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Chapter 7

THE TRANSLATOR OF THE VULGATE BIBLE: A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY CONTROVERSY

A beautiful picture by Guido Reni from the early 1630s (fig. 48) shows Jerome in his cave at work translating the Bible. As he writes, he turns and looks up attentively at an angel hovering near him. The angel makes the traditional gesture of teaching, gracefully holding the middle finger of his left hand between the thumb and index finger of his right, as though showing a small child how to count. The subject is "The Inspiration of St. Jerome." Its meaning is that Jerome was the author of the Latin Bible by the universally known as the Vulgate and that divine inspiration guarantees the faithfulness, authenticity, and authority of his translation.[1]

Behind this unambiguous messages lies a history of uncertainty and debate reaching back to the high Middle Ages. Before the sixteenth century the standard view had been that the "Latin translation commonly used in our churches" (*ea tralatio qua nostrae ecclesiae passim utuntur*), or what contemporaries more simply referred to as "our translation" (*nostra tralatio*), was Jerome's greatest gift to the church. "After much labor," wrote Nicolò Maniacoria, "Jerome mastered all the books of the Old and New Testaments in Hebrew and Greek... He translated into Latin all the books of the Old Testament, first from Greek, and then more accurately from Hebrew. He revised the New Testament from the original

[1] Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 1631-35; E. Baccheschi, *L'opera completa di Guido Reni* (Milan, 1971), no. 189a, p. 11; Exh. cat. Vienna, Albertina, 14 May-5 July 1981. *Guido Reni Zeichnungen* (Vienna, 1981), nn. 121-23, pp. 168-69. There is a variant, later in date, in Detroit. See D. Stephen Pepper, "*The Angel Appearing to Saint Jerome* by Guido Reni, a New Acquisition," *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts* 48(2) (1969) : 28-35.

Greek."[2] A century later Vincent of Beauvais testified to Jerome's autorship in almost the same words : "Jerome, skilled in the three languages, revised the new Testament from the original Greek and translated the Old Testament from the original Hebrew."[3] Abbot Trithemius repeated the common wisdom in his biographical and bibliographical dictionary, published in 1494: "Among all the doctors none benefit the church more than Jerome; for in addition to his innumerable writings he translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin, corrected the New Testament from the Greek original, and offered them both to the church for its faithful reading."[4]

Yet according to Rober Bacon in 1267, some of his contemporaries were already suggesting that the "translation in common use" was defective and very likely not by Jerome. Scholars who knew Hebrew, like the biblical commentator Nicholas of Lyra or the Dominican friar Raymundus Martinus (1220-1285), an accomplished orientalist and author of the *Pugio fidei adversus mauros et Iudaeos*, pointed out the many places where "our translation" failed to reflect the *Hebraeica veritas*, while even scholars without Hebrew noticed that the Latin of their Old Testament was not always the same as the Latin translation used by Jerome in his own biblical commentaries and other works.[5] Roger Bacon explained the discrepancy by supposing that Jerome had made two translations of the Old Testament, of which "our translation" was the earlier. In this first version, he accepted the readings of the *vetus translatio* or *vetus Latina*, the Latin Bible of the early church, except where the old translation was manifestly in error, in order to keep peace in the church and to protect himself from defenders of the old translation, who were calling him a heretic and false coiner for presuming to touch the traditional text at all. He based his second version entirely on the Greek and Hebrew verities, but he kept it secret from the vulgar, using it only in his

[2] *Vita Hieronymi (PL 22*: 186-87 and 196).

[3] *Speculum historiale*, XVI, xix (Venice, ed. September 1494, fol. 199).

[4] *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, 2d ed. (Paris, Berthold Rembolt, 16 October 1512), fol. 27.

[5] Hody, 430-33.

commentaries for the instruction of serious scholars.[6] In the next century, the Oxford-trained theologian Richard Fitzralph, archbishop of Armagh (d. 1360), concluded from the same evidence that the Latins possessed three whole or partial translations of the Old Testament: one made from the Greek Septuagint (the Old Latin version); Jerome's translation, believed to survive (apart from the *Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos*) only in the quotations from it that he used in his commentaries; and the translation in common use (*illa translatio quam vocamus communis*), asserted to be anonymous, of uncertain origin, and possibly translated, at least in part, from a language other than Hebrew or Greek.[7]

Humanist critics were more sharply outspoken. Collating the Latin text of the New Testament against the Greek original and judging its language by the classicizing standards of the *studium humanitatis*, they were dismayed by its solecisms and barbarisms, its ambiguities and obscurities, its departures from the Greek, and as shocked by a Latin so unclassical as the young Jerome had been by the crudity of the prophets. "Careless translation," "barbarous word," "crudely translated" are some of Lorenzo Valla's criticisms of the man he referred to simply as the *interpres Latinus*.[8] By 1506, Reuchlin, who had learned Hebrew and Greek under the influence of St. Jerome in order to read the Scriptures

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[6] *Opus Minus*, in *Fr. Rogeri Bacon opera quaedam lactenus inedita*, ed. J. S. Brewer (Rolls Series, 15) (London, 1859), 330-49.

[7] *Summa Domini Armacani in questionibus Armenorum*, ed. Joannes Sudoris (Paris, Ponset le Preux for Jean Petit, 1511/12), XIX, 18-42, sig. C, i-C, iii.

[8] *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum*, in *Opera* (Basel, Henricus Petrus, March 1540), 843, col. 1 ("semibarbarus"); 844, col 1 ("Inepte translatum et idcirco inepta sententia"); 849, col. 2 ("Nimis inculta oratio, nec plane graeco vocabulo respondens"); 862, col. 1 ad I Cor. 2:9 "*Nec in cor hominis ascendit, quae preaparavit deus, qui diligunt illum* Interpres non animadvertit verbum graecum, etsi numeri singularis, tamen fuisse transferendum pluraliter, ut facit Hieronymus in epistola super pentateuchum, *nec in cor hominis ascenderunt*; ut appareat aut non esse hunc interpretem Hieronymum, aut eius interpretationem fuisse corruptam. Idem vitium paulo post." For more examples see S. Garofalo, "Gli umanisti italiani del secolo XV e la Biblia," *La Biblia e il Concilio di Trento (Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici,* 96) (Rome, 1947), 44-55, and Jerry H. Bentley, *Humanitists and Holy Writ. New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton, 1983), 32-69.

in the languages "in which they are believed to have been originally composed under the inspiration of God," had rejected both the Septuagint and the Vulgate, remarking that "although I revere St. Jerome as an angel and honor Lyra as a teacher, I worship only truth as I worship God." In his *De rudimentis Hebraeicis* he corrected the Vulgate in over 200 places.[9] Erasmus found more mistakes: "The translator has added something of his own here"; "This passage is ridiculously translated"; "The translator, whoever he may be, has nodded here, or wandered in his mind."[10] How could Jerome, universally acclaimed for his eloquence, learning, and mastery of the three languages, be this translator?

It was Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples, however, the great French humanist, Aristotelian philosopher, and biblical critic, who first tried to save Jerome's scholarly reputation by proving in some detail that he was not the author of "our translation" of the New Testament. In 1512 he published commentaries on the Pauline epistles, accompanied by a new Latin translation. In order to defend himself against possible charges that he was insolently tampering with Jerome's translation, he prefaced his version with an *Apologia* in which he showed that the "old translation of Paul's epistles everywhere read today" was by a man who had lived much earlier than Jerome and that it was identical with the translation Jerome called the *vulgata editio*.[11] (Lefèvre was using the word "vulgate" exactly as Jerome had done, to mean either the Septuagint Greek of the Old Latin versions of the Greek Old and

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[9] *Johann Reuchlins Briefwechsel*, ed. Ludwig Geiger (Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, CXXVI) (Tübingen, 1875), ep. 15, p. 16; *De rudimentis Hebraeicis* (Pforzheim, Thomas Anshelm, 27 March 1506), 549; and Werner Schwartz, *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation. Some Reformation Controversies and Their Background* (Cambridge, 1955), 61-91.

[10] *Des. Erasmi Roterodami in Novum Testamentum ad eodem denuo recognitum Annotationes* (Basel, Johann Froben, March 1519), sig. aa2, v; p. 131, *in margine*; p. 135, *in marg.;* p. 236. See also Schwarz, op. cit., 92-166, and J. H. Bentley, "Erasmus' *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* and the Textual Criticism of the Gospels," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 46 (1976): 33-75.

[11] "Apologia quod vetus interpretatio epistolarum beatissimi Pauli quae passim legitur non sit tralatio Hieronymi," in *Contenta. Epistila ad Rhomanos. Epistola prima'ad Corinthios... Commentariorum libri quatuordecim. Linus de passione Petri & Pauli* (Paris, Henri Estienne, 15 December 1512), sig. a, ii, v-a, iiij, v.

