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# TSF

# BULLETIN

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7. The Inappropriate "Historical Disjunctions." We are charged in this section with assuming that "certain correct assertions about an individual's thought logically disallow other ones from being true." Woodbridge then lists a number of these. He claims, for example, that we believe "because a thinker speaks of God accommodating himself to us in the words of Scripture, it is assumed that he or she does not believe in complete biblical infallibility." (Throughout his list of our logical errors, Woodbridge repeatedly uses the "complete biblical infallibility" language which only confuses things.) But the primary question is not whether we were right or wrong in making so-called "assumptions." The question, historically, is whether or not the people and documents *actually did teach* the inerrancy position Woodbridge espouses. Does the evidence show that the people who spoke of accommodation also believe in "inerrancy"? We believe the evidence does not support this. On the positive side we've shown how accommodation, for example, was an important tool for maintaining the complete integrity of the biblical revelation and its *full* theological authority. Again the question is history and not logic. Ironically, Woodbridge knows this too when he writes that "only careful open-minded historical investigation can perhaps reveal if a person adheres to limited or complete biblical infallibility." Actually it is Woodbridge who is making the "historical disjunctions" and the "logical deductions" with his conclusions in light of our documentation that his categories are the only ones to be read rightly into the evidence.

8. The Dated Models of Conceptualization. It is said that we write "elitist history" since we do not delve into "new methods of conceptualization" dealing with the fields of "popular religion," the book trade, disparities of belief and practice, etc. This makes our study "surprisingly dated" according to our critic. Yet we must ask: since when do we find those supporting the inerrancy view producing the kinds of historical studies Woodbridge appraises so highly?

Moreover, Woodbridge claims loyalty to the idea of taking stock of the individual's thought "with the categories of his or her age." But when inerrantists use the scientific categories of the seventeenth century to read third-century theologians or the nineteenth-century categories of Hodge and Warfield to read the sixteenth-century Calvin, we must wonder who really needs to heed the advice about "models of conceptualization."

9. The Bibliographical Insensitivity. The final consideration put forth by Woodbridge is our "peculiar insensitivity to the problem of doing balanced bibliographical work." On the one hand he chastises us for not including Kantzer's dissertation on Calvin in our "Selected Bibliography." But then in the next sentence Woodbridge says that we "do interact with this and other literature." He calls our interactions, however, "sometimes at a very superficial level."

Our "Selected Bibliography" was just that. It and all the others were selective. Why Woodbridge should worry that an "unapprised reader would not generally surmise from this bibliography that a scholarly literature exists that challenges many of the conclusions of the authors' choice volumes" is puzzling. The unapprised reader would no longer be unapprised of this if he or she became actually a reader of the book since it is apparent throughout (as Woodbridge knows) that we have put forward a thesis and offered a model for biblical authority. We interacted with varying interpretations throughout. Space limitations precluded more extensive arguments with all those with whom we did not agree—whether from a "liberal" or "conservative" direction. We wanted to point people to the sources, to lay out the main contours of the scholarly debate, to provide data, and to say openly and honestly how we read and interpret the history and documents with which we deal.

Both Jack Rogers and I are glad for the opportunities to work with others in coming to understandings about the nature of biblical authority and issues of scriptural interpretation. This is

the task to which we have all been called and along with John Woodbridge and his colleagues are glad to announce our allegiance to the Lord of the Scriptures.

More specifically, Jack and I hoped to open new avenues for many who have felt increasingly uncomfortable with their present understandings of what the Bible is for and how it is to function in their lives. Some have felt this discomfort because of what they have been taught the church has believed about Scripture throughout its history. In the face of these teachings, we've sought to say what we've discovered and to hold forth the Scriptures as God's gracious communication of Himself to us, His children. We look to the Scriptures with confidence and in faith believing them to be God's written word. And we look to all our brothers and sisters in Christ to work with us in understanding the Scriptures that we might be faithful interpreters of that Word.

Correction: The address for the *Trinity Journal*, in which John Woodbridge's complete article appears, is Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2045 Half Day Rd., Deerfield, IL 60015. The zip code was listed incorrectly in our March issue.

## OLD TESTAMENT TEXTUAL CRITICISM: SOME RECENT PROPOSALS By A. J. Petrotta, Ph.D. candidate, University of St. Andrews

Textual criticism is not likely to excite the imagination of most students. More often than not, it conjures up visions of poring over countless manuscripts, sifting through endless variants, or the dreaded task of unlocking the mysteries of the *apparatus criticus*! Our survey is highly selective but seeks to illustrate some recent trends which promise to disenfranchise the subject from the dungeons of the exegetical task.

An essay by S. Talmon (1975) was one of the first attempts to show the new directions that textual criticism could take "in direct conjunction with the wider realm of biblical studies." He argued that the "creative impulse" did not end with the authoring of a biblical text but overlaps with the history of the transmission of a text. Once this is accepted the separation between "lower" and "higher" criticism is less distinct. He concluded the essay with numerous examples of the continuity of literary and scribal techniques to show how stylistics and textual criticism can be united to illumine a text.

An essay by M. Greenberg (1978) is a fine example of the fruitful use of textual criticism in the exegetical task. It includes a comprehensive treatment of a single pericope in the book of Ezekiel. For Greenberg, the primary role of textual criticism is not the reconstruction of a hypothetical "original," but a more precise understanding of particular texts. As Greenberg summed up his own study:

We have tried to show through study of two examples that divergences between MT (= Masoretic text) and G (= Septuagint) in Ezekiel (and by implication elsewhere) may constitute alternative messages, each with its own validity. Exegetical rewards came, in each case, by asking not which reading was the original one, but what effect the divergences work on the messages of the respective versions (p. 140).

