TEXTUAL AND LITERARY JUDGMENTS ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT--WHAT HAPPENS TO THE LUTHERAN COMMITMENT TOSCRIPTURAL INERRANCY?

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PART I: INITIAL PRESENTATION

Our subject is textual (or lower) criticism and its impact on the formal principle (Holy Scripture) of Lutheran—and all biblical--theology. We are especially concerned with the views of Dr Jeffrey Kloha of the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Some preliminaries. First, I have never met Dr Kloha and therefore what I have written and published elsewhere on this topic—and what I shall be presenting today—must not be considered any kind of personal vendetta. I am much impressed by Dr Kloha's linguistic knowledge and the laborious analyses of textual minutiae in his doctoral thesis. *Our problem is with the philosophy of textual criticism he espouses and its implications for the doctrine of scriptural inerrancy*.

Secondly, Dr Kloha has repeatedly said that I "do not understand him"[2] and that, because my scholarly specialties are not in the area of textual criticism, I have no business critiquing him. I have pointed out that, with a classics major at Cornell University, a master's degree in New Testament, years of teaching Greek at graduate level, three

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[2] In this I am by no means alone. Dr Kloha said the same thing of Dr Alvin Schmidt after Dr Schmidt published a critique of Kloha's position in the 9/1 *Lutheran Clarion* (Sept. 2016): http://lutheranclarion.org/images/NewsletterSep2016.pdf Do Dr Kloha's crtics not understand him—or do they understand him all too well?

For those who think that I don't know anything about textual criticism and have misrepresented Kloha, here is the evaluation of Dr Paul D. Wegner, director of the PhD/ThM Program at Gateway Seminary, Ontario, CA, and author of the standard text, *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006): "You are very correct in your critique of Kloha's thorough-going eclecticism view. At the end of the day you have no objective criteria to evaluate the text. At least with manuscripts you have something that actually exists and not just your assumptions about which reading is favored by internal evidence. . . . Because there is so little evidence on how an author can say things and if they can ever say something new or unique causes a serious problem for the thorough-going eclecticism view. You have hit the nail on the head for the problem; is the text a revelatory construction or merely a literary one? If it is revelatory, then we must start with original or as close to original sources as possible" (personal communication, 20 August 2016).

earned doctorates, and two published translations of previously untranslated Latin works of the 17th century, I am entirely capable of raising issues as to his position; and, far more important, that these issues do not relate to the technicalities of textual criticism but to the *underlying philosophy of textual criticism espoused.* It has been common for atheists such as Richard Dawkins to argue that only someone with his/the unbeliever's scientific specialty (in Dawkins' case, evolutionary biology) has a right to criticize the secular position. This is, of course, errant nonsense, since the problems arise, not from the science *per se* but from the *philosophy of science* being presented. A generation ago, Dr Gordon Clark, a distinguished philosophy professor, wrote a little book on textual criticism. In it, he defended his authorship against the charge that he himself was not a textual critic:

> Although the present writer is not a textual critic, he will be bold enough to make some small claim to acquaintance with logic. . . . If someone argues, "All insects are quadrupeds, and all quadrupeds are edible, therefore all edibles are insects, " the writer can with some degree of assurance declare the syllogism invalid, even though he may not know whether or not a bumble bee is an insect. . . . Similarly, if a textual critic asserts that manuscript *B* has the correct reading for Luke 5:33, and that therefore *B* has the correct reading for Jude 22, we must suggest a course in logic for the critic, even though we might think that *B* was discovered in 1624 and represents the Byzantine text.[3]

Thirdly, this is not a call for an *auto da fé.* It up to Dr Kloha's academic and theological superiors to deal with the consequences of his views. I am sure that he is Christian believer who wishes to identify himself with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The question is: *How realistic is it that someone with his biblical orientation teach future pastors of that church body?*

Philosophies of Textual Criticism

Let us begin with the most esoteric aspect of the issue—textual criticism *per se.* Here are two standard dictionary definitions of the field: "the study of a literary work that aims to establish the original

[3] Gordon H. Clark, *Logical Criticisms of Textual Criticism* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, n.d.), pp.10-11.

text"; "the technique of restoring texts as nearly as possible to their original form."

The field is by no means limited to theological materials—classical studies and Shakespearean scholarship are equally concerned to arrive at the best representations of what authors originally wrote.

The problem is that we do not have—in the case of all ancient and most modern literature—the "autographs" of the authors (their original, hand-written texts). It is therefore necessary to compare copies, together with quotations of the work from other writers, so as to arrive as closely as possible to the authorial originals.

In the case of the Bible, this task is made particularly difficult by the sheer number of copies, as well as numerous citations in sermons, in liturgies, and in the writings of early churchmen. The books now in our New Testament were (rightly) considered of such eternal consequence that they were copied, recopied, and quoted again and again from apostolic times to the invention of printing from movable type in the West (the 15th century). So how should the textual critic proceed?

There are several theories of textual criticism in the biblical field. These differ particularly in the value they place on *internal, literary criteria* for determining the choice of a reading. We shall focus on the theory espoused by Dr Kloha, following his doctoral mentor J. Keith Elliott, one of the chief advocates of the approach termed *thoroughgoing eclectism.*[4] Here is Professor Elliott's statement of that philosophy—in contrast with the classic approaches:

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[4] We do not commit ourselves to a particular theory; our object here is, rather, to show the great dangers for the doctrine of scriptural inerrancy attendant on the theory espoused by Dr Kloha, following J. Keith Elliott. A far less subjective approach is that of the "single text model"—the model generally chosen being Codex Sinaiticus: "[A]ncient editors would have had access to much earlier and better manuscripts than modern editors and therefore would have probably been in a better position to make text-critical decisions" (Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, *Fundamentals of New Testament Textual Criticism* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015], p. 95). The latest efforts to arrive at the *Ausgangstext*/source text of the NT on a more solid, objective foundation is the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM). Tommy Wasserman's paper on the subject (57/2 *Novum Testamentum* 206-218 [2015]) and his lecture at the 2014 annual meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature (San Diego, CA) apply the method, *inter alia,* to NT material (I John, Jude) for which we have an apparatus by way of the Editio Critica Maior project at the University of Münster; the result is a substantial critique of Bart Ehrman's claim to "orthodox corruption" of NT texts (textual changes due to Christological controversies)—cf. below, our note 16.