New Testaments. Only gradually after about 1520 did biblical critics begin to call "our translation" the *vulgata editio*, thus usurping for it the name of the version it had long since displaced, and not until after 1546, when the Council of Trent described the "translation in common use" as *haec vetus et vulgata editio,* did the new usage become common. The title of the official bibles issued by Popes Sixtus V and Clement VIII in the early 1590s, *Biblia sacra vulgatae eidtionis*, made the name universeal.)[12]

Lefèvre found his evidence in Jerome's own commentaries on Paul's epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Titus, and Philemon. He pointed out that Jerome called the author of the Latin text he was explaining the *Latinus interpres*, regularly cited him as someone other than himself, censured his ignorance, and corrected his errors. He invited his readers to compare the text of "our translation" with the improved readings Jerome offered in his commentaries. They would find in the translation "everywhere read today" the same errors Jerome had censured and none of his corrections. "Who but a fool will not say that our translation is Jerome's translation and that he criticized himself for ineptly mistranslating into Latin a correct Greek text?" No one doubts, of course, that Jerome did indeed revise the Old Latin text of the New Testament at the request of Pope Damasus, for at the end of *Famous Men* he tells us that he did: "I corrected the New Testament from the Greek and translated the Old Testament from Hebrew." What is at issue is whether "our translation" is the one Jerome corrected. It is not. "Our translation" is the one Jerome criticized, and uncorrected text that still swarms with infelicities and errors. Defenders of "our translation" sometimes try to explain its relation to Jerome's Pauline commentaries by supposing that he wrote the commentaries before he revised the New Testament. But this hardly explains why he failed to remember his earlier suggestions for improvements when he was revising the New Testament. Moreover, the redating accuses that most holy and learned father, or so Lefèvre thought, of presuming to explain a text before he could properly read it, arrogance inconceivable in so holy a man, "nay more, a hero and more than a man." Yet others have asked why so defective a translation was received by the church instead of Jerome's

[12]E. F. Sutcliffe, "The Name 'Vulgate'" and A. Allgeier, "Haec vetus et vulgata editio," *Biblica* 29 (1948): 345-52, 353-90.

corrected one. The fault, answered Lefèvre (it is his weakest argument), lay with those in Rome who envied him and forced him into exile. Lefèvre concluded that Jerome's recension, not just of the Pauline epistles, but of the whole New Testament, the labor he had undertaken for the common good at Pope Damasu's request, had perished.[13]

Independently of Lefèvre and at almost the same time, Paul of Middleburg, a graduate of the University of Louvain, professor of mathematics and astronomy at Padua, and since 1494 bishop of Fossembrone in the duchy of Urbino, came to the same conclusion, not only about the "common" translation of the New Testament, but about that of the Old Testament as well. In a treatise dense with miscellaneous learning, published in 1513 and principally devoted to establishing the precise date of the crucifixion, he digressed to discuss the autorship of the translation of the Bible commonly used in the church. Citing many of the same examples form Jerome's Pauline commentaries already used by Lefèvre, as well as others from the *Commentary on Matthew*, he showed that the translator of the New Testament was an unknown man whom Jerome often criticized and disparaged.[14]

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[13] Lefèvre, "Apologia," concluding (sig. a, iiij, v): "plane intelliget ex eodem non modo epistolarum Pauli, sed ned evangeliorum traductionem qua nunc utuntur ecclesiae esse Hieronymainam." Many modern scholars think that Jerome revised only the Gospels and use arguments very similar to Lefèvre's to show that he did not revise the rest of the New Testament. The Vulgate of the Pauline and Catholic epistles (and probably of Acts and Revelation also) is likely the work of an editor active in Rome at the end of the fourth century. He has recently been identified, very plausibly, as Rufinus the Syrian, a priest and monk from Jerome's own monastery in Bethlehem, sent by him on a mission to the imperial court c. 398. See F. Cavallera, "Saint Jérôme et la Vulgate des Actes, des Épîtres et de l'Apocalypse," *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 21 (1920), 269-92; H. J. Frede, *Ein neuer Paulustext and Kommentar*, 2 vols. (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1973), 1:253-55; H. J. Frede, ed., *Vetus Latina* 25/2, *Epistulae ad Thessalonicenses, Timotheum, Titum, Philomenem, Hebraeos* (Freiburg, 1976), 99-100 and 155, n. 49. Cf. Gerald Bonner, "Rufinus of Syria adn African Pelagian Controversy," *Augustinian Studies 3* (1972): 61-95; and O. Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius. Die theologische Position der römischen Bischöfe in pelagianischem Streit in den Jahren 411-432* (Stuttgart, 1975), 12-15.

[14] *Paulina de recta paschae celebratione: et de die passionis domini nostri Iesu Christi* (Fossembrone, Octavianus Petrutius, 8 July 1513), bk. II, chap. 1, sig. B, vi-vi,v: "Ex quibus constare arbitror beatum Hieronymum novum testamentum prout in ecclesia canitur non traduxisse. Posset quoque id plurimis exemplis probari quibus idem in suis commentariis hanc ipsam damnat

He used similar arguments to question Jerome's authorship of the *usitata editio* of the Old Testament. In his *Hebraeicae quaestiones*, Jerome proposed improved renderings of many words and phrases in the book of Genesis; his suggested improvements cannot be found in *nostra usitata editio*. Jerome based his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* on a text he explicitly described as his own translation from the Hebrew; it does not correspond with the text of Ecclesiastes in "our translation." And it is well known, continued the bishop of Frossembrone, that Jerome's translation of the Psalms from the Hebrew, the *Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos*, is not the version included in our bibles. "From all of this it is plain that Jerome's translation was not accepted by the church." We know that Jerome translated the canonical books of the Old Testament from the Hebrew. We know too that the corrected the Old Latin translation from the Septuagint Greek, indicating his revisions by asterisks and obelisks. Neither of these versions is the text of our present-day bibles. "Enough has been said to prove that the common translation of the Bible is not by Jerome, even though his little prefaces appear before some of its books."[15]

As he prepared his edition of the Greek New Testament and revised to go with it the new Latin translation he had made for John Colet in 1506-1507, Erasmus read Lefèvre and Paul of Middleburg and agreed with their conclusions. The translator of "the edition that we have in common use" (*qua vulgo utimir*) was often careless, clumsy, and inattentive to the Greek. Although his version has often been attributed to St. Jerome, "it is known to be

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translationem ab ecclesia usu habitam, et quasi ab alio factam carpit, et interpretem reprehendit... Apparet ergo quod haec usitata aeditio non est a Hieronymo translata... Nobis autem impraesentiarum sat est Hieronymum hanc nostram translationem damnare et a se factam negare, quod et plurimis aliis locis deduci potest."

[15] Ibid., sig. B, vii-B, viii, v: "Redeuntes ergo ad primum nostrum propositum satis constare arbitror translationem nostram usitatam a Hieronymo minime factam esse, quandoquidem eam dammans plurimis in locis corruptam docet non solum in novo, sed etiam in veteri testamento... Praeterea Augustinus libro. 18. de civitate dei docet Hieronymi ex Hebraica veritate aeditionem ab ecclesia non fuisse receptam, sed Septuaginta interpretum translationem in usu ecclesiae duntaxat haberi... Ex quibus apparet Hieronymi interpretationem ab ecclesia non fuisse acceptam... Satis itaque constare arbitror usitatam translationem non esse ipsius Hieronymi, licet eius praefatiunculae in ipsius exordiis sint praemissae."

neither Cyprian's nor Hilary's nor Ambrose's nor Augustine's nor Jerome's, for [Jerome] has different readings; much less is it the version which he tells us he has corrected, for things are found in it which he condemns, in respect not only of the wording but of the sense." No council, no official decision of the Roman church has formally approved it. In the age of the fathers, it was only one of many Latin translations in circulation. Ambrose cited one of these, Augustine another, Hilary and Jerome still others. In time, by virtue of being used, it gradually gained strength and authority, by custom as it were. Eventual acceptance, however, does not make Jerome its author. The scholarly consensus is that Jerome was not the translator.[16]

Doubts about Jerome's authorship or competence were especially strong among Hebrew scholars who were themselves offering new translations of the Old Testament to the public in the 1520s and 1530s. The Dominican Sanctes Pagnini of Lucca (d. 1536), the first modern scholar to translate the whole Bible from the original languages, did not deny that the translation *quae passim legitur* was by Jerome, but he emphasized that the text of it available to him and his contemporaries was not reliable (*germana, genuina*), but so corrupted by time, careless copyists and typesetters, and the emendations of the ignorant that what Jerome said of the Old Latin New Testament of his day could be said of it: there are as many versions as codices. But even a pure text would be found to be full of errors. Jerome was holy and learned; we venerate and adore him; but he was a man, and erred as all men do. Indeed, he often confessed that he worked too fast, and in his commentaries frankly acknowledged his mistakes and retracted and corrected them.[17] In a brief excursus prefacing his translation of the Hebrew Bible entitled *An Hieronymus vulgatae aeditionis fuerit auctor*

[16] So in the "Apologia" prefacing the New Testament (Basel, Froben, 1516): "Iam illud quemadmodum extra controversiam est apud eruditos, ita indoctis etiam multorum libris persuasum esse reor hanc novi testamenti editionem Hieronymi non esse; tametsi nos nec hanc, qualiscunque est aut cuiuscunque est, neque convellimus ullo modo neque calumniamur" (ed. Horborn, 165, lines 26-31). See also Epp. 326, 337, 456, 843 (Allen, 2:57-58, 110-11, 324-25; 3:313, lines 17-24; *C.W.E.* 3:71, 134-35; 4:45; 6:5-14).

