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The English Bible in A Postmodern Age

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THROUGH THE MIDDLE DECADES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, THE great issue among American Lutherans regarding the Bible was the use of the higher critical method.[1] This method is based on the assumption that the student of the Scriptures can take an objective, scientific approach to the sacred text so as to determine its origins and meaning naturalistically, i.e., apart from any resort to the supernatural or miraculous. As Kurt Marquart has demonstrated, "The whole point of historical-critical Biblical research is that it is and must be simply an integral part of the general secular-scientific enterprise."[2]

But what happens when the scientific consensus collapses, when the academy gives up on the ideals of objectivity and certainty, when even natural scientists admit that the presence of the observer always changes the observation? In other words, what are the consequences for Biblical interpretation when modernism gives way to postmodernism? Clearly, the radical relativizing of all human knowledge challenges Christian theology in significantly different ways from the old higher criticism in its approach to the Scriptures. In particular, it is the argument of this paper that postmodernism provides a congenial context for

novel translations of the Bible into English that surrender faithfulness to the original texts in order to accommodate the concerns of contemporary ideologues, especially feminists.[3]

But first of all, what is postmodernism? Definitions abound (and on postmodernist principles they should!). Nevertheless, for the purposes of this essay, I have relied on the description by Stanley Grenz in his *A Primer on Postmodernism.* Grenz characterizes postmodernism as a rejection of the central assumptions of the modern world regarding the objectivity, rationality, and certainty of knowledge. Instead of positing a world outside of the human observer that is independent, static, and so knowable, postmodernism insists that the observer is an integral part of whatever he observes and that knowledge always depends upon the attitude of the observer. But that attitude, in turn, does not depend upon the observer, considered solely by himself, but rather upon the observer as part of a community. The result then is knowledge that is relative to the knower and his community, incomplete because it is limited to a particular point of view, and is always in process since the knower and his community are continually changing over time.[4]

The contemporary version of the English Bible that best exemplifies a postmodernist consciousness is *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version* (Oxford, 1995) but even *The New Revised Standard Version* (Oxford, 1989) illustrates postmodernist sensitivities in its accommodation of contemporary feminists. In different ways and to different degrees, each of these versions has introduced into the text of the English Bible elements that are not present in the original, but that conform to the expectations of the communities for which they have been produced. In both versions—one blatantly and the other more subtly—Biblical truth has been reshaped to fit the expectations of feminist readers. Feminist ideology is imposed on the Biblical text in these translations.

Well before either of these versions appeared, the feminist theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza called for new translations of the Bible in the context of a feminist reworking of the entire Christian tradition. Significantly, she justified her enterprise by appealing to higher critical conclusions regarding the *interpretive* character of Biblical texts:

> Such a presupposition [i.e., that the New Testament writings are objective factual reports of early Christian history and development]. . . neglects the methodological insights of form criticism, source criticism, and redaction criticism. . . . The early Christian authors have selected, redacted, and reformulated their traditional sources and materials with reference to their theological intentions and practical objectives.[5]

Furthermore, Fiorenza insisted that those communities responsible for interpreting the Christian experience in the New Testament documents were "patriarchal" and "androcentric," as a result of which these texts ignore and marginalize women. Therefore, according to Fiorenza, it is necessary to reconstruct the world of the early church so as to recover woman's role and experience:

> Rather than take androcentric texts as informative "data" and accurate "reports," we must read their "silences" as evidence and indication of that reality about which they do not speak. . . . We must learn to read the silences of androcentric texts in such a way that they can provide "clues" to the egalitarian reality of the early Christian movement.[6]

To those who would insist that historians, including Biblical scholars, should draw their conclusions from the evidence and not their own ideology, Fiorenza maintained:

> All historiography is a selective view of the past. Historical interpretation is defined by contemporary questions and horizons of reality and conditioned by contemporary political interests and structures of domination. Historical "objectivity" can only be approached by reflecting critically on and naming one's theoretical presuppositions and political allegiances.[7]