> The majority of textual critics grudgingly apply principles of intrinsic probability to text-critical problems only when their preferred external evidence is unhelpful or ambiguous. Thoroughgoing eclecticism, by contrast, operates the other way round, that is to say the initial questions asked when variants need to be resolved are: Which reading is in accord with our author's style or language or theology? and Why and how did the alternative readings occur?[5]

A follower of Professor Elliott, Charles Landon, in his *A Text-Critical Study of the Epistle of Jude* (one of the very few attempts to apply thoroughgoing eclecticism to an entire New Testament book), says in his definition of the eclectic method that the methodology relies "mainly on internal evidence to choose the best reading whenever the MSS divide, [and] places minimal reliance on external evidence."[6]

In practice, this means that, though the thoroughgoing eclectic uses external text evidence (how could he avoid doing so?), the factors that most influence his conclusions are the internal, literary character and context of the work for which he is trying to establish the best reading of a given passage. Thus the following factors loom large in the eclectic's decision-making:

> A variant's conformity to the author's style . . . vocabulary [and use of rhetoric]
>
> A variant's conformity to the author's theology or ideology[7]

Thoroughgoing eclectics have tried to deflect the charge of literary subjectivism that such a philosophy inevitably entails, but without great success. Here is a recent evaluation of that methodology:

> While thoroughgoing eclectics insist on the objectivity of their criteria, issues of style, language, use, theology, and other internal

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[5] J. K. Elliott, *New Testament Textual Criticism: The Application of Thoroughgoing Principles* ("Supplements to *Novum Testamentum*" 137; Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 41-42. See also Elliott, "Thoroughgoing Eclecticism in New Testament Textual Criticism," in: Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes, *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research* (2d ed.; Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 745-79.

[6] Charles Landon, *A Text-Critical Study of the Epistle of Jude* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. 25.

[7] *Ibid.,* p. 26. Landon approves these criteria—to be found in E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee, *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 163-64. The square brackets are Landon's—who wishes the "rhetorical" style of the author (in his case, Jude's) to be taken into account when evaluating the choice of variant readings to be accepted.

> considerations are rarely as formally based as they propose or as clear-cut as they need to be. A wholesale diminishing of external evidence ends up placing the entirety of the decision upon the shoulders of the critic, without due consideration of the objective controls provided by external considerations. This represents the primary reason why most NT textual critics have rejected thoroughgoing eclecticism.[8]

The same point is made in a review of Elliott's book, *Textual Criticism: The Application of Thoroughgoing Principles* (2010):

> The claim that thoroughgoing eclecticism is "by no means subjective" (19)—indicating that decisions are not made on a whim but on the basis of clearly established criteria—overlooks the fact that the very selection of any criteria is a subjective enterprise.[9]

Another critic of thoroughgoing eclecticism writes:

> What Elliott fails to address, however, is the assumptions upon which a preference for internal criteria depend; for example, in his attention to the variant in Mark 1:4 . . . Elliott accepts "the probability of Markan consistency"; indeed, his entire argument depends in part on the assumption that the author is--or would be--consistent in his usage.[10]

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[8] Porter and Pitts, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94. Not so incidentally, a milder position, "reasoned eclecticism," falls under the same axe: "The same criticisms are applicable to reasoned eclecticism as are lodged above against thoroughgoing eclecticism. There are not clear criteria regarding the balance between external and internal criteria" (*ibid.*, p. 95). Fascinatingly, Elliott himself provides a commendatory recommendation of the Porter and Pitts book.
To prevent misunderstanding, we are not saying that internal criteria must *never* be employed by the textual critic. As in the "construction" (interpretation/exegesis) of legal documents, internal factors can be taken into account in the limiting case where the text as arrived at objectively makes no sense. This so-called "golden rule" in the construction of legal documents states that "the grammatical and ordinary sense of the words may be modified, so as to avoid . . . absurdity and inconsistency *but no farther* (*Grey v Pearson* [1857], 6 HL Cas 61, Parke B; our italics). Cf. Montgomery, *Law and Gospel* [2d ed.; Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology and Public Policy, 1994], chap. 12, pp. 23-26).

[9] Juan Hernandez, Jr. (Bethel University): http://www.academia.edu/6858603/Textual_Criticism_on_the_Basis_of_Thoroughgoing_Principles [accessed 15 September 2016].

[10] Kim Haines-Eitzen (Cornell University), Review of *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism,* ed. David Alan Black, *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism,* 2003.

The use of stylistic considerations for the determination of text authorship and origins has quite rightly been rejected in other academic fields. Thus, in computer investigations of texts:

> A collection of newspaper articles and an autobiographical account all by the same author may differ considerably in their measurable style. Clearly, then, stylistic analyses are fallible and cannot provide positive identification of a text's authorship or literary heritage.[11]

Parallels with the "higher criticism" should be evident: (1) reliance on subjective, internal, literary considerations in evaluating texts, and (2) the non-acceptance of such approaches outside the narrow confines of a (generally liberal) theological community. It is especially noteworthy that thoroughgoing eclecticism has never been accepted or employed in the textual criticism of Shakespeare; there, one relies objectively on a best text (e.g. the First Folio). As one writer has put it: "*All* modern Shakespeare critics are historical/documentary critics."[12]

There is also a serious logical problem inherent in the philosophy of thoroughgoing eclecticism. If, in the final analysis, one determines a reading by what best fits the internal content of the work as a whole, *how did one discover the proper readings constituting that work as a whole*? One needs to have a solid text in order to judge what variant reading best fits it—so one can hardly claim that literary "fit" is the fundamental factor for deciding which given variant is to be chosen. This is of course why the standard critical editions of the Greek New Testament (Nestle/Aland *et al.*) have generally used Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, the Corpus Paulinum, and the earliest major papyri as their starting points.[13]

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[11] Daniel I. Greenstein, *A Historian's Guide to Computing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[12] Cf. Peter Alexander (ed.), *Studies in Shakespeare: British Academy Lectures* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 128-30. There, bibliographer Ronald B. McKerrow notes Dr Samuel Johnson's reliance on the First Folio and his evaluation of Edward Capell's editorial approach to the Shakespeare texts as "gabble." Capell had "the idea that if an editor likes a reading, that reading is (a) good, and (b) attributable to Shakespeare." This uncomfortably reminds us of how Dr Kloha handles the sacred text (*infra*).

[13] See above, our note 4. Michael W. Holmes concedes that "the effort to identify the earliest text form to which we have access will always have a certain logical and diachronic priority, inasmuch as it provides a point of reference from which to assess and evaluate later changes and developments in the transmission of the text. As Epp has observed, 'we need a baseline'" (M.W. Holmes, "From 'Initial Text' to 'Original Text'," in Ehrman and Holmes, *op. cit.* [in

Dr Kloha's Approach to the Biblical Texts

We have noted that Dr Kloha regards himself as a thoroughgoing eclectic. In the conclusion to his doctoral dissertation, he writes: "The goal of this study has been realized: To apply the principles of thoroughgoing eclecticism to the readings of the Greek manuscripts of I Corinthians, in order to determine how and, where possible, why the manuscripts were altered in the earliest period of transmission, that is, up to the fourth century."[14]

But what does this mean in practice? The fact that thoroughgoing eclecticism privileges subjective, internal, literary criteria for the choice of biblical texts does not *per se* mean that Dr Kloha falls into this methodological pit. We must therefore examine how Dr Kloha does in fact make his textual decisions.

Kloha's doctoral dissertation provides innumerable illustrations of the consequences of his acceptance of thoroughgoing eclecticism. Here are but two instances that point up very clearly the incompatibility of his approach with the classic doctrine of biblical inerrancy—that the Bible speaks the truth in everything it teaches or touches.