[17] *Biblia* (Lyons, Antoine du Ry, 29 January 1527/28), sig. d, iij, v.

(a good example of the use of "Vulgate" in the modern sense), Sebastian Münster (1489-1552), a professor at the University of Basel, using arguments by then traditional, repeated that Jerome translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew but that our *vulgata editio* is not that translation.[18] Joannes Campensis, professor of Hebrew at the Trilingual College at Louvain and author of a Latin paraphrase of the Hebrew Psalms first published in Nuremberg in 1532, was brief but firm: "The identity of the author of the translation used in the church does not greatly concern me; what I do insist on is that the translation is unworthy of St. Jerome."[19]

So much for the critics. Supporters of the traditional version were not wanting. Before the Council of Trent, the most influential treatises defending Jerome's authorship of the translation gradually becoming known as the *vulgata editio* were the *Annotations against Lefèvre d'Etaples* (1519) by Diego López de Zúñiga (Stunica), one of the team of scholars assembled at Alcalá by Cardinal Ximénez to prepare the Complutensian Polyglot;[20] the *Five Treatises on Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (1529) by the Observant Franciscan Franz Titelmans, praelector in Holy Scripture at the University of Louvain, who prefaced the volume with a *Prologus apologeticus pro veteri et ecclesiastica novi Testamenti Latina interpretatione,* directed principally against Lefèvre and Erasmus;[21] an exceptionally

[18] *En tibi lector Hebraica Biblia Latina planeque nova Sebast. Munsteri tralatione,* 2 vols. (Basel, H. Bebelius for Michael Isingrinius and Henricus Petrus, 1534-35), 1:sig. a, 5v-b, 1v.

[19] *Psalmorum omnium iuxtra Hebraicam veritatem paraphrastica interpretatio* (Paris, Claude Chevallon, 1533), sig. a, ij, a.

[20] *Annotationes Iacobi Lopidis Stunicae contra Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem* (Alcalá, Arnaldus Guilielmus de Brocarius, 1519). See H. J. de Jonge's notice of Stunica in the introduction to his eidtion of Eramus's *Apologia ad Annotationes Stvnicae (Opera Omnia,* 9 (2) [Amsterdam-Oxford, 1983], 13-43).

[21] *Collationes quinque super Epistolam ad Romanos beati Pauli Apostoli* (Antwerp, Guilielmus Vorstermanus, May 1529). On Franz Titelmans see H. de Jongh, *L'ancienne faculté de théologie de Louvain au premier siècle de son existence, 1432-1540* (Louvain 1911), 249, n. 1; Allen, 7:69; Leopold von Ebersberg, in *Lexikon fûr Theologie und Kirche* (1965), 10:210-11; and J. H. Bentley, "New Testament Scholars at Louvain in the Early Sixteenth Century," *Studies in*

important and influential work by another professor from Louvain, *De sacris scripturis et dogmatibus* by Johannes Driedo (1533);[22] and, finally, the brief but dense *An vulgata editio sit divi Hieronymi* (1535) by Agostino Steuco, an Augustinian Canon Regular, bishop of Gubbio, prefect of the Vatican Library, and a distinguished Hebrew scholar.[23] Their common conclusions were that the Vulgate was eloquent, accurate, authoritative, and almost entirely, since he revised and translated it, the work of St. Jerome. Their views on the character and extent of the divine inspiration Jerome had been vouchsafed to help him were positive but not without nuance. From these shaping works emerged the orthodoxies defined at Trent and in the papal prefaces to the editions of the Sisto-Clementine Bible.

To those who said that the Vulgate was rude and barbarous, full of solecisms, ambiguities, and places difficult to understand, they replied by distinguishing secular eloquence, often magnificent and sublime, from Christian eloquence, the simple, tender language in which Jesus spoke to his disciples. This is the eloquence captured by the Greek original and faithfully reproduced in *nostra tralatio*. The number of solecisms has in any case been much exaggerated. The old translator did make a few grammatical mistakes, but they were minor ones, and not more numerous nor more serious than the errors of the evangelists and apostles themselves, though whether *they* committed them in order to shame

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Medieval and Renaissance History, n.s. 2 (1979): 69-79.

[22] *Ioannis Driedonis a Turnhout theologiae professoris apud Lovanienses, De ecclesiasticis scripturis et dogmatibus Libri. 4.* (Louvain, Rutgerius Rescius, 10 June 1533). See also de Jongh, op. cit., 156-60; H. de Vocht, *Monvmenta Hvmanistia Lovaniensia. Texts and Studies about Louvain Humanists in the First Half of the XVIth Century (Hvmanistica Lovaniensia, 4*((Louvain, 1934), 344-45; R. Draguet, "Le maître louvaniste Driedo inspirateur du décret de Trente sur la Vulgate," in *Miscellanea historica in honorem Alberti de Meyer*, 2 vols. (Louvain, 1946), 2:836-45; B. Emmi, "Il posto del De *Ecclesiasticis Scripturis et Dogmaticis* nelle discussioni tridentine," *Ephemerides Theologiae Louvanienses* 25 (1949): 588-97; and J. Etienne, *Spiritualisme érasmien et théologiens louvanistes* (Louvain, 1956), 105-60 (bibliography).

[23] In his *Opera omnia*, ed. Ambrosius Morandus, 3 vols. (Venice, Dominicus Nicolinus, 1591), 1:239-48; Th. Freudenberger, *Augustinus Steuchus aus Gubbio, Augustinerchorherr und päptlicher Bibliothekar (1479-1548) und sein literarisches Lebenswerk* (Münster, 1935).

the delicate ears of the wise men of this world, or to underline their own humility, or because they were carried away by the impetuosity of their message, or simply because they were ignorant, is unclear. What is plain is that we cannot criticize in the translation what we accept in the evangelical original. As for barbarisms, we recognize them as such only because our taste has been educated to the new standard of the *humanitatis studium*. Humanists say that the Latin of the New Testament is barbarous because it is not the Latin of Cicero, Livy, and Vergil. But each period and each author possesses an individual peculiarity of style. That of the *vetus interpres* was appropriate to his purpose, time, and place. It may be rude and humble, but such is it *energia* that its heavently heat penetrates the innermost chamber of the human heart.[24]

Does the Vulgate contain more serious errors, departures from the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek originals? Everyone agreed that the translation contained errors. Two explanations were offered. The mistakes were the fault of copyists and printers, not the translator. The remedy for these was not a new Latin translation but a critical edition of the one in common use, to expunge the corruptions of transmission and restore the text to its pristine purity. The second explanation concerned only the New Testament. We must remember that *nostra tralatio* is a revision of the Vetus Latina, not an original translation. We must remember and understand how Jerome revised this old translation: unwilling to offend tradition and custom by tampering too much with a familiar and much-loved text, he corrected only those places where the meaning did not agree with the Greek, leaving the rest intact. Minor errors and verbal infelicities that did not affect the meaning, he left untouched, even though he discussed them at length in his commentaries and suggested better readings there. In sum: the errors of the Vulgate are trivial, and it contains no mistranslations that distort the meaning of the inspired originals.[25]

The essential point, most clearly formulated by Johannes Driedo, who, unlike the more enthusiastic of his colleagues, felt no need to minimize the weaknesses of what he

[24] Titelmans, *Collationes*, sig. d, 4v-e, 1; Driedo, De *eccl. scrip.*, 85-87, 89.