Fiorenza was exhibiting a postmodernist approach to the New Testament by reinterpreting Biblical texts in such a way as to maximize contemporary feminist political objectives in both church and society, even if the documents themselves were not only ignorant of such objectives but were even hostile to them. She was determinted to apply her view to Bible translation. Fiorenza paid lip-service to the need for a "historically appropriate and philologically correct translation," but she argued that the kind of language used in the original texts would not be appropriate today. While admitting that the actual language of the Bible—the Hebrew and the Greek—"functioned as inclusive [i.e., of both men and women] in a patriarchal culture," because of her rejection of that kind of culture, Fiorenza also rejected using the same kind of language in contemporary translations of the Bible on the grounds that such language is today "exclusive" and "male-biased." Fiorenza questioned not only the generic use of "man" and "men" and the use of "he" and "him" as indefinite pronouns, but also Pauline references to "brothers" (not "brothers and sisters") and masculine pronouns for God—both of which are present in the original languages. Since Fiorenza believed that "every translation is also an interpretation influenced by the contemporary perspective of the translators," she insisted on a translation for today that would open up the Biblical text to feminist reinterpretations of early Christian history. Objectivity and accuracy must yield to ideology and politics.[8]

Fiorenza's call did not go unheeded, and in 1995, Oxford published *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*, in which the editors have freely acknowledged and described the "interpretive character" of their text. First of all, they decided to "replace or rephrase all gender-specific language not referring to particular historical individuals, all pejorative references to race, color, or religion, and all identifications of persons by their physical disability alone." Although they contended that contemporary English usage accounts for some of their efforts, clearly that is only part of the story, since they also have admitted that their version "*attempts to anticipate* developments in the English language with regard to specificity about a number of issues such as gender, race, and physical ability."[9]

Secondly, this version has gone well beyond the original text of the Scriptures in order to create a Bible much more palatable to feminists. The editors have chosen to add women's names to men's "when the origin or generation of a people is under discussion"[10]; to eliminate all pronouns for God, either male or female[11]; to identify God as "Father-Mother"[12]; to call Jesus the "Child of God"[13] not the Son of God and the "Human One" not the Son of man;[14] to avoid using a pronoun for either the pre-existent or post-crucifixion Jesus;[15] and to minimize such expressions as "king,"[16] "kingdom,"[17] and "Lord."[18]

In view of such extensive departures from what is actually present in the Hebrew and Greek texts, the editors felt compelled to justify their modifications; and in so doing, even if they did not use the word "postmodernism," it is evident that their work was informed by a postmodernist understanding of knowledge and truth as social constructs. Besides their contention that the changing nature of the English language necessitates changes in the English text of the Bible, the editors maintained that every translation involves interpretation. This is certainly true, since every translator selects vocabulary and syntax for his

work from a myriad of possibilities. But what should guide the translator in his selections? His understanding of the text or something else? The editors of this version answered by referring to factors outside of the text itself, in particular to the *community* to which they belonged and for which they have prepared this translation:

> The Bible is the book of the community of faith, an inclusive community. . . . This inclusive community looks to its Scriptures for guidance and authority in how to form community; the way community is formed ultimately influences how the Scriptures themselves are read. *Thus, the language of Scripture reflects the community and the community is shaped by language.*[19]

The community for which they have prepared this version places a premium on the "equal value of all people, both genders, every race, religion [sic], and physical condition" and understands the Body of Christ as being formed only "when all persons, women, men, children, the elderly are treated equally and nonviolently." Social egalitarianism, therefore, norms their interpretation of the Biblical text, and any particular passage that does not reflect this commitment must be reworked until it does.[20]

Not the text itself or the cultural milieu in which it was written, but the translators' convictions about what the text *should* say to a community now committed to social egalitarianism account for their deviations from the original texts, "rendering Scripture in language that reflects *our* best understanding of the nature of God, of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ, and of the wholeness of human beings."[21] But when community commitments guide the translation instead of the text itself, we have entered the world of postmodernism. Truth then is shaped by the preconceptions of the community.