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our note 4 *supra*], p. 643). In his discussion of Codex Sinaiticus, David C. Parker notes that "Myshrall's analysis of approximately three thousand corrections in the Gospels revealed that the vast majority of them are minor—orthographical or just changing word breaks across a line. Only a tiny number are textually significant" (D. C. Parker, "The Majuscule Manuscripts of the New Testament," in Ehrman and Holmes, *op. cit.*, p. 58. And Barbara Aland, after noting the careful transmission of the earliest major papyri (P^{45}, P^{46}, etc.), states: "If we do not see radical changes in the transmission of a text later on, it follows that we should not see them earlier on either, before the initial text. And thus we should be able to trust the initial text as being fairly close to the original text" (B. Aland, "New Testament Textual Research, Its Methods and Its Goals," in: Stanley E. Porter and Mark J. Boda, *Translating the New Testament: Text, Translation, Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009], p. 24).

[14] Kloha, "A Textual Commentary on Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Leeds, 2006). Vol. 2, p. 714 [hereafter cited as "Kloha thesis"]. Only the first two volumes are text; the remaining volumes consist of lists of MSS readings, bibliography, and the reproduction of a previously published article. The thesis demonstrates impressive labour; what it lacks is awareness of the theological implications of the philosophy of textual criticism it slavishly follows.

In his treatment of I Cor. 7:33-34, Dr Kloha rejects the "archetypal" reading reflected in our modern translations (based on the foundational MSS P^{15} B P) on the grounds that "the influence of the parallelism of the context, the difficulty of several syntactical features, and the development of terminology and practice in the early church led to several simultaneous alterations that cannot be attributed to accidental corruption."[15]

At the end of his thesis, Kloha speaks of "the contexts of individual witnesses." He asserts that these contexts "can be known only in the case of a handful of witnesses (for example F G), and even there only imperfectly. Nevertheless, the theological, ethical, and even linguistic developments that were taking place during the first few centuries of the transmission of the *Corpus Paulinum* must be understood. For example, only after a highly-developed Trinitarian theology took hold could the addition of 8:6 have been made."[16] It should be observed that if this view is accepted, no pastor should preach I Corinthians 8:6 as if it were the Word of God.

In the Festschrift for his mentor Elliott, Dr Kloha identifies the author of the *Magnificat* as Elizabeth and not Mary.[17] To be sure, whether Mary or Elizabeth spoke those words poses no doctrinal issue whatsoever. But the way in which Kloha arrives at his attribution is fraught with the most serious consequences for the authority and factual inerrancy of the text—and, by implication—for all other biblical material.

Klohe first sets forth the manuscript evidence for the two readings of Luke 1:46. "Turning to the continuous-text manuscript tradition of

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[15] Kloha thesis, I, 186-87.

[16] Kloha thesis, II, 717. It is clear that Kloha agrees here with Bart Ehrman: "As Ehrman has argued, at least some passages of the NT manuscripts have been altered in light of the christological controversies with which the scribes, presumably, would have been familiar" (*ibid*. I, 26). Ehrman's (and Kloha's) hypothesis of "orthodox corruption" has been shown by Tommy Wasserman to be unnecessary in several instances (cf. above, our note 4). My appreciation to Wasserman for an email that helped to make my argument more precise on this point.

[17] Kloha, "Elizabeth's *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46)," *Texts and Traditions: Esssays in Honour of J. Keith Elliott,* ed. Peter Doble and Jeffrey Kloha (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 200-219. Another contributor to this volume is James W. Voelz, Kloha's New Testament Department head at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, who (naturally!) has found no problems with Kloha's methodology or theology.

Luke," he properly notes, the Marian reading "is consistently attested in all Greek MSS at Luke 1:46" (p. 205). This, to be sure, is why "no editions of the Greek New Testament produced in the last half-century" accept any reading other than the Marian one (p. 200). The only readings of any consequence attributing the *Magnificat* to Elizabeth are non-Vulgate Latin readings, Irenaeus (a divided authority, however, since in one place he explicitly attributes the song to Mary), Origen (indecisive, as with Irenaeus), and a little-known, hardly impressive late 3d-, early 4th-century Latin preacher, one Nicetas of Remesiana. The fact that these authorities are earlier than the authoritative Greek texts (Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, early to mid 4th century) is hardly a strong argument for the Elizabeth attribution, since they are non-Greek versions/translations and contradict the Greek texts.[18] Kloha admits this.

So why does Dr Kloha favour the Elizabeth reading—against the powerful weight of textual authority? Answer: because he accepts the philosophy of textual criticism espoused by J. Keith Elliott. In the Introduction to the Elliott Festschrift, we are told that "Keith's career has seen him refocus his work from searching for an 'original text' to what may be reasonably be said of the history to which texts point." Kloha revealingly quotes Elliott at the beginning of his article in the following terms: the textual critic, according to Elliott, "feels able to select freely from among the available fund of variants and choose the one that best fits the internal criteria" (p. 200).[19]

If such an approach is accepted, the result is what might well be termed a "designer New Testament": variants are chosen according to the literary criteria of the textual critic, the idea being to arrive at a text which has the literary quality (similarity of vocabulary, style, structure, etc.) with which the critic is comfortable. This is, of course, to deny the *historical* claims of the New Testament books (e.g., Luke 1:1-4, which precedes the *Magnificat* passage in the same chapter!). Note

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[18] See, for example, the Nestle/Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th ed.; Stuttgart: Württ. Bibelanstalt) at Luke 1:46. Throughout his doctoral dissertation on the text of I Corinthians, Kloha shows particular bias for early, non-Vulgate Latin readings--in spite of the tremendous problem that it is impossible to identify the original Greek text they were attempting to translate. See below, our Appendix A, for a simple illustration of the irrationality of Dr Kloha's approach.

[19] More detail on this issue can be found in Montgomery, "Beyond the "Plastic Text": The Plot Thickens," 12/3 *Global Journal of Classic Theology* (Dec. 2015): http://www.globaljournalct.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Montgomery-Vol-12-No-3-Beyond-the-Plastic-Text-Rev.pdf

well: *any* New Testament text would be subject to the same treatment. Dr Kloha's students, as future pastors and teachers, could hardly miss the lesson: if Kloha can do it, so can I.

The central problem with thoroughgoing eclecticism and Dr Kloha's employment of it lies in the unrestrained discretion given to the textual critic. Here one observes a significant parallel with the evils of uncontrolled judicial discretion.[20] A proper jurisprudential philosophy will limit judicial discretion to those rare cases where the law is unclear. A proper biblical theology will limit textual discretion to those rare cases where external evidence *per se* cannot provide a solution based on the weighing of MS authority.

Even recognizing the unfortunate results of Dr Kloha's textual philosophy in practice, can we not say that, considering the overwhelming similarity of textual readings and therefore the virtual identity of modern translations based on commonly accepted Greek texts of the New Testament (almost never the product of thoroughgoing eclecticism), no harm is really done?