[25] Titelmans, *Collationes*, sig. a, 4v-a, 5v and a, 7v; Stucho, *Opera*, 1: fols. 244v-248.

called the *interpretatio Latina seu communic editio vulgata qua ecclesia nunc utitur*, was that it accurately reproduced the Greek and Hebrew originals in everything touching faith and morals. The Vulgate's solecisms and stylistic lapses have spawned no heresies, led to no deviant behavior. Despite its many small mistranslations, despite its obscurities and ambiguities, every "mystery of faith," every "evangelical precept" shines out with straightforward clarity.[26] In this respect the vulgate is similar to the Septuagint. Although it too departed in many places from the Hebrew, Christ and the apostles respected and quoted it. Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome honored the Old Latin version, even though they were aware of the places where it differed from the oldest Hebrew and Greek texts. We should honor "our translation" in the same way; for the fact that it has been universally accepted for over a thousand years authenticates its freedom from doctrinal error and confirms that it was a providential gift of God to the Latin church to serve as its foundation of truth and unity.[27]

It was a further common view of apologists for the Vulgate that a special providence

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[26] Driedo, *De eccl. scrip.,* 81:
Quamquam probabile est vulgatam aeditionem, qua in novo Testamento Ecclesia nunc utitur, non esse pure Hieronymianam ac castigatam ad veritatem Graecae fidei, sed mistam quandam, partim ex illa, partim ex editione quadam olim vulgata, non sunt tamen ulla neque evangelica praecepta neque fidei mysteria in hac aeditione nostra vel praetermissa vel obscure designata, quae non in eadem apertissimis locis sunt declarata... Ex cuius [aeditionis] sive soloecismis, sive sententiis minus forsitan apte versis neque comprobatur, neque fovetur ulla haeresis, in qua fidei nostrae mysteria sufficienter declarantur, in qua neque sit quicquam quod praestet occasionem errandi pernitiose. Unde credimus neque in Graecis Hebraicisque exemplaribus esse ullum Christianae fidei mysterium, ullumve salutis humanae dogma necessarium, quod hactenus aut fugerit aut latuerit Latinorum Ecclesiam, aut si omissum aut contrarie positum in aeditione nostra Latina, quanvis in ea sint loca nonulla aut ambigue aut obscure aut minus congrue posita, quae hactenus etiam eruditissimi patres tollaverunt, non quod ignoraverint aut approvaberint errores, sed quia viderint nihil periculi in fede et moribus pendere ex huiusmodi locis, vel non prorsus a suo fonte deviis, vel etiam aut sic aut aliter interpretatis.
Also, ibid., 90: "Nam fidei et morum praecepta aliaque ad salutem utilia sifficienter sunt expressa et declarata in aeditione nostra Latina, eaque in quibus discrepat aeditio nostra Latina a veritate Graeca non multum iuvare possunt haereticos. quamobrem non oportet nos turbari, si quibusdam in locis aeditionis nostrae scriptura si vel ambigua vel obscura vel suspecta tanquam aliquantulum devia a mente scriptoris."

[27] Ibid., 82, 96-100.

of the Holy Spirit had acted directly on the translator to guarantee his trustworthiness. The point was recognized to be a delicate one, and there was a good deal less agreement about what it might mean to call a translation inspired. Some commentators, believing that the Latin church would be proved fallible if even a single error could be found in its Latin Bible, took the line that the Holy Spirit had made "our translation through St. Jerome precisely as it had made the Greek and Hebrew verities through the prophets and apostles. Titelmans considered the problem in some detail, and with greater subtlety. He knew that there were those, like Paul of Middleburg, who argued that a translation is authoritative (*autentica*) only to the extent that it agrees with the original and not because it has been used by the church for a long time. The truth of the Gospel is one and eternal; translations are many, time-bound and relative, subject to change and repudiation by the ecclesiastical authorities; only the Greek and Hebrew originals remain the same.[28] He remembered too that Jerome, after ridiculing the legend of the seventy translators in their separate cells, had said that "it is one thing to be a prophet, another to be a translator; in the one case, the Spirit predicts things to come; in the other, the translator uses learning and literary skill to reproduce in another language his understanding of the text." It was Titlemans's opinion that Jerome had not meant to deny that the translator of the Bible needs the inspiration of the Spirit as well as knowledge of languages and rhetorical training. For at the end of the same letter, the preface in which he dedicated the first part of this translation of the Old Testament to his friend

[28] *De recta paschae celebratione*, sig. C, iii: "Ex hac et tanta translationum diversitate inferri potest aeditionem non debere dici autenticam ex hoc solo quod in usu ecclesiae extitit, maxime si ab originali fuerit discrepans; vel saltem originalia et prototypa ab apostolis et evangelistis vel a prophetis conscripta magis erunt autentica. Praeterea veritas evangelii est una et aeterna, translationes vero sunt multae et temporales, pro beneplacito summi pontificis mutabiles et abolendae, originale vero semper unum et idem manet; ergo translationes non debent dici simpliciter autenticae, nisi fuerint originali conformes." A lively advocate of the more radically conservative inspirational view was Petrus Sutor (Pierre Cousturier), who in his *De tralatione bibliae et novarum reprobatione interpretationum* (Paris, 1525) argued not only that Jerome had translated the entire Vulgate under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit but that in order to prepare him for the task God had carried him off to the third heaven. For a full acount see Heinz Holeczek, *Humanistiche Bibelphilologie als Reformproblem bei Erasmus von Rotterdam, Thomas More, und William Tyndale* (Leiden, 1975), 186-245.

Desiderius, Jerome prayed that the same Spirit that had written the Pentateuch would help him translate it.[29] He asked for help because he knew that secular erudition is incapable of reaching the hidden meanings of Scripture. Only with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as he emphasized in his *Commentary on Galatians*, can the commentator move from the words of Scripture to their meaning, from surface to marrow, from rhetorical superficialities to the root of understanding.[30] To translate Cicero does not require divine help. But texts originally dictated by the Spirit must be read, understood, and translated under the inspiration of the Spirit. Only in this context does the argument from age acquire its true weight. For the Vulgate does not possess public authority (*publica authoritas*) simply because it is old. Other translations are as old or older, but they are not "authentic" for all that. The *ecclesiastica translatio* is authentic, official, and public because for over a thousand years the church has registered its approval by using it in its public worship and teaching and in its definition and defense of orthodoxy. The church's choice is a reliable guarantee that "our translation" can be trusted in everything that pertains to faith and morals because the Holy Spirit, which permanently inhabits the church, has enabled it to recognize the same inspiration in the translation and its author. Any translation made without the Spirit is purely human; and any doctrine or teaching based on it, without authority.[31]

Driedo faced squarely the further difficulty of explaining how a translation of the Bible could be at one admittedly defective and divinely inspired. He may have got the germ of his solution from Erasmus. Pointing out that the presence of mistakes in the New Testament's Greek need not shake the credit of the whole of Scripture, Erasmus had suggested that "perhaps it is not for us to dictate how the Holy Spirit shall tune the instrument that he makes of his disciples; however he may have done this, he has done it in

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[29] *Praef. in Pentateuchum (PL 28:* 151A).

[30] *Comm. in Galat*, I, 11 (PL 26: 447A) : "Nec putemus in verbis scripturarum esse Evangelium, sed in sensu; non in superficie, sed in medulla; non in sermonum foliis, sed in radice rationis."

[31] Titelmans, *Collationes*, sig. c, 6v-d, 4.

the way that he knew to be most conducive to the salvation of the human race. He was present in them so far as pertained to the business of the Gospel, but with this limitation, that in other respects he allowed them to be human none the less." Inspiration does not guarantee correct grammar. The Greek of the apostles, clumsy, not to say barbarous, was no gift from heave. Jerome often said that Paul's writing was uncouth. "So it is not necessary that whatever was in the apostles should at once be attributed to a miracle. Christ allowed his chosen to make mistakes even after they had received the Paraclete, but not to the extent of imperilling the faith, as today we admit that the church can err, but short of any risk to faith and religion."[32]

What Erasmus had said about the Greek verity could be applied even more appropriately to the translation. Driedo emphasized that Jerome never considered his translation divine or something that reflected perfectly the originals in every particular. Quite the reverse; time after time, he offered his readers alternate renderings, forcing them in this way to use their own judgment. He was keenly aware that no translator can avoid ambiguities and obscurities and that it is impossible to reproduce fully and precisely in one language the meaning and style of a passage in another. This is why it is legitimate and necessary for modern scholars to return constantly to the originals from which Jerome was working. And this too is why it is foolish to assume that Jerome had received a mystical intelligence of the text. He was helped by the Spirit, but the Spirit works in different ways: there is a Spirit of wisdom, a Spirit that operates miracles and deeds of heroic virtue, a Spirit that brings with it the gift of tongues, a Spirit of faith and charity, and, finally, a *spritius propheticus*. Jerome was a translator, not a prophet. He was human and made mistakes. Since, however, he amply possessed the *spiritus fidei et caritatis*, his translation was not a purely human work. The Spirit did not illumine him to the degree that he understood the meaning of the prophetic books as fully as the prophet himself, dictating in Hebrew in the radiance of prophetic vision. He did not always reproduce the *Hebraeica veritas* of the Old Testament. Nor has the church approved every word of his revision of the New Testament just because Pope Damasus

[32] Ep. 844 (Allen, 3:331-33; *C.W.E.* 6:28-30).

commissioned him to make it. But the Spirit of faith and charity prevented him from mistranslating things that matter; his translation never deviated from the truth of faith or the rules of Christian living. Jerome was not a prophet nor an evangelist; but he was, in the precise sense that he was incapable of error about faith and morals, an inspired translator.[33]