Earlier, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza made it clear that she had no use for a Christianity that did not have radical social egalitarianism at its center, and so she rejected the normative character of all Biblical texts that did not accommodate her theology:

> A feminist theological hermeneutics having as its canon the liberation of women from oppressive patriarchal texts, structures, institutions, and values maintains that—if the Bible is not to continue as a tool for the patriarchal oppression of women—only those traditions and texts that critically break through patriarchal culture and 'plausibility structures' have theological authority of revelation. The 'advocacy stance' of liberation theologies cannot accord revelatory authority to any oppressive and destructive Biblical text or tradition.[22]

Obviously, with the publication of *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*, feminists like Fiorenza had their kind of Bible. But what about *The New Revised Standard Version*? This version of the Scriptures makes far fewer concessions to feminism than does the Inclusive Version; and, in point of fact, the editors of the latter created their version by modifying the text of the New RSV. Clearly, from their perspective, the New RSV did not go far enough. Nevertheless, the New RSV makes its own adjustments to the Biblical text that manifest the influence of feminism, and in this respect, at least, it reveals a postmodernist approach to the Scriptures.

Significantly, in her remarks regarding the need for a new translation of the Bible, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza was in part reacting to an interim report by Bruce Metzger, chairman of the translation committee for the Revised Standard Version, regarding the use of feminist language in the subsequent revision of this translation. Already by that time (1979), the RSV translators had agreed on eliminating generic "man" and "men," but were

still struggling with indefinite "he" and "him." Metzger was silent regarding the other items on Fiorenza's agenda.[23] But by the time the New RSV was published ten years after Metzger's report, he and his colleagues had gone a long way toward accommodating Fiorenza and those who shared her objectives regarding the English Bible.

Many reviewers, favorable as well as unfavorable, have noted the extensive changes made in the English text of the original RSV to accommodate feminist values in the new edition (1989).[24] In so doing, the New RSV routinely obscures the grammar and vocabulary of the original texts. The New RSV does not claim to be an entirely new translation but positions itself in the Great Tradition of English Bibles stretching back to the era of the Reformation. According to Bruce Metzger in the preface of the New RSV, "As for the style of English adopted for the present revision, . . . the directive [was] to continue in the tradition of the King James Bible, but to introduce such changes as are warranted on the basis of accuracy, clarity, euphony, and current English usage." Efforts to accommodate the contemporary idiom were strictly limited so that, as Metzger wrote, "The New Revised Standard remains essentially a literal translation."[25]

Metzger did mention an important exception to this basic commitment to the literal character of the Great Tradition: "Paraphrastic renderings have been adopted only sparingly, and then chiefly to compensate for a deficiency in the English language—the lack of a common gender third person singular pronoun."[26] Although this sounds like a grammatical point, it is actually an ideological one. Traditional English has long been able to compensate for this supposed deficiency, without experiencing a lack of clarity in communication, simply by using "him," "his," and "he" in an indefinite sense for *any* human being.[27] Traditional English has employed "man" generically for *all* human beings, without notable confusion.

And it can do so because a vocable conveys meaning only in a particular context.[28] Thus, "man" in some contexts will mean "male" and in other contexts "humanity." Similarly, "his" will sometimes refer to an actual male person, but other times it will be used for an unspecified human being. In either case, the context determines which meaning is correct. Of course, in some instances, there may be ambiguity, but it is not always present, and traditional English has employed such double-duty words for centuries to communicate clearly. One female writer put it this way, "Scrupulous anxiety about offending women is offensive to this woman. If someone thinks I'm incapable of reading 'Blessed is the man' and figuring out it applies to me too, I'm insulted."[29]

The concern of those who prepared the New RSV was not just the ambiguity of traditional English per se, but a conviction that it exhibited what Metzger called 'linguistic sexism," and which he attributed to "the inherent bias of the English language towards the masculine gender, a bias that in the case of the Bible has often restricted or obscured the meaning of the original text.'[30] But where is the evidence that employing generic "man" and indefinite "he" restricts or obscures the meaning of the original? In fact, using standard dictionaries and style manuals published in the 1990s, as well as the findings of the usage panel of the *American Heritage Dictionary* (1992), Wayne Grudem has shown that the issue is not so much clarity in communication as preference in usage; and given the fact that only in the last few years has anyone employed feminist English, so that the vast bulk of extant writing in English uses the traditional forms, English readers will routinely encounter, and so learn to understand, generic "man" and indefinite "he."[31]

However, far from clarifying the meaning of the original, the efforts of Metzger and his fellow translators to avoid the "bias" of traditional English have not only modified the language

of the translation, but have actually obscured shades of meaning in the original text, since charges of "masculine bias" against traditional English apply equally to the ancient Hebrew and Greek.[32] Clearly, if translators have as their principal aim to communicate faithfully the meaning of the original, their work should exhibit the cultural "bias" out of which the original has come, precisely to the degree that it is present in the original. In other words, readers of an originally "patriarchal" text should be able to see that same characteristic in an English translation. However, if translators intend instead to facilitate a feminist reinterpretation of the Christian tradition, then accuracy must yield to ideology and the alleged patriarchy must be muted or removed. This is exactly the situation in the New RSV.