Sadly, much harm is done. This is due to the fact that Dr Kloha draws a logical but deadly conclusion from the fundamental principle of thoroughgoing eclecticism that *all* variant readings are in theory deserving of consideration. Since the number of existing texts, good, bad, and indifferent, is legion—and since there is always the possibility of uncovering previously undiscovered ones—the text of the New Testament is indeed never settled ("plastic," to use language that he has ceased to use for political reasons). This means that the biblical text is always in a state of flux. Dr Kloha declares: "We now have a text of the New Testament that makes no claim to being fixed and stable, for it is subject to continuous improvement and change."[21]

That being the case, how can it be authoritative for the pastor or the layman? When can one say with confidence, "Thus says the Lord?" Dr Kloha sees the historical church as the solution: it is the church

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[20] "Judicial power is never exercised for the purpose of giving effect to the will of the judge, always for the purpose of giving effect to the will of the legislature; or, in other words, to the will of the law" (John Marshall, C.J., *Osborn v. Bank of the United States*, 22 U. S. 738 (1824).

[21] Kloha, "Theological and Hermenuetic Reflections on the Ongoing Revisions of the *Novum Testamentum Graece,*" in: Achim Behrens and Jorg Christian Salzmann (eds.), *Listening to the Word of God: Exegetical Aprpoaches* (Gõttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2016), p. 180. (This is the revision of Kloha's "Plastic Text" essay delivered at the Lutherische Theologische Hochschule, Oberursel, Germany, in November, 2013.)

that ultimately decides on the text to be accepted at any point in time. And since the church is the body of Christ, led by the Holy Spirit, we need not be troubled by an ever-changing Bible.

In Kloha's view, the attempt to get back to the original autographs of Scripture is a chimerical task. One cannot even be sure that the *Corpus Paulinum* gives us the *ipsissima verba* of the Apostle. Indeed, final theological authority cannot reside in a Bible produced by single acts of divine inspiration. Rather, that authority must lie in the church herself as she continually reevaluates the results of the labours of textual scholarship. The text, like the canonicity question, is never finally closed, but remains an open and continuing task for the church. Writes Kloha:

> How, then is it decided which *reading* is apostolic and has been received as such by the church? The church has been and continues to be led by the Spirit into all truth as it hears ever again the Word. And the church has always taken the greatest care to ensure that what it teaches and preaches is indeed apostolic. That work continues today, in light of new evidence and historical study. . . . [T]o speak of a single act of inspiration . . . leaves us vunerable. . . . God works in history. The Spirit created the church. [22]

This, of course, is exactly the Roman Catholic solution to textual problems and biblical authority.

It is *not,* however, the Lutheran answer. Had it been, Luther's Reformation would never have occurred. He could hardly have said at Worms, "My conscience is captive to the word of God" and set

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[22] *Ibid.,* pp. 198, 200. The proof-texts Kloha cites in support of his view have, literally, nothing whatever to do with the issue (I Cor. 1:21, Acts 2:38-41). In his original "Plastic Text" paper, he wrote: "Who then decides? As always, the gathered baptized, those who hear the voice of the shepherd and follow where he leads. . . .The church decides, but the church has been and continues to be led by the Spirit into all truth as it hears ever again the Word." Remarkably, though Kloha's specialty is the New Testament text, he does not seem to realise that the "*leading into all truth" (John 16:13) like the bringing "all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26) were special gifts of the Spirit bestowed by Jesus on the original apostolic band, and thus the guarantee that their recounting of divine truth would be infallibly reliable—not a general promise to the church that it would function as the vehicle of revelatory truth*. Pre-eminent New Testament scholar Oscar Cullmann referred to this as the "gift of total recall." See below, our note 32 and Appendices C and D.

biblical teaching against that of the Roman church of his day. One cannot have it both ways: if the Scripture is created by the church, it can hardly be used to criticize the church's errors.

Moreover, of course, such a solution is pure *Schwärmerei*: the Holy Spirit, instead of working through the objective Word to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8), becomes a *deus ex machine* to justify the subjective literary judgments of the textual critic as to the proper content of the biblical text. In a very real sense, when "the church led by the Spirit" justifies the text, it is really justifying the literary perspective of the textual critic(s). Unless the text is justified by Christ's promise to the apostolic band, i.e., by its apostolic character, there will be no adequate case for its revelatory and inerrant nature. Without this, the Christian falls into the sectarian category of proclaiming as God's word what cannot be shown to be such (as with the *Bhagavad gita, Qur'an, Book of Mormon, Science and Health,* etc.).

And what happens to the Lutheran commitment to the i*nerrancy* of Holy Writ? Inerrancy refers to issues of *truth:* whether the Bible is factually correct in all its assertions. When the content of Scripture is treated as a literary production—texts being chosen that presumably fit better the literary context—inerrancy becomes impossible in principle. A literary production can be effective and moving, but it cannot be "true" or "false." (Think, for example, of *Winnie the Pooh.*)

To be sure, one can redefine "inerrancy"—to mean, say, "effective and moving"—doing in every instance "what God wants it to do." This is precisely how the Seminex professors handled the matter. They never outrightly denied the inerrancy of the Bible; they merely downplayed it at best and redefined it at worst (example: Arthur Carl Piepkorn).[23]

Hear Dr Kloha on the inerrancy issue, and ask yourself: How does this differ from simply jettisoning the doctrine and going with Seminex "gospel reductionism" (the Bible is true in the sense that it presents the gospel):

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[23] See A. C. Piepkorn, "What Does 'Inerrancy' Mean?" 36 *Concordia Theological Monthly* 577-93 (September, 1965). Cf. for numerous other illustrations: Montgomery, *Crisis in Lutheran Theology* (2d ed., 2 vols. in 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1973), I, 81-123 (especially pp. 96-97, 116-17).

> If you want to rip Romans 15 and 16 out of my Bible, I can live with that. If you want Hebrews, James, Revelation torn out too, I can live with that. If you force me to look only at p46 or the bizarre majuscule manuscript W or one of thousands of Byzantine minuscules and use them as my New Testament—I can live with that. Give me only Codex Boernarianus, one of the most poorly copied, misspelled, error filled copies of Paul's letters, and I can live with that. I could live with or without any of those, because even these poorly copied, corrupted by people, edited, to use Luther's words, preach Christ. And if they preach Christ, they are of the Spirit, for preaching Christ is the Spirit's work. And if they preach Christ, they are apostolic, for the apostle can speak nothing other than what he has been sent to speak. So apostles, no matter who they are, even one who has been aborted yet lived like Paul, who once persecuted the church, preach the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I can live without a perfect Bible. I cannot live without God raising Jesus from the dead.
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> On the other hand, force me read only the Gospel of Thomas, I cannot live with that. Or the Koran, or the Book of Mormon. Not because the are not "inerrant" or "perfect," or even "human," but because there is no Gospel: There is no new life in Christ.[24]

Finally, it has been argued that, since Dr Kloha has not denied any Lutheran doctrine, there is no issue to be faced anyway. Such a conclusion is comfortable politically, but represents staggering naiveté.[25]

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[24] Kloha, "The Authority of the Scriptures," Concordia Seminary St. Louis 2010 Symposium ("The Scriptures: Formative or Formality?"). The logical slippage in the above argument should not be overlooked (cf. above, the Gordon Clark quotation at our note 3): Says Kloha:"*if they [texts] preach Christ, they are apostolic, for the apostle can speak nothing other than what he has been sent to speak* So apostles, no matter who they are . . . " BUT preaching Christ does not make the preacher an Apostle ("apostolic")—or everyone who has ever preached the gospel would be an Apostle! In reality, solely *being an Apostle* makes one's utterances apostolic.