Driedo's views on the authorship of the Vulgate were not as straightforward as his discussion of Jerome's inspiration might lead one to suppose. Other scholars trying to rebut Valla, Lefèvre and Erasmus, Paul of Middleburg, Sanctes Pagnini, and Joannes Campensis, liked to argue that no one but Jerome *could* have produced the Vulgate. Who but Jerome among the Latins possessed the necessary command of Hebrew and Greek? Augustine hardly knew Greek. And had not Jerome's version displaced the Old Latin in spite of St. Augustine's opposition? They cited the evidence of the prefaces attached to the various books of the Old Testament Vulgate. In them Jerome himself had affirmed that he was responsible for what followed. It is inconceivable that the church should have been so misguided as to put Jerome's prefaces in front of someone else's translation.[34] The chronological argument appeared repeatedly. Agostino Steuco supposed that Jerome had translated the Old Testament after, not before, writing his commentaries on the major and minor prophets. It is the Vulgate, therefore, that reflects his mature opinion and learning. Where there are disagreements, its readings are better than those proposed in the commentaries.[35] Stunica had said the same. Jerome wrote his commentaries on Paul before he revised the New Testament at the request of Damasus. When he wrote the commentaries his youthful head was swollen with pride at his rhetorical skill and command of Greek, and he railed unnecessarily at the supposed errors of the Old Latin. By the time Damsus

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[33] Driedo, *De Eccl. scrip.*, 72, 87-90. The church thus ratifies Jerome's translation, not because it is in perfect consonance with the originals, "sed tanquam omnibus aeditionibus tunc factis praeferendum, et in regulis fidei et morum nusquam deviam, et tanquam talem quae publice legatur et recipiatur in usum, quae et ad scripturas in suo fonte diligenter collata, excussa, et examinata nihil contineat subdole vel adiectum vel immutatum" (ibid., 96).

[34] Steucho, *Opera* I, 241-241v; Freudenberger, *Augustinus Steuchus*, 171-72.

[35] Steucho, *Opera* I, fols. 247v-248.

commissioned him to revise the New Testament, he was a wiser and better biblical scholar; he left unchanged words and expressions he had earlier incriminated because his method required him to leave the wording reverently untouched except where he found it seriously unfaithful to the meaning of the Greek.[36] Driedo explained more ingeniously the frequent failure of commentaries and translations to harmonize. The Vulgate, as we have it now, is a mixed text. It is not wholly Jerome's translation, nor is it wholly the earlier Old Latin version; it is a conflation of the two. Driedo does not make clear how this came about. What he seems to have believed is that Jerome's translation replaced the Old Latin very gradually and that during the several centuries when both translations were in competitive use Jerome's version became heavily contaminated by the Old Latin. This is why some of the renderings, corrections, and emendations that Jerome testifies he made do not appear in the Vulgate, while others do.[37]

Although ordinary scholars may have been ill informed about such textual arcana, they were well aware, from Jerome's own testimony, of the heterogeneous authorship of their Latin Bible. Jerome had not considered books like the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus canonical, one of his few judgments cited with approval by Martin Luther; they appear in the Vulgate in unrevised Old Latin versions. Jerome did translate Tobit and Judith from Aramaic, though he considered them apocryphal too; that is, uncanonical but suitable for the edification of the faithful. Since his Aramaic was weak, he engaged a learned Jew to help him. As the Jew translated the Aramaic orally into Hebrew, Jerome dictated a Latin version to his secretary. He alleges that he translated Tobit in a single day and Judith in a single night.[38] Of his three versions of the Psalms, it was the *Psalterium Gallicanum*, his critical revision of the Old Latin according to the Septuagint column of Origen's Hexapla, and not the *Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos*, his translation direct form the Hebrew, that found

[36] Stunica, *Contra Fabrum*, sig. A, 5-5v.

[37] Driedo, *De eccl. scrip.*, 79-80, 87. Cf. above, n. 26.

[38] *Praef. in Tobit (PL* 29: 23:26); *Praef. in Judith (PL* 29: 37-40).

a place in the Vulgate.[39] The further conclusion toward which his sixteenth-century apologists were gradually moving was that the Vulgate translation of the remaining books of the Hebrew canon was the work of St. Jerome (an opinion ratified by modern scholarship) and that the Vulgate of the entire New Testament was the translation of an anonymous *interpres Latinus*, made long before Jerome but so thoroughly revised by him that it faithfully reproduced the meaning of the Greek original in all matters concerning faith and morals. In sum, the opinion was regaining ground that Jerome was the principal author (*primarus auctor*) of the *vulgata editio*.[40]

The Council of Trent dealt with the problems concerning sacred Scripture in March and April 1546. The decree on the Vulgate is dated April 8:

> The same holy synod considering that no small advantage may accrue to the Church of God, if out of all the Latin translations of the sacred books in circulation it made known which is to be held as authoritative (*authentica*): determines and declares that this ancient vulgate translation (*haec ipsa vetus et vulgata editio*) which is recommended by the long use of so many centuries in the church, be regarded as authoritative in public lectures, disputations, sermons, and expository discourses, and that no one may make bold or

[39] R. Weber, ed., *Le psautier Romain et les autres anciens Psautiers latins (Collectanea Biblica Latina,* 10) (Rome, 1953); *Liber Psalmorum ex recensione S. Hier.* (= vol. 10 of the Benedictine Vulgate) (Rome, 1953); and H. de Sainte-Marie, ed., *Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos (Collectanea Biblica Latina*, 11) (Rome, 1954). Tirple Psalters survive from the ninth to the thirteenth century containing all three versions in parallel columns. Quadruple Psalters are also known; a particularly fine one was copied at St. Gall in 909, with the three versions of Jerome plus the Septuagint Greek transcribed in Latin characters. See V. Leroquais, *Les Psautiers manuscrits latins des bibliothèques publiques de France*, 2 vols. (Macon, 1940-41), 1:153-54; 2:18, 78-91, 119-20. The first part of the *Quincuplex Psalterium* of Lefèvre d'Etaples (1509) reproduces a typical triple Psalter (E. F. Rice, ed., *Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples* [New York, 1972], ep. 66, 192-201).

[40] Titelmans, *Collationes*, sig. a, 7v.

presume to reject it on any pretext.[41]

The scope, meaning, and implications of this decree have been much debated. What seems certain is that the Tridentine fathers attributed to the Vulgate supreme authority in the Latin West on the grounds that the church, made infallible in faith and morals by the Holy Spirit, had used it for so long. It follows that the Council also asserted, by implication, that the Vulgate does not err in doctrine or ethical teaching, that it is in all necessary matters in conformity with originals directly inspired by God. Nevertheless, the Council did not say that the Vulgate was in perfect conformity with its Hebrew and Greek originals, still less that it was superior either to them or to other Greek and Oriental versions. It was the work of a man, and so contained errors and infelicities; but since the translator was to some degree inspired by the Holy Spirit, none of his lapses touched faith or morals. Nor, it should be emphasized, did the Council, even in its own journals and minutes, identify the translator as St. Jerome. In a letter of 26 April to Cardinal Farnese, the legates told him that some of those present thought that the Vulgate was the work of Jerome, but that many others–learned Dominicans, Franciscans, and other religious from France, Spain, and Italy (*periti*, not prelates)–disagreed and referred to the Vulgate as the work of an unknown author.[42]

Protestants were outraged at what they took (mistakenly) to be the real meaning of the decree: that the Vulgate was the only authoritative translation of the Bible, superior to vernacular translations and even to the Greek and Hebrew originals. If we were to accept that judgment, wrote Melanchtlon, we would have to agree that "the Vulgate has been revealed

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[41] *Concilium Tridentinum*, ed. Societas Goerresiana (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1911), 5: 91-92. The translation is by E. F. Sutcliff, "The Council of Trent on the *Authentia* of the Vulgate," *Journal of Theological Studies* 49 (1948): 35-36.

[42] H. Höpfl, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sixto-Klementinischen Vulgata* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1913), 4-8; G.-M. Vosté, "La Volgata al Concilio di Trento," *La Biblia e il Concilio di Trento (Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici*, 96) (Rome, 1947), 1-19; Stutcliffe, "Council of Trent," 35-42; H. Jedin, *Papal Legate at the Council of Trent. Cardinal Seripando*, tr. F. C. Eckhoff (London, 1947), 295-99; ibid., *A History of the Council of Trent*, tr. E. Graf, 2 vols. (London, 1961), 2:58-97.

to us by the Holy Spirit." But how can this be, when Valla's *Annotationes*, Erasmus, Sebastian Münster, and even Agostino Steucho have shown that it departs constantly form the Hebrew and Greek sources? Nicholas of Lyra, Paul of Burgos, and Johann Reuchlin have proved the same. If even the most modestly endowed linguist will compare the Vulgate with a good recent translation, he will soon see that it is not the support and rule of truth that the Council claims it is.[43] The Council's defense of the Vulgate goaded Calvin to blind vituperation. The clerics at Trent are trying to make us adore this hopelessly corrupt translation as though it has come down from heaven. There is not a single page that contains three lines in a row unsoiled by a major error. Have they no shame pretending that the Vulgate of the New Testament is "authentic" when works by Valla, Lefèvre, and Erasmus listing its innumerable errors and corruptions are in every hand?[44] Martin Chemnitz's *Examination of the Council of Trent* moderately repeated some of the objections that had been accumulating for over half a century. "Jerome himself in matters of the Hebrew renders and interprets many things differently than we now read in the Vulgate edition. We have Jerome's version of the Psalter and of Ecclesiastes; but in the Vulgate we have far other versions of these books. Jerome confess that he had emended the four Evangelists by a comparison of the Greek codices, and yet when he translates Matthew, he criticizes certain things in the Vulgate, as he also does in the epistles of Paul." Actually, the translation is not bad, Chemnitz concluded, though of course one must go back to the originals when the translator "appears to have rendered something incorrectly, or not adequately or appropriately."[45]

Catholic scholars writing after the Council of Trent continued to express a wide range of opinion about the authorship, quality, and inspiration of the Vulgate. Some assigned the whole Vulgate to Jerome; some referred cautiously to "the translator, whoever he may be";

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[43] *Acta Concilii Tridentini, anno M.D. XLVI celebrati: una cum annotationibus piis ac lectu dignissimis* (N. p., 1546), sig. h, 1v-h, 3v.