Translators of the New RSV have employed a variety of techniques in order to avoid the indefinite third person singular pronouns, "he," "his," and "him"; but the one that they have not used is the "he or she" option, which, however clumsy, at least has the virtue of precision. Instead, they have usually chosen to employ the plural where the original is singular.[33] In other instances, they have rewritten personal statements as impersonal ones,[34] put active verbs into the passive,[35] changed third person nouns and pronouns into second and first person,[36] and converted direct quotations into indirect discourse.[37] According to Wayne Grudem this has resulted in more than 3,400 deviations from the original text of the Scriptures and a rewriting of thousands of passages.[38] At the very least, such changes affect the nuance of meaning, and in certain cases the substance.[39]

Of course, one could argue that translation always involves some change of meaning on account of the inherent differences between the original languages and English.[40] Nor is it the argument of this paper that the only good translation is one that is slavishly literal. Translators have to make choices regarding what in the original they are going to bring over into English and what

they are not. It is impossible to do otherwise. However, what one can say about the New RSV translators is that their choice of feminist English abandons numerous possibilities for preserving elements of the original languages that traditional English can maintain. And they have done so to please a certain clientele and not just for philological reasons. Robert C. Denton, one of the vice-chairs of the New RSV translation committee, has stated:

> There is a large constituency, even of women, that feels such concerns [regarding "sex-biased" language] are trivial, but *the leaders of the mainline churches,* both men and women are committed to the use of "inclusive language," as are *most younger women and most publishers and educational organizations.*[41]

Apparently, feminist claims that traditional English demeans women have created a sizable constituency in churches, schools, and publishing houses for a Bible that avoids the offending terms and syntax. Such terms and syntax can still communicate clearly, but they do so in ways that readers like these find objectionable. Subtly, perhaps even unconsciously, the New RSV translators have slipped into a postmodernist approach to the Scriptures in that the truth content of their Bible depends, at least in part, on the reactions, not the understanding, of the group for whom they have prepared it. The translators have concerned themselves to create not only an accurate text, but also one that is inoffensive—at least to some readers.

But what if the language of the original texts contains the same sort of offending terms and syntax? Although Denton maintained that "the sex-biased forms are, for the most part, accidents of English style and are not supported by the ancient Biblical languages," nevertheless, the concern of the New RSV translators regarding gender-bias could also apply to the original lan-

guages.[42] In his introduction to the New RSV, Metzger mentioned specifically the problem posed by "the lack of a common gender third person singular pronoun" in English.[43] But New Testament Greek exhibits much the same deficiency;[44] and Old Testament Hebrew lacks not only a common gender third person singular, but third person plural, and second person both singular and plural.[45] In Hebrew and Greek, masculine forms are often used to include both males and females.[46]

The generic use of "man" also has counterparts in the Biblical tongues. The Greek word for human being, *anthropos,* refers specifically to a *male* human being in certain passages.[47] Likewise, the Hebrew *adam.*[48] On the other hand, the normally male *ish* in Hebrew can sometimes be used in the distributive sense, "each" or "every," for both men and women.[49] Both Hebrew and Greek also use the usually gender-specific terms for "son" and "brother" in contexts that clearly include females.[50] The Biblical writers had available to them Hebrew and Greek words for "daughter" and "sister" that they did not use in such contexts but instead used the masculine terms to include both men and women. Sacred penmen did not exhibit feminist sensitivities.

The New RSV translators have avoided English equivalents of "masculine" language in those passages that might include females in order to present a translation more congruent with a feminist interpretation of the text. Thus, "brother" becomes a "brother or sister,"[51] "neighbor,"[52] "kin,"[53] "believer,"[54] or, in Matthew 18, "another member of the church"[55]; and "brothers" routinely become "brothers and sisters,"[56] although sometimes also "believers,"[57] "friends"[58] or "beloved"[59]—even "students" (Matt. 23:8) and "comrades" (Rev. 12:10)! Similarly, "son" and "sons" often become "child"[60] and "children."[61] Even "fathers" become "parents"[62] or "ancestors,"[63] although it is far from clear that the text means to include the mothers in each case.[64] Again, idealogy has been imposed on accurate translation.