Not so incidentally, *pace* Dr Kloha, the reason for textual critic Bart Ehrman's defection from biblical Christianity was *not* his prior commitment to a traditional, evangelical understanding of the inerrancy of given-once-for-all biblical texts; it was his acceptance of a rationalistic, anti-miraculous, secular worldview which made any kind of transcendent revelation impossible (*finitum non capax infiniti* vs. the biblical—and Lutheran—*infinitum capax finiti*).

[25] See Appendix B to this essay.

We mentioned Seminex in passing. The Seminex professors accepted as legitimate the higher criticism. Higher critics receive from the lower/textual critics the best biblical texts, and then endeavor to go "higher" (or deeper) by subjecting the biblical material to internal, stylistic, literary analysis. On finding what they believe to be errors, inconsistencies, vocabulary and stylistic differences, etc., they arrive at the conclusion that there must have been earlier sources, earlier authors, and earlier editors of the material. The fact that such earlier documents are nowhere to be found does not bother the higher critic—for his approach, like that of thoroughgoing eclecticism, focuses not on the objective, but on subjective, literary, stylistic judgment. In both cases, one might say—perhaps unkindly, but realistically—an objective God who objectively reveals is replaced by the Critic whose subjective determinations provide whatever "revelation" there is.

Is it really important whether biblical revelation is destabilized by higher criticism or by an unfortunate philosophy of lower criticism? The result is the same. Unless one gives the Holy Spirit a function Scripture does not, or unless one accepts the Roman Catholic belief that the church visible is the justifier of Scripture, these views must be rejected. One simply cannot be permitted to hold such views as a confessional Lutheran.

A Cautionary Tale in Conclusion

In the preceding analysis, we have assiduously avoided *ad hominem* argumentation. But, in conclusion, it cannot be omitted—owing to the lesson it carries.

On the recommendation of his department head, Dr James Voelz, Jeffery Kloha proceeded to the University of Leeds (England) to obtain the Ph.D. under Professor J. Keith Elliott.[26] The English Ph.D. is not like the American degree of the same nomenclature: it requires neither a year or more of advanced course work in the field nor any comprehensive, written, qualifying examinations; the entire responsibility of the candidate is to produce an original thesis that will satisfy his doctoral mentor, advisor(s), and sometimes external examiners chosen by the doctoral mentor. In his doctoral thesis, Kloha lavishly praises Elliott for his guidance and his personal kindnesses.[27]

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[26] Note: not a theological doctorate from a theological faculty.

[27] "Prof. J. K. Elliott has provided his meticulous guidance throughout. It has been an honor

In point of fact, Professor Elliott, during his career, has been a vicious critic of scholars who do not agree with him. Here are but two painful examples:

A review by Professor Elliott in the *Journal of Theological Studies* was so offensive that the editors subsequently published the following notice in its New Series (2013):

> **Editorial Apology.** In April 2010 *JTS* published a review of Professor Chris Keith's book *The Pericope Adulterae, the Gospel of John, and the Literacy of Jesus* (New Testament Tools, Studies, and Documents 38; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2009). Pp. xvi+350. Hardback Euro121.00/$166.00. ISBN 978 90 04 17394 1. The editors wish to apologize unreservedly for the publication of this review, and for the unprofessional and personal criticisms of the book and its author which it contained. The editors have also invited Professor Keith to respond in the article which follows to the academic criticisms of his book which were made in the review and a new review of the book has been commissioned."

Professor Elliott's review of the late Dr Harold Greenlee's *The Text of the New Testament: From Manuscript to Modern Edition* (2008) in the *Review of Biblical Literature* was so objectionable that one commentator used the adjective "vituperative" to describe it.[28] It is noteworthy that Professor Elliott has been especially disturbed by evangelicals (in his view, fundamentalists) such as Dr Greenlee.

Plainly, Professor Elliott does not suffer gladly those whom he considers fools, and that deviation from the thoroughgoing eclectic textual theory for which he has become the major spokesman would be difficult to tolerate. Success in obtaining the English doctorate requires the wholehearted support of one's major professor. I am myself acquainted with sad cases of students' ruffling the feathers of their doctoral advisors at English and commonwealth universities and never receiving their degree.[29]

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to work under his direction. I only hope that I can begin to emulate his model of outstanding scholarship and warm collegiality" (Kloha thesis, I, 1).

[28] http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/2009/02/greenlee-review-keith-elliott-responds.html [accessed 15 September 2016].

[29] Since I possess two earned European doctorates (as well an an American one), this evaluation can hardly be dismissed as "sour grapes." See my article, "On Taking a European

Is it too much to suppose that, with so much at stake academically, Jeffery Kloha moved inexorably into the orbit of his mentor's textual theory—even though there is no possible way to make it compatible with the classic Lutheran view of Scripture (or any understanding of the Bible as inerrant revelation, for that matter)?

If so, it would hardly be a unique phenomenon. American seminary graduates—especially those from theological faculties of in-grown denominations where the student has spent virtually his entire academic life in the institutions of that church body—arrive in Europe and are blown-out-of-the-water by a professorial atmosphere where, all too often, you either become a disciple of your major professor or return home with no doctorate and nothing to show for all the time and money expended. Example: Daniel Fuller (son of the famed radio evangelist Charles Fuller) whose doctrine of biblical inerrancy disappeared as he studied for the theological doctorate under the aegis of Karl Barth at the University of Basel.[30]

Those American theology students who do proudly return to the U.S. with European doctorates often receive teaching positions at conservative theological seminaries, colleges, and bible schools. The institutional administrators are so impressed with the newly-crowned doctors that their beliefs are seldom questioned—as long as they use the proper creedal and denominational lingo (without being asked to define their terms, of course). For a while, the professors continue to use the old language of biblical "infallibility" or "inerrancy," but eventually that goes by the board—and the institutions move to a "moderate" or "quasi-liberal" theological stance (Princeton Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, and a host of others).

"Professor" is, etymologically, "one who professes" something. A seminary professor, above all, should be presenting, stressing, and reinforcing his students' confidence in Holy Scripture—not offering new and original viewpoints that do exactly the opposite. Our entire culture pressures the church and its clergy to give up confidence in God's inerrant Word. Sadly, our Lutheran seminaries offer little or no meaningful answers and little, if any, serious apologetics for the truth

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Theological Doctorate," in Montgomery, *The Suicide of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethnay, 1970), pp. 174-80.

[30] As told me by Daniel Fuller in persona conversation. Daniel Fuller became subsequently one of the main influences in the Fuller Theological Seminary's jettisoning of its doctrinal commitment to biblical inerrancy.

of the faith once delivered to the saints. This is scandalous, and declining church membership is often but a reflection of inadequate seminary instruction.

One of the major themes of J. R. R. Tolkien's novels *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* is the ease with which we come to believe that, if evil is decisively conquered on one occasion, we shall have nothing to fear in the future. But, in fact, Middle Earth—and *our* earth—is never free of the dangers of the old Dragon's return. Only Christ's coming will end the struggle.