[44] *Acta Synodi Tridentiane. Cum antidoto* (N. p., 1547), 98-99, 102.

[45] *Examination of the Council of Trent*, tr. Fred Karmer, 2 vols. (St. Louis, 1971), 1:201-2.

some gave the Old Testament to Jerome, while assigning the revision of the New Testament, with the possible exception of the Gospels, to an anonymous fifth-century cleric. On the quality of the translation most commentators followed Driedo. The translator, whether Jerome or another, was a man; he made mistakes. The translation does not always accurately reproduce the *Hebraeica* and *Graeca veritas*; and of course it is soiled by scribal errors. What matters, as Cardinal Bellarmine authoritatively repeated, is that "there is no error in this translation in matters pertaining to faith and morals."[46]

Judgments about the accuracy of the Vulgate remained closely tied to the question of its inspiration. In response to Protestant attacks on the Vulgate and on the decree of the Council of Trent confirming its authority, the tendency was to assert plainly that the Vulgate was "written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit" or that the "translator was wonderfully adorned with the gifts of the Holy spirit." Nevertheless, other scholars still preferred to say only that "a singular providence had guarded the translator from error" or that the Spirit had not inspired him to infallibility but that he possessed a spirit close enough to the prophetic to guard him from error in matters pertaining to faith and morals. The rest denied that the Vulgate had fallen from the sky and was "inspired from above" (*divinitus inspirata*), while firmly maintaining that it was faithful to the substance of its divinely inspired original.[47]

The papal prefaces to the Sistine (1589) and Clementine (1592) editions of the Vulgate Bible concentrated minds and opinions. Here at last was the critical edition recommended by the Council of Trent to correct a text corrupted by the ravages of time, the carelessness of copyists and printers, reckless emendations, and the audacity of recent translators. Returned now to its pristine purity, its excellence and authority were said to be so great that it far surpassed all other Latin translations. The popes carefully described its contents, authorship, and inspiration. Our Bible, they wrote, consists in major part of books translated or revised by St. Jerome, in minor part of books in the earlier translation that

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[46] *De editione latina Vulgata, quo sensu a Concilio Tridentino definitum sit, ut pro authentica habeatur*, in X.-M. LeBachelet, *Bellarmine et la Bible Sixto-Clementine* (Paris, 1911), 107.

[47] Hody, 510-39.

Jerome called *vulgata*, Augustine the *Itala*, and Gregory the Great the *vetus translatio*. St. Jerome was the principal translator of the Vulgate, and his dignity, learning, and holiness should make us honor it the more; for Jerome is unsurpassed in eloquence, linguistic skill, and knowledge of Scripture. As an exegete he has no rivals. From his own day to this, the luminaries of the church–Gregory the Great, Isidore of Seville, the Venerable Bede, Alcuin, Rhabanus Maurus, St. Anselm, Peter Damian, St. Bernard, Richard and Hugh of St. Victor, Peter Lombard, Alexander Hales, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventura–have admired the *versio Hieronymi* and used it in all their commentaries, sermons, treatises, and disputations. "This is why the Catholic church rightly celebrates St. Jerome as *doctor maximus*, moved as he was from on high to translate Holy Scripture, and why it condemns those who withhold their assent to the work of so outstanding a doctor and presume to equal it or even to do better."[48] The wording is careful. Jerome was divinely inspired to translate Holy Scripture, moved to it from on high: *ad Scripturas sacras interpretandas divinitus excitatus*. Interpreted narrowly, there is no claim here that his translation was itself inspired. At the same time, the phrase had an inspirational resonance that tempted commentators to give it the wider, more specific meaning that Jerome translated the Vulgate Bible under the direct (but not necessarily verbal) inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The distinction between form and substance, superficial detail and passages of doctrinal significance, retained its force. A "special inspiration of the Holy Spirit" (*specialis Spiritus Sancti afflatus*) guided Jerome as he translated Holy Scripture. But he enjoyed its help only in reproducing perfectly the doctrinal and moral teachings of the Bible, not in translating single words: he could, and did, make errors in translating the names of plants and animals, for example. "In everything pertaining to faith and morals and to other matters of like weight," wrote the Procurator General of the Friars Minor in France, "Jerome had the help of the Holy Spirit in making his translation; but in places of less moment the Holy Spirit left him to himself and to his human learning." A professor at the Jesuit University of Ingolstadt seemed to go even further when he wrote that "God so directed the hand and pen

[48] *Biblia Sacra vulgatae editionis*, ed. Monachi abbatiae pontificiae Sancti Hieronymi in Urbe (Rome, 1959), x-xi. The text will be found in almost any other edition of the Vulgate Bible as well.

of the translator that he nowhere missed the meaning of the Holy Spirit"; at once, though, he made it clear that the Holy Spirit guaranteed only the accuracy of passages touching faith and morals and not necessarily the exact rendering of everything in Hebrew and Greek.[49]

Painters, however, instructed by ecclesiastical advisers anxious to reassure an audience more heterogeneous than learned and baffled in any case by the difficulty of representing pictorially so abstract a distinction as that between the verbal and substantive inspiration of a text, supported without reservation or qualification the claim that God had guided the hand and pen of the translator of the Bible by showing Jerome taking dictation of the Vulgate from the Holy Spirit in the shape of an angel. Lodovico Carracci,[50]

[49] Hody, 531-32, 541.

[50] Bologna, S. Martino Maggiore, 1598; H. Bodmer, *Lodovico Carraci* (Burg b. M., 1939), n°. 45 and pl. 47.

Domenichino,[51] Albani,[52] Rubens,[53] van Dyck (fig. 49),[54] Simon Vouet,[55] and Johann Liss[56] are some of the painters besides Guido Reni who honored Jerome and the Vulgate in this way.

The representation of Christian inspiration in a pictorial motif is very old. Early medieval manuscript illuminations regularly show the evangelists and fathers of the church inspired by the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove. In miniatures in a ninth-century manuscript from Saint-Denis and an eleventh-century manuscript from Canterbury (fig. 50), Jerome sits on a throne translating the Bible; the dove of the Holy Spirit whispers the words

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[51] London, National Gallery, 1602; Michael Levey, *National Gallery Catalogues. The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Italian Schools* (London, 1971), 95-96; Richard E. Spear, *Domenichino*, 2 vols. (New Haven, 1982), 1:126(2) and pl. 3. This is one of two of Domenichino's earliest surviving documented pictures; it is recorded in an inventory of 1603 in the collection of Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini.

[52] Madrid, Prado, c. 1603. Illustrated by H. Voss, *Die Malerie der Barock in Rom* (Berlin, 1924), 198. Traditionally attributed to Domenichino, but ascribed to Albani by Donald Posner (*Arte Antica e Moderna* 12 [1960]: 411, n. 66) and Denis Mahon (Exh. cat. *L'ideale classico del seicento in Italia e la pittura di paesaggio.* Bologna. V Mostra biennale d'arte antica [Bologna, 1962], nº. 18, pp. 97-98).

[53] Potsdam-Sanssouci, Bildergalerie, c. 1609; Hans Vlieghe, *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, 8. Saints*, tr. P. S. Falla, 2 vols. (New York, 1973), 2:97-99 and fig. 65.

[54] (a) Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen and (b) Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, 1620-21; Alan McNairn, *The Young van Dyck*. Exh. cat. National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, 1980), nn. 74 and 75, pp. 160-65.

[55] Washington, National Gallery, c. 1625; W. R. Crelly, *The Painting of Simon Vouet* (New Haven, 1962), nº. 153, fig. 25.