Once again, however, the point here is *not* that such renderings are always inaccurate or misleading; but simply to show that in order to please some readers, the translators have decided to keep from all readers a facet of the original that traditional English could accommodate. Moreover, in some cases, traditional English would better convey the theological content of the text. For example, the decision to translate "son of man" in the Old Testament as "mortal,"[65] "O mortal,"[66] or just plain "human being" (in Daniel 7:13, the critical "son of man" passage) obscures the significance of Jesus' self-designation in the New Testament.[67]

Likewise, in the New Testament, when "sons" become "children," there can be an important loss of theological meaning as in Galatians 3 and 4, in which Paul explains how it is that we are all one in Christ, in spite of differences of race, class, and sex: God sent His *Son* to redeem us and then the Spirit of His Son to adopt us as *sons.* In our baptism, we are clothed with Christ so as to be identified with Christ as the *sons* of God. Each one of us has exactly the same status before God that Christ Himself has. But in the New RSV, our identity with Christ the Son ("*huios*") is muted by translating the plural, "*huioi,*" as "children" when it applies to believers instead as "sons." In this case, one could argue that the New RSV has actually obscured Gospel realities in order to accommodate feminist preferences.[68]

Such accommodation led the translators to avoid the gender-specific terms of the original "even in some instances in which the committee believed that only males were involved ('My child' for 'My son' in Proverbs, for example)."[69] Perhaps that also explains why "men of war" are now gender-neutral "warriors"[70]; why the male Ezekiel is no longer called "son of man" but "O mortal" and "mortal"[71]; and why psalms of David have been rewritten to obscure the maleness of their author.[72] Frequently, such translations are encountered in the new RSV.

Although the New RSV translators refrained from changing the allegedly patriarchal terminology employed in the Bible for God, e.g., Lord, King, and Father, nevertheless they did seek to minimize the number of masculine personal pronouns for God.[73] Harrelson admitted that such changes would facilitate a public reading of the Scriptures without "offensive" masculine terminology:

> It is a genuine pleasure, as I have had occasion to discover, to be able to read the lessons appointed for the day in such a way as to eliminate entirely masculine references to the deity, and to do so without having had to retranslate or reproduce the Biblical lessons in advance.[74]

Such efforts to avoid what is an integral characteristic of the original texts belie the claim that the New RSV is basically a literal translation. Instead, it is at least in part a postmodernist work guided not only by what the original says, but also by what is acceptable to a certain group of readers. Metzger himself admits in his introduction to the New RSV that "no translation of the Bible is perfect or is *acceptable to all groups of readers*" (emphasis added). This perhaps suggests that the "group of readers" for whom a translation is intended has some sort of claim on the content of the translation itself. Although Metzger concludes with the prayer that this version will "hold a large place in congregational life and . . . speak to all readers,"[75] it is clear that the New RSV is aimed primarily at congregations for whom a commitment to the social equality of the sexes is absolute and at readers, like Walter Harrelson, for whom the Biblical description of God's people—and sometimes God too—in masculine terms is an embarrassment.

When translators consistently obscure elements of the original texts in order not to offend their prospective readers, they

are shaping the truth contained in those texts to fit the expectations of those readers. This is what the New RSV translators have done. When translators go even further by adding to or subtracting from the original, they are substituting their own truth for that in the text. This is what the editors of the Inclusive Version have done. But in either case, these translators of the Bible have sacrificed the idea of an absolute, objective truth for something else—a truth that depends not only on the text but also on its reader. In both of these versions, therefore, we see the spirit of postmodernism at work, modifying and molding the Word of God to fit the conventions and convictions of our times.

Notes

1. Kurt E. Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 41–53, 107–45.

2. Kurt E. Marquart, "The Historical-Critical Method and Lutheran Presuppositions," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 8 (1974): 121.

3. For the relationship between feminism and postmodernism, see Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 261–71, 314–15.

4. Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 13–15, 165–66. Other good introductions include A. K. M. Adam, *What Is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) and Paul Lakeland, *Postmodernity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997). See also Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, 3–10; James W. Voelz, *What Does This Mean?* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1995), 15–16, n. 7, and 366; and Edgar V. McKnight, *Post-Modern Use of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 13–21.

5. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Her Memory: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1983), 49.

6. Ibid., 41.

7. Ibid., xvii.

8. Ibid., 43–48.

9. "General Introduction, *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version* (New York: Oxford, 1995), vii–viii; emphasis original.

10. "General Introduction," *Inclusive Version,* xv. Examples: Matt. 1:2–6; John 8:37,52–58; Rom. 4:13.

11. John 3:16; 13:32; 2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 1:3–14; 1 John 4:9,10; Ps. 23:2,3.

12. Matt. 5:48; 6:4,9; Mark 14:36; Luke 11:2; 23:34,46; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6.

13. Matt. 27:54; 28:19; John 1:16,18; 3:16; 17:1,2.

14. Matt. 12:8; 25:31; Mark 2:28; 8:38; Luke 9:58; 21:27.

15. Acts 1:1–4; Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:15–20.

16. 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14.

17. Matt. 3:2; 5:3; 6:10; Luke 11:2; John 3:3,5; Acts 11:6.

18. Ps. 23:1; 98:1,2; 100:1,2,3; 110:1; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14.

19. *Inclusive Version,* ix; emphasis added.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.; emphasis added.

22. Fiorenza, *In Her Memory,* 33.

23. Bruce Metzger, "The Revised Standard Version," *Duke Divinity School Review* 44 (1979): 79–82.

24. Although most reviews have been favorable, some have been critical, including Paul G. Bretscher, "Translating the Bible [An Evaluation of the New Revised Standard Version]," *Logia* 3 (Jan. 1994): 55–58, and J. J. M. Roberts, "An Evaluation of the NRSV: Demystifying Bible Translation," *Insights* 108 (Spring 1993): 25–36. Generally favorable but with some concerns are the reviews found in Nakamura, C. Lynn, et al., "The New Revised Standard Version: A Review," *Trinity Seminary Review* 12 (Fall 1990): 77–94. Likewise, Donald A. Carson, "Review of the New Revised Standard Version," *Reformed Theological Review* 50 (1991): 1–11, and John H. Stek, "The New Revised Standard Version: A Preliminary Assessment," *Reformed Review* 43 (1990): 171–88. Even Walter Wink's favorable review found a few points with which to quibble, "The New RSV: The Best Translation, Halfway There," *Christian Century* 107 (Sept. 19–26, 1990): 829–833.

25. Bruce M. Metzger, "To the Reader," *The Holy Bible . . . New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), [8–9].

26. Metzger, "To the Reader," *NRSV,* [9].

27. For a very interesting historical discussion of this "problem" in English, see Dennis Baron, *Grammar and Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 190–216.

28. Voelz, *What Does This Mean?*, 102–104. Also, Vernard Eller, *The Language of Canaan and the Grammar of Feminism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 17–19, and D. A. Carson, *The Inclusive Language Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 61–65.

29. Frederica Mathewes-Green, "Go Ahead, Offend Me," *First Things* No. 83 (May, 1998): 13. In fairness, it must also be noted that Mathewes-Green has decided that generic "man" is now archaic, although she does not recommend rewriting everything in English to fit the canons of feminism.

30. Metzger, "To the Reader," *NRSV*, [9].

31. Wayne Grudem, "What's Wrong with 'Gender Neutral' Bible Translations?" Aug. 20, 1996, copies available from the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, P.O. Box 7337, Libertyville, Ill. 60048. See also his "Do Inclusive-Language Bibles Distort Scripture? Yes.," *Christianity Today* (Oct. 27, 1997): 27–32.

32. Bretscher, "Translating the Bible," 56. Roberts, "An Evaluation," 33, one of the New RSV translators, contends that his fellow translators have imposed "a twentieth-century, Western cultural agenda on a first-century text. Such anachronistic glosses make sociological or cultural appraisal of the world of the original text more difficult and cast doubts on the reliability of such a translation for serious historical work."