In the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, many have believed that, with the purification of the church (and especially the St Louis seminary) from the Seminex contamination, the church body became immune to scriptural and doctrinal problems. "Now, all we need to worry about are the church growth movement and increased administrative centralism." Nonsense.

If I were C. S. Lewis's demonic Uncle Screwtape, I would not bother with liberal denominations: they aren't saving people anyway. I would focus my efforts on destroying the few church bodies that still hold to the entire truth of God's Word (Scripture and Gospel). They are the ones to corrupt—and the best place to start is the faculties of theology, and the best place in the seminaries to do devilish work is the exegetical department. Why? Because a corrupt view of Scripture will—as the night follows the day—inevitably result in the corruption of systematic and practical theology—and thus impact what will be preached from the pulpit by the seminary graduates. And I would always push any viewpoint that stresses subjective decision-making, since, at all costs, the demonic strategy is to downplay the fundamental truth that God's Word is always *extra nos.*

For Uncle Screwtape to succeed, all it takes is naïve seminary and church administrators: seminary presidents, deans, and department heads who value "scholarship" or "academic reputation" above doctrine; church presidents who want peace and any price, and value, above doctrinal truth, good ecumenical relations with sister denominations or with wider ecclesiastical life.

"The secret of freedom is courage" (Thucydides). But in church and seminary bureaucracies today, courage is the virtue encountered the least. Why do theological seminaries and churches go liberal—as virtually all have done? Answer: the pusillanimous attitude that

refuses courageously to root out whatever is incompatible with the formal or material principles of any truly confessional theology.

Our concluding recommendations: (1) Refuse to tolerate textual philosophies that employ internal (stylistic) criteria as the preferred standard for the choice of readings—just as we have refused to tolerate higher critical theories that employ internal (stylistic) criteria to determine the origin and authorship of the biblical books.[31] (2) Insist upon a serious commitment to biblical inerrancy—which necessarily means that scriptural material purporting to present historical facts (e.g., Luke's Gospel) be treated as objective history and not transformed into literary productions where the content depends upon stylistic considerations as theorized by critics or interpreters. (3) Continue to oppose all varieties of gospel reductionism—all positions that maintain, in one fashion or another, that biblical revelation consists of nothing more than expressions of the gospel and that whatever else is there can be treated as the product of human fallibility. (4) Maintain and present to a dying world the objective, factual, evidential work of God as exemplified by a totally trustworthy Bible and a historical Christ whose human life and divine ministry are precisely as described in the biblical records.[32]

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[31] Cf. Kurt E. Marquart, "The Incompatibility between Historical-Critical Theology and the Lutheran Confessions," in: *Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics,* ed. John Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 313-33.

[32] For a summary of the serious difficulties in Dr Kloha's approach, see Appendix C (*infra*). N.B. I had suspected that a good part of Dr Kloha's problem was a tacit commitment to a presuppositionalist stance, comparable to that present in much Calvinist/Reformed epistemology (Cornelius Van Til, *et al.*). This is confirmed in Kloha's recent essay, "Manuscripts and Misquoting, Inspiration and Apologetics," presented at the Lutheran Concerns Association Annual Conference, 19 January 2015: "In the end, we either trust the promises of Christ, or we do not. . . . 'But when the Comforter comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me' (John 15:26). . . . We cannot *make* the Scriptures authoritative, we cannot prove them to be authoritative; any foundation or method which depends on our interpretation or reconstruction is, by definition, self-referential, self-serving, and ultimately uncertain. Only one based on Christ and his promises, which we know through his Word, is certain" (p. 16). Three comments: (1) If the text is not factually certain, how do we "know Christ and his promises through his Word"? The gospel will be uncertain if the text of Scripture is uncertain. (2) As we have pointed out earlier, John 15:26 and the other passages in John dealing with Jesus' gift of truth and recall through the Spirit are directed specifically to the apostolic company, *not* to the church across the centuries—unless we commit ourselves to some kind of "apostolic succession" as does Roman Catholic theology (see *supra,* our 22; also our Appendix D, *infra*). (3) The presentation of factual evidence for the correctness of a viewpoint is *not* "self-referential" or "self-serving." Without such evidence for biblical truth, the unbeliever in a secular age is left without an effective witness. Dr Kloha's presuppositionalism may be a comfort to those already Lutheran; it is a hopeless fideism in a pluralistic world of unbelief

Coda

Debates tend to harden the positions of the debaters. This is unfortunate. I believe that Dr Kloha wants to be a truly Lutheran professor of theology, faithful to its beliefs and to those of the historic church.

May I therefore suggest that

--he rethink the eclectic position and move in the direction of a more objective textual philosophy, such as that of the Coherence Based Genaalogical Method;

--he realize that the authority of the NT rests with its *apostolic character,* objectively guaranteed by Jesus' promise to the apostles that the Holy Spirit would cause them to remember accurately exactly what he had told them (and their subsequent approval of Paul as a genuine apostle);

--he accept the necessary consequence of this promise, that a divinely guaranteed inspiration establishes the truth of the NT writings, not just in a narrow theological sense ("gospel reductionism") but in everything they present as historical fact;

--he agree that these writings, *not created but confirmed by the church*, can and should function as the standard "by which all teachers and writings must be judged" (Formula of Concord, Epitome);

--he undertake a serious study of apologetics—to see how this factually true biblical revelation can be successfully proclaimed and defended in a world where the number of Lutheran church members continues to diminish but where the growing number of unbelievers must be presented with a religion of truth, not just a religion of personal faith;

--he clearly and explicitly convey these essentials to his students and future pastors, as well as to the scholarly, ecclesiastical, and general

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crying out for Christians who will "be ready always to give an answer [Gk *apologia*] to everyone that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you" (I Peter 3:15). (See my numerous apologetics publications in this area, and especially "Christian Apologetics in the Light of the Lutheran Confessions," in: Montgomery, *Christ As Centre and Circumference* [Bonn, Germany: Verlag fuer Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2012], pp. 147-63.)

public—and that he publish in the same media as have publicized his earlier views his re-orientation of perspective in these several areas of critical doctrinal concern.[33]

APPENDIX A:

WHY WE SHOULD NOT EMPLOY KLOHA'S TEXTUAL APPROACH: TWO HYPOTHETICALS

THE REAGAN HYPOTHETICAL

Suppose 200 years have passed since the death of President Reagan. Textual scholars are concerned to arrive at the proper reading of one of his speeches. No autograph original of the speech has survived.

The majority of textual critics rely on several MSS of the speech that are dated some 100 years after Reagan's time. These are in the English language.

Now Critic K points to another MS of a portion of the speech that can be dated some 50 years after the speech was delivered. It is in Spanish and fragmentary. This text uses an expression that, when translated back into English, Reagan used during the *Iran-Contra* hearings ("I have no recollection of that"). The widely accepted, English MSS of the speech say, instead, "How could I remember a thing like that?"

Critic K argues for the reading in the Spanish MS—on the grounds that (1) stylistically, it's more "Reaganesque"—it fits better from a contextual standpoint than does the reading in the English MSS, and (2) it is earlier than the MSS relied on by the majority of textual scholars.

What do we say to this? Surely, we should reject Critic K's argument. Why?