[56] Venice, S. Niccolò da Tolientino, c. 1627; Exh. cat. Augsburg, Rathaus and Cleveland Museum of Art, 2 August 1975-7 March 1976. *Johann Liss* (Augsburg, 1975), no. A39 and color pl. 9. The pictures carry various titles at present: *The Vision of St. Jerome, The Angel Appearing to St. Jerome, St. Jerome in His Study, St. Jerome with the Angel, St. Jerome and the Angel, The Inspiration of St. Jerome,* or simply *St. Jerome*. A more accurate title for all such pictures would be *The Inspiration of St. Jerome.*

into his right ear.[57] The subject of the elegant early fifteenth-century pen and ink drawing St. Jerome in his study now bound at the front of a *Bible moralisée* in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (MS. fr. 166) is the same: a dove dictates the text of Jerome's translation as divine illumination irradiates his mind from above.[58] A picture by Lodovico Cardi, known as Cigoli, painted in 1599 for the church of S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini in Rome, shows Jerome at work in his study translating the Old Testament, the Hebrew text propped up against a skull and open before him (fig. 51). Divine inspiration, symbolized here by three allegorical figures representing Faith, Prudence, and Eloquence, guarantees the truth and beauty of his translation. From an archetypal book of the Word drop down the flowers and pearls of rhetoric, while religion and prudence make certain that he does not mistranslate anything pertaining to faith and morals.[59] Cigoli's picture catches a critical moment of transition: not only is it an early instance of the revived interest in showing Jerome translating the Bible under divine inspiration, it is the last Italian St. Jerome in his study as well as a precocious example of another revival, the illustration of Jerome's penitential lament that he seemed always to hear the fearful voice of the trumpet of the Last Judgment–for on the wall behind him is a painting of the Last Judgment on which can be discerned a trumpeting angel, a skeleton climbing out of its grave, and two words of an incription: *con tremisco,* with fear and trembling.

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[57] Par. Lat. 1141, fol. 3 (Amédée Boinet, *La miniature carolingienne. Planches* [Paris, 1913], pl. 131); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 389, fol. 1v (Francis Wormald, *English Drawings of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* [London, 1952], 61 and pl. 36); and Lambert, 4A, pl. 3.

[58] M. Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry. The Linbourgs and Their Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (London, 1974), 2: fig. 357; ibid., "French and Italian Variations on an Early Fifteenth-Century Theme: St. Jerome in His Study," *Gazette des Beaux-arts* 62 (1963): 147-50. In an *Inspiration of St. Jerome* in an early fifteenth-century Hours of the Virgin (British Library, MS. Royal 2 A. VIII, 113v), rays of golden light play around Jerome's head as he turns to listen to the dove of the Holy Spirit murmuring in his ear.

[59] M. Bucci et al., *Mostra del Cigoli e del suo ambiente* (San Miniato al Tedesco, 1959), n°. 26, pp. 76-78; Exh. cat., Paris, Louvre, 2 October 1981-18 January 1982. *Dessins baroques florentins du Musée du Louvre* (Paris, 1981), n°. 18, p. 38.

To embody Jerome's inspiration in a beautiful angel, however, was a recent conceit, no earlier than the end of the sixteenth century. But for this too models were conveniently at hand. In antiquity, authors composing their works were depicted accompanied by their Muse. A nearer and more important visual source was the symbol of St. Matthew, a winged man, usually understood to be an angel, shown, from at least the tenth century, gently instructing the untutored simplicity of the senior evangelist. Representations of the inspiration of St. Matthew, of which Caravaggio's (Rome, S. Luigi dei Francesi), Guercino's (Rome, Capitoline Museum) and Rembrandt's (Paris, Louvre) are late but celebrated examples, are the direct prototypes of the seventeenth-century inspirations of St. Jerome,[60] a borrowing encouraged by familiar parallels between the two saints. Both were believed to be buried in S. Maria Maggiore. Matthew owed his symbolic angel to Jerome, assigned to him in the preface of Jerome's *Commentary on Matthew*, a text that established as well the primacy of Matthew's gospel over the other three. When the four doctors of the church were paired with the four evangelists, Jerome was often paired with Matthew.[61]

But the nearer literary source of the notion that the Holy Spirit inspired Jerome

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[60] H. van de Waal, "Rembrandt's Faust Etching, a Socinian Document, and the Iconography of the Inspired Scholar," *Oud Holland* 79 (1964): 39, n. 83, lists examples of the *Inspiration of St. Matthew*. The earliest he illustrates is a sculpture from Chartres. See also the important article by Irving Lavin, "Divine Inspiration in Caravaggio's two St. Matthews," *Art Bulletin* 56 (1974): 59-81, to which I owe much.

[61] On the various pairings of the four evangelists and the four doctors of the Latin church, see Barbier de Montault, "Le culte des Docteurs de l'Église à Rome," *Revue de l'art chrétien* 41 (1891): 116. Although Jerome was eventually paired with Mark because each had a lion, he was also frequently paired with Matthew: for example, in a frescoed pendentive in the church of S. Maria in Porto fuori città at Ravenna (c. 1350) or Correggio's pendentive in S. Giovanni Evangelista in Parma (1520-24). The key passage in Jerome's preface to his Commentary on Matthew is the following: "[Ecclesia] quattuor flumina paradisi instar eructans quattuor et angulos et anulos habet, per quos quasi arca testamenti et custos legis Domini lignis immobilibus uehitur. Primus omnium Matheus est, publicanus cognomine Leui, qui euangelium in Iudaea hebreo sermone edidit... Haec igitur quattuor euangelia multo ante praedicta Hiezechielis quoque volumen probat, in quo prima uisio ita contexitur: *Et in medio sicut similitudo quattuor animalium, et uultus eorum facies hominis et facies leonis et facies uituli et facies aquilae*. Prima hominis facies Matheum significat" (ed. E Bonnard, S. C. 242 [Paris, 1977], 1:62 and 64.

through an angel, like several other texts that shaped Jerome's image in the visual arts, lurks among the *spuria*. It is an abbreviated Psalter, probably no older than the fourteenth century, made up of some one hundred verses from different psalms and beginning with the verse from Ps. 5, *Verba mea auribus precipe Domine*. The tiny Psalter (fig. 52) was designed for the use of the sick, for travelers, soldiers, hermits, for men and women submerged by their work or weak from fasting, in short, for all who lacked the time and strength to recite the whole Psalter. "He who wishes the merciful God to save his soul, let him assiduously recite the abbreviated Psalter and he will possess the Kingdom of God." Many fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century handwritten Breviaries, Books of Hours, and Books of Prayers conclude with the little Psalter. It had a great success in print as well, in Latin and in the vernaculars: Marsiglio Ficino translated it into Italian for Clarice de' Medici, wife of the Magnificent Lorenzo. The anonymous compiler begins his brief preface with the following sentence: "*Sanctus Ieronimus in hoc modo disposuit hoc psalterium, sicut angelus Domini docuit eum per Spiritum Sanctum.* St. Jerome abbreviated the Psalter in this way as an angel of the Lord taught him to do through the Holy Spirit."[62]

Embodying the idea of inspiration in an angel instead of in a dove or abstractly as a ray of light was particularly appropriate. It allowed the artist to express through a variety of gestures the verbal inspiration of the text that Jerome was pictured writing, while the

[62] Paris, BN., Ms. lat. 13.285, fols. 17v-18 (*Horae*, English, x. XV; V. Leroquais, *Les Livres d'Heures manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale* [Paris, 1927], 2: 88-99, no. 212):
Sanctus Ieronimus in hoc modo disposuit hoc Psalterium, sicut angelus domini docuit eum per spiritum sacntum. Et propter hoc abreviatum est, quod illi qui solitudinem habent seculi, vel qui infirmitatibus iacent, vel qui operibus occupantur, vel qui iter longum agunt, vel qui navigio navigant, vel qui bellum commissuri sunt contra hostes, vel qui contra ividiam diabolorum militant, vel qui votum voverunt domino cantare magnum psalterium et non possunt, vel qui ieiunant fortiter et debilitatem habent, vel qui solempnia festa custodiunt et non possunt cantare magnum psalterium, istud cantent. Et qui animam suam salvare voluerit secundum misericordiam dei assidue cantet istud et possidebit regum dei.
For the same text, see also BN., MS. fr. 24.748, fols. 140-140v; British Library, King's MS. 9, fols. 238-238v; Royal 2.A. VIII, fols. 111v-112; Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MSS. 49, fol. 86; 51, fol. 130v; 52, fol. 118; 54, fol. 163; 153, fol. 280. For Ficino's translation see P. O. Kristeller, "Marsilio Ficino letterato e le glosse attribuite a lui nel codice Caetani di Dante," *Quaderni della Fondazione Camillo Caetani* (Rome, 1981), 3: 30-31.

presence of a dictating angel at once made clear that the next he was inspiring was the Bible; for although any number of texts have been thought to be divinely inspired, only the Bible was dictated, word by word, "into the pen" of its authors. We see the angel ticking off his instructions of his fingers, handing the saint his pen, sharpening his quill, guiding his writing hand, reading to him from a heavenly book held open by a putto or another angel, holding up a book from which the saint copies, pointing to a particular word on the page, or dictating the text softly into his ear. Jerome listens and writes. Theological *periti* may have wished that the painters had distinguished more carefully a doctor from an evangelist or a prophet and the "spirit of faith and charity" from the "spirit of prophecy." The interest of these images is precisely that they blur those distinctions in order to make an unambiguous statement about the church's Latin Bible and its author: Jerome wrote it instructed by the same Spirit that had dictated the original to the prophets and evangelists.