33. The examples Grudem cites in "What's Wrong with 'Gender Neutral' Bible Translations?" include: Ps. 1:2,3; 91:15; 34:20; Matt. 10:39; 13:12; John 3:21; 6:54; 11:25; 14:21,23; 15:5; 1 Cor. 14:28; and James 5:14–15. See also Ps. 7:14–16; 8:5,6; 10:4; 14:1; 19:12; 36:1,2; 37:13; 119:9; Jer. 17:5; 23:24; and Amos 2:14–16.

34. Grudem's examples are Prov. 5:21 and 16:9; but see also Prov. 18:14; 19:21; Job 2:4; 7:1; and 4:17.

35. Grudem's example is Ps. 34:6, but see also Ex. 21:16; Prov. 6:27; 19:17; 1 Cor. 3:14; and Col. 3:25.

36. Grudem's examples include James 1:20; 2:14; and Gal. 6:7. See also Lev. 1:3,4; Ps. 3:2; 35:25; 37:23,24; 90:3; and 1 John 5:16.

37. Grudem's example is Ps. 41:5. See also v. 8 of the same psalm.

38. Wayne Grudem, "Gender Neutral," 2–6.

39. Grudem's essay is filled with examples in which he contends the New RSV has changed the meaning of the original. Since Carson, *Debate*, generally disagrees with Grudem's criticism of inclusive language, his own questioning of the following passages cannot be dismissed as special pleading: Ps. 19:11–12 (*Debate*, 140); Prov. 29:3 (*Debate*, 144);

John 14:23 (*Debate,* 152); 1 Cor. 14:28 (*Debate,* 160); and Titus 1:6 (*Debate,* 161). In his generally favorable review of the New RSV, Carson also lists John 7:37–38 as problematical. Walter Wink thinks that in Luke 14:27, the New RSV makes it sound as if Jesus' disciples were supposed to carry *his* cross rather than their own (Luke 14:27). Mark A. Powell, reviewing the NRSV Gospel of Mark in *Trinity Seminary Review* 12 (1990): 87, complains that in Mark 8:34–35 the introduction of plurals obscures Jesus' invitation to individuals. J. J. M. Roberts, "An Evaluation," 33, wonders "whether something of the particularity and emphasis of the original is not lost" by the replacement of singulars by plurals.

40. For an excellent discussion of this point, see Carson, *Debate,* 47–61.

41. Robert C. Denton, "The Story of the NRSV," in *The Making of the New RSV,* 6; emphasis added. What Denton did not acknowledge was that there was also a sizable portion of the Bible-reading public for whom the introduction of "inclusive language" was itself offensive. See Carson, *Debate,* 26–37, for an account of the 1997 controversy among Evangelicals over plans to produce an "inclusive" version of the NIV. According to Carson, the opponents included James Dobson (*Focus on the Family*), and both the Southern Baptist Convention and the Presbyterian Church in America, which passed resolutions opposed to "inclusive" Bibles. According to *Christianity Today* (June 16, 1997), plans to publish such an edition have now been dropped.

42. Denton, "Story of NRSV," 6. Fiorenza, *In Her Memory,* 44, refers to the language of the Bible as "androcentric language which functioned as inclusive language in a patriarchal culture."

43. Metzger, "To the Reader," *NRSV,* [9].

44. Personal, reflexive, relative, and demonstrative pronouns all distinguish between masculine and feminine in the third person singular form. The indefinite "*tis*" is used for both males and females. See J. Gresham Machen, *New Testament Greek for Beginners* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 235–37.

45. E. Kautsch, ed. *Gesenius's Hebrew Grammar,* 2nd English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 105–108.

46. Gesenius's Hebrew Grammar, 428, 468. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament,* trans. and rev. by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 74, 75. Herbert W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 271.

47. Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. "*anthropos.*" See Mt. 10:35; 11:8; 19:5,10; Lk. 7:25; 1 Cor. 7:1; and Eph. 5:31.

48. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, reprint ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), s.v. *adam.* See Gen. 2:22,23,25; 3:8,12,17,20,21; and Eccl. 7:28.

49. *BDB*, s.v. *ish.* See 1 Chron. 16:3 and Job 42:11.