(1) No writer or speaker has to be consistent in style, vocabulary, structure, etc., and people do not in fact operate that way. The task of

[33] Dr Kloha might also consider joining the Evangelical Theological Society, the doctrinal basis of which states: "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs."

the critic is to determine what Reagan actually said—as a historical fact—not what the critic thinks would provide a better or more consistent literary version of the speech.

(2) *Earlier* is not necessarily *better*—particularly when a translation (version) is involved. Reagan never delivered speeches in Spanish, and there is always the possibility of mistranslation in trying to construct the original from a translation..

Note the close parallel with the determination of whether or not to accept the "Elizabeth" rather than the "Mary" reading of the *Magnificat*. Codices Siniaticus and Vaticanus ("Mary") are admittedly later (4th century) than the 2d-3d century Latin readings ("Elizabeth") relied upon by Kloha. However, they are not in the common Greek (*koiné*)—the *lingua franca* of the Apostles' time—and no one maintains that any NT book was originally written in Latin. As for literary style, do we really want a biblical text that reflects what the critic thinks the Apostles *should* have written—as opposed to a text based on the most widely accepted Greek MSS and therefore presumably a better record of *what historically—in fact—occurred*?

THE VINIFIC HYPOTHETICAL

Let us suppose that a 2d century non-Vulgate Latin version of the wedding of Cana pericope in John 2 is discovered in the ruins of an Egyptian monastery. This MS has the words for "wine" (*vinum*) and "water" (*aqua*) reversed throughout, so that Jesus changes wine into water. This reading also occurs once in Irenaeus and once in Origen, and is employed in an anti-drunkenness sermon of the 4th century ascetic A. Teetotalus.

Dr C. R. I. ("Carry") Nation, is a prominent textual critic of the thoroughgoing eclectic persuasion. From Dr Nation's literary standpoint, the acceptance of the Latin reading—doubtless derived from a now lost, early Greek text of the Gospel—would far better fit the New Testament concern to reduce inebriation (e.g., "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit"—Eph. 5:18). And it is much earlier than the baseline Greek MSS Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus (early to mid 4th century).

As a result of his internal analysis, Dr Nation opts for the Latin reading as best fitting the literary context and theology of the

Gospel—even though there is almost uniform agreement among the best texts against it.

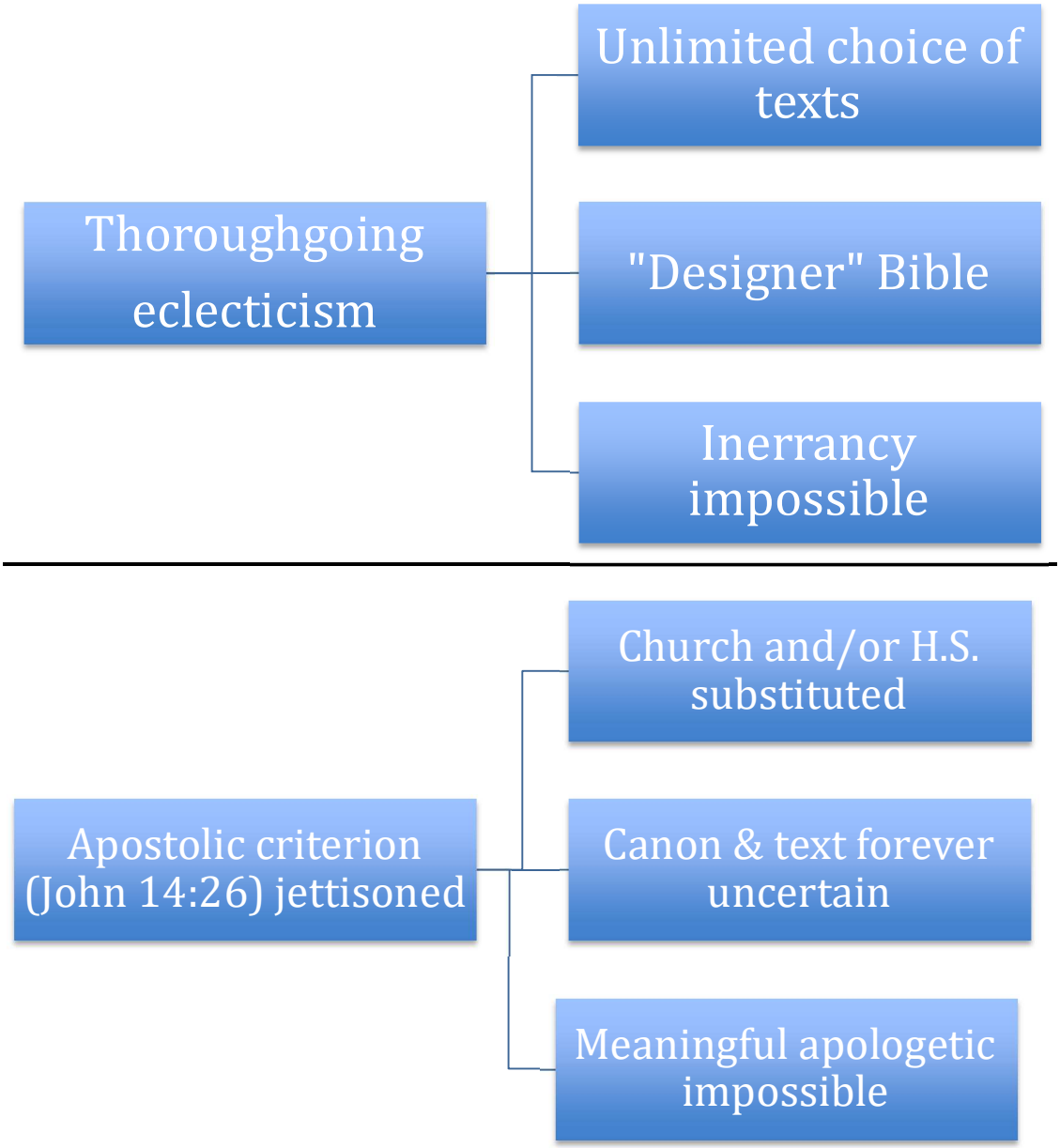
Dr Nation has followed the underlying principle of thoroughgoing eclecticism: he has allowed internal, literary considerations to trump objective, external MS evidence.

