende Religionsgeschichte im 17. Jahrhundert," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 3 (2001); Peter N. Miller, "Taking Paganism Seriously: Anthropology and Antiquarianism in Early Seventeenth-Century Histories of Religion," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 3 (2001); Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford, 2003), esp. 219–38.

[84] Walton quoted in Miller, "London Polyglot," 474.

[85] On Vossius and the Septuagint, see J.C.H. Lebram, "Ein Streit um die hebräische Bibel und die Septuaginta," in Th. H. Scheurleer and G.H.M. Meyjes, eds., *Leiden University in the Seventeenth Century: An Exchange of Learning* (Leiden, 1975), 21ff. For Morin on the Samaratin Bible, see *Exercitationes Biblicae, de Hebrai Graecique Textus Sinceritate* (Paris, 1669).

[86] Jacques Le Brun, "Das Entstehen der historischen Kritik im Bereich der religiösen Wissenschaften im 17. Jahrhundert," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 89 (April–June 1980): 106.

[87] Heinsius quoted in H. J. de Jonge, "The Study of the New Testament," in *Leiden University*, 90.

the breadth of its dissemination.[88] After its publication, new editions of the Greek New Testament—which had enjoyed such an efflorescence in the hands of Erasmus, Robert Stephanus, and Theodore Beza—virtually disappeared until the middle of the eighteenth century.

In Protestant Europe, in other words, the seventeenth century was marked by two great moments of religious textual stabilization. On the one hand, the canon of vernacular Bibles was established, a canon that in large part still shapes the modern English, German, Dutch, and American experiences of the Bible. On the other hand, the canon of original language New Testaments was established. Although it is possible that these two events were merely coincidentally contemporaneous, it seems unlikely. For the sixteenth-century iconoclastic efforts to renew the theological foundations of Christianity prompted both the vernacular translation project and the explosion of New Testament textual scholarship. But as the violent consequences of religious difference made themselves felt both on the continent and in England, and as Protestantism emerged as an institutionalized set of churches threatened just as much by internal division as by external pressure, the need for consolidated and stabilized Bibles became pressing. The destructive religious wars that in the German case left nearly a third of its population dead, pushed clerics, theologians, and politicians from all confessions to forgo the potential chaos that new translations and new theologies offered. In England, the Revolution might have, and nearly did, inspire the newly ascendent Puritans to seek alternatives to a Bible clearly tainted by the touch of royal power and compromise. But in the end, the history of the seventeenth-century Bible followed that of seventeenth-century politics: *cuius regio, eius religio* was matched by the tacit acceptance of *cuius religio, eius scriptura*.[89] Stable Protestant theologies and stable Protestant theocracies needed stable vernacular Bibles.

Given the urge to keep chaos at bay, it is not surprising that the vernacular Bibles produced by Luther and the King James translators retained their place in the sun of the new century. And once the theological imperative to translate was gone, the interest in the actual text of the Bible—the urge to produce better original versions through manuscript research—waned as well, either because these texts represented a kind of religious dynamite better left untouched or because these texts were simply seen as stable fixtures around which an entirely new form of biblical scholarship—historical, antiquarian, scientific—could take place. As a result, as the end of the seventeenth century approached, the Bible seemed a

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[88] Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1968), 106.

[89] On confessionalization, see Heinz Schilling, "Confessionalization in the Empire: Religious and Societal Change in Germany between 1555 and 1620," in *Religion, Political Culture, and the Emergence of Early Modern Society* (Leiden, 1992) and "Confessional Europe," in *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600: Volume II: Visions, Programs and Outcomes*, ed. Thomas A. Brady, Jr., Heiko Oberman, and James Tracy (Leiden, 1995).

fairly familiar and established entity. The vernacular texts that shaped the Protestant reforms had become ingrained in popular religious life. They were sufficient enough in the minds of most, scholarly and unlearned alike, to teach the faithful the ways of God, transparent enough that the theological teachings of the Protestant churches would shine clearly. Scholarship was comfortably busy with biblical histories and chronologies; the texts of the Old and New Testament seemed unchanging and unchangeable. The Bible was alive, its significance guaranteed by Protestants who put the Word of God at the heart of their theological systems. The Protestant Bible was at peace. But not for long.