50. *BDB*, s.v. *ben* [son]. Although the singular almost always refers to the male, the plural, *benin*, is the regular word for either "sons" or "children," depending on context. See Gen. 3:16; Ex. 21:4,5; and 22:24. According to Carson, *Debate*, 19, the King James Version translates *ben* and its plural as "child" or "children" rather than "son" or "sons" about 35 percent of the time. BDB, s.v. *ach* [brother]. See Deut. 15:12. BAGD, s.v. *huios* [son]. See Mark 3:28; Luke 16:8; and Eph. 2:2. BAGD, s.v. *adelphos* [brother]. See Luke 21:16.

51. Matt. 5:22–24; Rom. 14:10; 1 Thess. 4:6; 1 John 2:9,10; 3:15; and 4:20.

52. Deut. 15:11; 22:1,3; Ezek. 33:30; and Matt. 7:3,5.

53. Lev. 19:17; 25:35; Ps. 50:20; Prov. 17:17; 18:9,24; Jer. 9:4; and Is. 3:6 ["relative"].

54. 1 Cor. 6:6; 7:12; 8:11; James 1:9; and 1 John 2:11; but "disciple" in Luke 17:3.

55. "A member of your community" in Deut. 15:12.

56. Matt. 5:47; Romans 1:13; 7:1; 8:12; 10:1; and James 2:1,5,14.

57. 2 Thess. 3:15.

58. Rom. 7:4 and 1 Cor. 14:26,39.

59. 2 Thess. 3:6 and Phil 1:12. The latter passage is especially confusing since in Phil. 2:12 Paul actually calls them "beloved" *agapeetoi* and in Phil. 3:1 and 4:1, the translators give us "brothers and sisters" (Carson, "Review," 10).

60. Ps. 50:20; Prov. 1–8; 19:3; Matt. 7:9; and Luke 11:11. Similarly, Jer. 6:26 and Zech. 12:10, in which "only child" replaces "only son."

61. Dt. 14:1; Ps. 82:6; Hos. 1:10; Matt. 5:9,45; and Rom. 8:14.

62. Ex. 20:5; Prov. 17:21; 19:14; and Luke 1:17.

63. Jer. 7:14; 23:27; 31:32; Mal. 2:10; Matt. 3:9; Luke 1:55 and John 4:12,20.

64. *BDB*, s.v. "*abh* [father]." Grudem, "Gender-Neutral," 14–15, also points out how the substitution of "orphan" for "fatherless" in 39

ses of the New RSV falsifies the cultural milieu of the Old Testament which "without a father to protect the family or provide for it, the ther and children were often exploited." See Deut. 10:18, 14:29; :17,19; Ex. 22:24; Ps. 109:9; Job 24:9; and Prov. 23:10.

65. Psalm 8:4; 90:3; and 144:3.

66. Ezekiel 3:1,4,10,17, etc.; and Dan. 8:17.

67. See Bretscher, "Translating the Bible," 57; Stek, "Preliminary sessment," 185; Grudem, "Gender Neutral," 1,2; and Carson, *Debate*, 0–75 for discussions of these changes.

68. See Bretscher, "Translating the Bible," 57, and Stek, "Preliminary Assessment," 184–85. Because all believers, male and female, are ons" of God in Christ, they are all "brothers" to one another. The peated addition of "sisters" to "brothers" in the New RSV imposes a xual distinction upon the community of believers that diminishes the ity that they have in Christ.

69. Walter Harrelson, "Inclusive Language in the NRSV," in *The aking of the NRSV*, 76.

70. Num. 31:28,49; Josh. 5:4. See Grudem, "Gender-Neutral," 16.

71. Ezek. 2:1,3,6,8; etc.

72. See Harrelson, "Inclusive Language," 78–79, for his discussion Ps. 41:5,8 and Ps. 131:2. Regarding the latter, Harrelson is pleased at the New RSV now implies that the author was a woman. Other amples include Ps. 3:2; 22:8,24; and 34:6,19,20. Of course, higher tics have long disputed Davidic authorship, but the point here is that ce the first verse of the Hebrew text itself ascribes each of these to vid, it is misleading to attempt to conceal that fact in the rest of the lm.

73. In Philippians 1:6; Matthew 10:40 and 19:4, "one" is used stead of a pronoun; and in Judges 13:21, the angel of the Lord is ferred to as "it" (see Nakamura, "NRSV: A Review," 79).

74. Harrelson, "Inclusive Language," 83–84; emphasis added.

75. Metzger, "To the Reader," *NRSV*, 7, 10.