Early seventeenth-century representations of Jerome hearing the trumpet of the Last Judgment or writing down the Vulgate "as an angel of the Lord taught him to do through the Holy Spirit" are the last Hieronymite images of power, invention, and more than local influence. They mark the end of the extraordinarily creative period in the history of Jerome's *fortuna* that had begun late in the thirteenth century with the translation of his remains from Bethlehem to Rome.

Possibilities for approved devotion to St. Jerome had been contracting for some time. Protestants were most radically affected. Luther reports that when he was a young man he imagined that a saint was someone who lived in the desert and subsisted on roots and cold water. Later, the Bible taught him the saints were not monks or hermits who performed superstitious and unnatural works, tortured the body by fasting, wore hair shirts, renounced marriage, and hid away in caves–for these extravagances are works of the flesh–but simply men and women who have declared that Christ alone is their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Zwingli pointed out that the correct translation is *hagioi* and *sancti* is "pious ones" or "pure ones" and that the phrase "communion of saints" in the Apostles' Creed means no more than "the community of pious people." The saints, repeated Calvin, are the elect, past, present, and future, "all those who, by the kindness of God the Father, through the working of the Holy Spirit, have entered into fellowship with Christ,

[and] are set apart as God's property and personal possession." In sum, every man, woman, or child, called by the Gospel, baptized, and justified by his faith alone, is a saint. Just as all true Christians are priests and monks (*religiosi*), so all true Christians are saints.

Protestants divines most sharply attacked the traditional piety of ordinary people when they branded the cult of saints as a kind of spiritual witchcraft blinding men's eyes and minds and seducing them from the path of holiness. The veneration of saints is unscriptural and superstitious. It transfers to the holy dead what properly belongs to God and Jesus Christ (or to one's needy neighbor). The dead, however holy, are creatures. In heaven, they glorify God and are wholly isolated from us. They do not hear our prayers; they cannot pray for either the living or the dead; they do not intercede for us with God. Especially pernicious is the belief that the saints have stored up a surplus of merits by their own godly works on which their devotees can draw to redeem their own sins, a doctrine annulled by the truth of justification by faith alone. Jesus Christ is the sole and single mediator between God and humanity, since he alone paid the ransom and deposit for us all. To invoke any other advocate is sacrilege and insults Jesus Christ. Venerating a saint makes void the Cross. The "Romish" doctrine of the saints, concluded the twenty-second article of the Church of England's Thirty-Nine Articles, is "a fond thing vainly invented."

Equally deplored, especially among Zwinglians and Calvinists, was Catholic teaching about religious images. Pictures and statues of the saints, like their relics, lead inevitably to idolatry; for people always end by putting their hope and trust in these carved or painted idols, praying to them, swearing oaths by them, sacrificing to them, giving them offerings, asking for their blessing, even superstitiously imagining that they speak or bleed in order to reveal future events. God and the Holy Scriptures have forbidden images. The only picture a believer needs is the one of Jesus in the Gospels and in his own heart. Images of Jesus' life are not the "Bible of the poor"; preaching is the proper way to teach the simple who cannot read. In 1524, the Council of Zurich ordered the removal of all paintings and statues from the city's churches, an example largely followed by other "reformed" churches, sometimes in orderly cooperation with the secular authorities, at other times imposed by violent iconoclastic riots.

As Europe split permanently into Protestant and Catholic territories on the principle

of *cuius regio eius religio*, Jerome's cult and image, like those of other saints, gradually disappeared from Protestant lands. Why his cult lost much of its earlier luxuriance even among Catholics is less obvious.

In part, of course, it was because Catholic bishops shared some Protestant, and earlier, medieval, reservations about the cult of saints. Episcopal reformers drew with increasing vehemence the line between popular piety and superstition. Let the people be taught that God is Alpha and Omega, that God only must beloved and worshipped, that in themselves the saints are nothing, that we venerate them only to the extent that they lead us to worship the one true God. The cult of saints must be orderly; seemly; uncorrupted by avarice, legend, and enthusiasm. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Jerome's cult had rested on a translation of relics, miracles, successful intercession, and answered prayers. After about 1520, he worked no recorded miracles and his old ones were, by many of the devout, disbelieved or forgotten. Erasmus had done his work well: the evidence for every traditional miracle, for every appealing legendary anecdote, had been proved spurious. Cardinal Baronius much disliked Erasmus, but the ratified his judgment spurious. Cardinal Baronius much disliked Erasmus, but he ratified his judgment in this. Before the end of the sixteenth century, Jerome's tomb in S. Maria Maggiore was built over, his remains misplaced, and his monument dismantled; devotees no longer earned plenary indulgences by visiting him on the anniversary of his translation, nor could they hope that he might introduce them, as he had St. Cajetan of Thiene, to the Virgin and Child when they prayed at the Chapel of the Presepio. We cannot suppose that such events necessarily scandalized learned piety in Rome.

Popular veneration for Jerome cooled also because the three important currents in European religious and intellectual life that had between 1300 and 1600 principally propelled his reputation had lost by the seventeenth century their original urgency and character. In the earlier Renaissance, his writings, life, and personality had aroused a vivid imitative response among penitential ascetics, hermits, and monastic reformers. Men and women struggling to reform the church by returning it to the evangelical poverty, simplicity, and abnegation of its beginnings found in Jerome a lucid, radical supporter. They gratefully promoted him to parity with John the Baptist and dedicated their houses and congregations to his name. By 1600, the eremitical impulse at the heart of Hieronymite spirituality had evaporated. The

Italian congregations, so important a locus of devotion to him, gradually diminished in ardor, number, membership, and prestige. The Spanish Hieronymites, by every worldly standard, flourished still; but contemporaries admired them more for the liturgical splendor than for the austerity of their devotions. The seventeenth century was typically the age of the Jesuit and the Oratorian, of activist teachers, preachers, and performers of the seven acts of mercy, not solitary ascetics; while by the early eighteenth century frivolity in such matters had reached the point where a great European garden could hardly be considered complete without a picturesque grotto with a hermit in it. Monks still cited Jerome when they needed to defend celibacy and the religious life. But even Catholic reformers found him less attractive once Protestants learned to tease them by quoting his mordant criticisms of fourth-century monks and priests.

In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Jerome's reputation had been magnified by a second constituency: humanist literati who found in him a justification for their admiration of the classics and a model of how to reconcile their study of pagan literature and philosophy with Christian piety and commitment. He taught them biblical criticism and offered them a positive, evangelical, affective, eloquent piety as an alternative to the systematic and (as they thought) rebarbative theology of the scholastics. By the seventeenth century success had blunted need, and this constituency too was much diminished. The long battle was won; the humanists had captured the castle of learning. Now everyone admitted the propriety and desirability of uniting wisdom and piety with eloquence. The *studia humanitatis* constituted the core curriculum of every Protestant secondary school and Jesuit college. Every teacher was a humanist now, just as every professor of theology was weaned on Cicero. No one had an urgent motive to cite Jerome in favor of an educational and cultural program that had triumphed everywhere in Europe.

After 1517, in response to the Protestant Revolution, a third group propagated Jerome's example and teachings. Adopted by the militants of the Counter-Reformation as Augustine had been coopted by Luther and Calvin, Jerome became the most frequently cited of the fathers in defenses of the traditional faith and in counterattacks against the innovators. Repeatedly he supplied the clinching authority for doctrines like the intercession of saints, the veneration of relics, papal power, monasticism, sacerdotal celibacy, Mariology, ascetic

and meritorious works, the sacrament of penance–all those and more could be, and were, defended from Jerome. Success again blunted need. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the church had permanently recovered from the low point of its fortunes in the 1560s. Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the religious wars were over. Jerome played a significant role in the reconquest, but his relevance to Catholic militants diminished with the end of the heroic age and the acceptance by both sides of religious diversity within fixed frontiers.

Much remained, of course. The papacy had confirmed his authorship of the Vulgate Bible; the Council of Trent established it as the authentic expression of the word of God for all public use in the liturgy and in sermons, lectures, and disputations. He continued to be venerated as one of the four principal doctors of the church and, in paintings, to remind attentive observers of their mortality. Clerics of literary bent savored his style. Biblical scholars relied on his commentaries. Historians reedited his works and rewrote his life. But after he lost his monastic, humanist, and militant constituencies, he no longer spoke directly to contemporary controversies and issues. The change of status is recorded in a change of titles. In the centuries when he was a culture hero his most common title was *doctor gloriosus*, bestowed on him by the author of the fourteenth-century pseudographs. In the prefaces to the Sisto-Clementine Bible, the popes, silently quoting Alcuin, called him *doctor maximus*, a most respectful tribute to his linguistic expertise and knowledge of the Bible. By the mid-seventeenth century, *doctor maximus* had usurped his former glorious title. Henceforth he was a subject for research rather than an object of awe and devotion.

Source : *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, Baltimore and London, The John Hopkins University Press, p. 173-199