In his presidential address for the Society of Biblical Literature, J. Sanders (1979) also sought to unite the sibling disciplines of textual criticism and exegesis. Against the backdrop of two major projects on the Hebrew text: the Hebrew University Bible Project, and the United Bible Societies Hebrew Old Testament Text Critical Project, Sanders addressed himself

to all the major issues of the text-critical task. He stated:

There is no early biblical manuscript of which I am aware no matter how "accurate" we may conjecture it to be, or faithful to its *Vorlage* (= the copy it was modeled on), that does not have some trace in it of its having been adapted to the needs of the community (p. 13).

Moreover, what we learn as we listen to the tradents checks our own proclivity towards post-Enlightenment *hubris*: "We are heirs of a very long line of tradents and not necessarily more worthy of the traditions than they" (p. 29).

B. Childs devoted an entire chapter to the question of "Text and Canon" in his monumental *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (1979). He, like Talmon, argued that there is an overlap between the literary and textual history of Old Testament books; he stressed that the textual changes were minor compared to the literary activity (Jeremiah showing the widest degree of variation in the textual phase). According to Childs,

A basic characteristic of the canonical approach in regard to both its literary and textual level is its concern to describe the literature in terms of its relation to the historic Jewish community rather than seeing its goal to be the reconstruction of the most original literary form of the book, or the most pristine form of a textual tradition (pp. 96-97).

He went on to argue for the priority of the Masoretic text in recovering the canonical text of the Old Testament.

P. Ackroyd's essay (1977) touched on textual criticism only tangentially, but has important implications for how one views the goal of textual criticism. He stated,

The authority of the biblical word is neither a matter of finding an "original" text which is accepted as coming direct from God; that search is often unproductive, but it may also take us back in a sense too far. Nor is it a matter of acceptance only of the finally agreed "canonical" form, . . . authority rests in the interaction between text and reader . . ." (pp. 171-72).

The nature of the authority of a biblical text is thus very much at stake when one engages in textual criticism.

For the above scholars, the textual study of the OT seeks to determine what if anything was intended by the variants reflected in the history of the Hebrew text and of translations made wholly or in part from a Hebrew text (Aramaic, Greek, Latin, and Syriac). It seeks to understand how and why a certain reading was preserved. It is thus an avenue for the exploration of the history of interpretation; more narrowly, an avenue for a better understanding of the text in its various forms. Its primary goal is not to reconstruct a hypothetical "original," but to understand the non-"originals" we now possess, in particular the Masoretic text.

For Childs and Sanders, the textual study of the OT makes it clear that the community which preserved the text cannot be divorced from the text itself. By implication, the nature of biblical authority will be misconceived without a proper recognition of the formative role church and synagogue played in the formation of the Bible.

Evangelicals have been severely criticized for pursuing studies on the periphery of biblical studies (Barr 1977, pp. 128f.). Perhaps recent trends in textual criticism will enable evangelicals to follow the paths of their ancestors and yet be allowed to enter the Promised Land of biblical theology. Certainly the concerns touched on above—a better understanding of the text, and the nature of biblical authority—are concordant with the concerns of biblical theologians of all persuasions.

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## INTERSECTION

*(The integration of theological studies with ethics, academic disciplines, and ecclesiastical institutions)*

### EVANGELICAL WOMEN'S CAUCUS By Ann Ramsey Moor

"I thought I was the *only one* who felt this way!" A few years ago, when Evangelical Women's Caucus was in its infancy, this statement was commonplace. To women (and some men) across the continent who had become privately convinced that there was a biblical basis for the equality of the sexes in church, home, and society, the knowledge that there were others who shared their conviction often came as a real surprise.

Today, in 1981, biblical feminism is no longer a novelty. EWC's international membership (now around 600) attests to that, as does the growing number of evangelical women who are going off to seminary.

Yet, despite their burgeoning ranks, theologically conservative women in North America's seminaries may still experience a certain sense of isolation. In some evangelical theological schools, women preparing for the pastorate may encounter thinly veiled hostility from male counterparts who question the legitimacy of what they are doing. In more pluralistic institutions, women who are trying to grapple honestly and carefully with "sticky passages" in the New Testament may be written off as hopeless literalistic.

Even without such conflicts, women in seminary tend to have somewhat different needs and problems than do men. Many embark upon their studies after a number of years of other life and work experiences: training for other professions, holding various jobs, and/or raising small children. Unlike male seminarians, who are often single and/or just out of college, they may not have the luxury of devoting all their time and energy to academic and field work. Furthermore, in line with a wider ranging and more wholistic concept of ministry, women frequently want to prepare for innovative ministerial situations, such as a hospital chaplaincy or staffing a halfway house or crisis center.

As a grass-roots organization of Christians attempting to become, and help others to become "all they're meant to be," Evangelical Women's Caucus can help enrich the lives of women seminarians or graduate students looking for intellectual, emotional, and spiritual support. Three of EWC's six active chapters are located in major centers of theological education (Boston, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay area), and almost all local or regional chapters have theological students in their membership. Several TSF groups also have close ties with EWC.

While chapters vary in structure and emphasis from location