In spite of his being highly praised by the Baptist and independent fundamentalist churches, which have always been uncomfortable with the historical fact that Jesus turned water into fermented wine, *Dr Nation should be locked up for his own good and for the good of the church.*

APPENDIX B: CONSEQUENCES OF KLOHA'S VIEWPOINT

"Some folks who have followed this controversy may wonder how I could state about Dr. Kloha's revised essay in Behrens and Salzmann . . . that 'I find nothing in it that is false doctrine" ("Noland Replies to Christian News,' *Christian News* 54 #19 (May 9, 2016): 3, col. 1) and at the same time disagree with some aspects of that essay or see such aspects as 'problems.' That is because I agree with the LC-MS about what constitutes a 'doctrine.' In LC-MS Constitution Article II, we define our 'doctrine' as that which agrees with the Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. In the Brief Statement (1932), Article 44, the LC-MS also stated what is *not* doctrine: 'Those questions in the domain of Christian doctrine may be termed open questions which Scripture answers either not at all or not clearly.' Neither Scriptures nor the Lutheran Confessions answer the questions raised by textual variants, therefore we have no formal or official 'doctrine' in the Lutheran church with regard to the matter of textual criticism. This is affirmed by the 'Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles' (1973, under 'The Infallibility of Scripture') which states 'We recognize that there are apparent contradictions or discrepancies and problems which arise because of uncertainty over the original text.' BUT – even though we don't have an official doctrine in the field of textual criticism, it therefore does not follow that every philosophical assumption, method, criteria, or statement made in that field is *congruent with our doctrine of Scripture*. My concern in the present article is the lack of such congruence, and I share that concern with Dr. Montgomery. For more on the LC-MS approach to open questions and theological problems, see Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (St

Louis: CPH, 1950), 93-102; and C.F.W. Walther, 'On Syncretism,' 'The False Arguments for the Modern Theory of Open Questions,' and 'Theses on the Modern Theory of Open Questions,' in *Church Fellowship*, Walther's Works (St. Louis: CPH, 2015), 81-143." --Martin Noland, "Why Dr. John Warwick Montgomery Is Right," 9/1 *Lutheran Clarion* (Sept. 2016), p. 4. n. 3: http://lutheranclarion.org/images/NewsletterSep2016.pdf



APPENDIX C: KLOHA vs. CLASSIC THEOLOGY

The Classic Position	*Kloha's Position*
1. NT texts chosen with minimal reliance on internal, literary	1. NT texts chosen primarily on the basis of internal, literary considerations

considerations	(thoroughgoing eclecticism)
2. Inspiration of NT documents based on their *apostolicity* (written by apostles or in apostolic circles)	2. Authorship of NT documents unimportant revelationally, since "if a text preaches Christ, it *is* apostolic"
3. Inspiration of NT documents a once-for-all act, limited to the apostolic company, including St Paul (accepted as a genuine Apostle by the original apostles); *Scripture critiques the church*	3. Inspiration is a continuous process in the history of the church; guided by the Holy Spirit; the church guarantees that the text is indeed revelatory[34]
4. Original autographs of NT writings inerrant; best texts approximate the autographs	4. "We now have a text of the New Testament that makes no claim to being fixed and stable, for it is subject to continuous improvement and change"
5. The Scriptures are correct in all their assertions, not just when they present the gospel (vs. gospel reductionism)	5. Textual errors are unimportant as long as "Christ is preached"
6. The Scriptures are defensible as divine revelation to an unbelieving world	6. "Proving" Christian revelation is "self-referential" and "self-serving" (Kloha a *fideist*)

APPENDIX D. EPISTEMOLOGICAL FALLACIES IN ASSERTING BIBLICAL INERRANCY

A. The Common Varieties

1. Confusing inerrancy with canonicity

[34] Kloha relies on John 13-17 to argue that Jesus' promise to "lead into all truth" was a promise made to the whole church through the centuries--and thus that the church, by way of the Spirit, can presumably create the canon and validate on a continuing basis the scriptural texts to be accepted as revelatory. However, those utterances of our Lord were *specific to the apostolic company*, as 14:26 makes crystal clear (bringing "all things *to your remembrance*, whatsoever I have said to you"). The personal references are exclusively to apostles (Peter, 13:36; Thomas, 14:5; Philip 14:8; Judas 14:22); see also 15:27 ("you have been with me *from the beginning*"); 17:12 (Judas Iscariot the only one lost). Not until 17:20 does Jesus shift attention to the whole church.

2. "Secular" vs. "spiritual" biblical content
3. Gospel reductionism
4. "Hermeneutics as a cloak for the denial of biblical inerrancy" (Barton Payne)
5. Ecclesiology as a cloak for the denial of biblical inerrancy
6. Pneumatology as a cloak for the denial of biblical inerrancy

B. The Core Problem

Is it true that "as long as one asserts biblical inerrancy, it makes no difference what constitutes one's *epistemological authority* for that belief? Is there a valid parallel with the notion that salvation comes from a simple relationship with Christ, such that one need have no epistemological or apologetic understanding to enter into the salvatory relationship?

But note the confusion: Of course, to be saved there is no need to work through philosophical issues that do not trouble the believer; but if one does not, for example, hold to the factuality of Jesus' life, miraculous acts, preaching, etc., one cannot be "saved by Christ"—since one isn't believing in the only Christ who factually saves. The saved thief on the cross knew little theology, but he accepted the facticity of Jesus' declaration that they would be together in Paradise; not to have accepted that would have precluded his salvation.

Likewise, if one's basis for holding to "inerrancy" is of such a nature that it (1) redefines inerrancy to embrace de facto errors in the biblical text, or (2) grounds inerrancy in an authority that is fallible or subjectively indefensible, the consequence is an "inerrancy" devoid of meaningfulness. Such an "inerrancy" will be incapable of sustaining Christian faith in a secular world and will so weaken Christian proclamation that the believer will be unable to declare "Thus saith the Lord" in any persuasive fashion.

A few examples of how *not* to ground biblical inerrancy:

--I believe that the Bible is inerrant because, as an Irishman, I was visited by a leprechaun who informed me of its nature,

--I believe that the Bible is inerrant because of a vision I experienced and an angelic word confirming biblical authority.

--I believe that the Bible is inerrant because the Book of Mormon assumes its inerrant authority.

--I believe that the Bible is inerrant because the Roman Church maintains in the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent that it is such.

--I believe that the Bible is inerrant because the Holy Spirit guides the church across the centuries toward solid textual authority; de facto errors in the text or higher critical analyses do not therefore upset my belief in biblical inerrancy. [Kloha}

--I believe that the Bible is inerrant because that belief warms my heart.

C. The Proper Basis for Inerrancy

The historical Christ's position on the nature and value of Holy Scripture.

Literary genres—determined by the text itself or by "analogy of faith" (related text passages elsewhere in Scripture—concentric circles of applicability) OR (the higher critical route) determined by alleged "literary genres of the time" (i.e., external materials—cf. the Parol Evidence rule)?

Empirical method for determining best text—would it be just as fallible as church authority? Former is a *method* for finding truth; the latter is a presuppositional commitment to a particular truth-claim.

PART II: MONTGOMERY'S REBUTTAL TO KLOHA

Positive

--Dr Kloha cites an impressive list of Lutheran fathers dear to the heart of conservative Lutherans: Chemnitz, Sasse, Pieper, the Preuses. (It is noteworthy, however, that he offers these citations even when they are not in fact on point with the disputed issues to be treated in this debate.)

--His presentation today is very different in tone from that of his prior publications (Is it possible that Dr Kloha takes his audience's worldview into account, presenting material incompatible with biblical inerrancy to audiences not holding to inerrancy, and the reverse in contexts such as the present one? Is he perhaps *disingenuous*?)

Negative

--More interesting is *what he has left out* than what he has presented*:*

+ He glosses over the essence/the distinguishing feature of thoroughgoing eclecticism: its privileging of internal criteria over objective external evidence in determining the choice among variants. Note the citations corresponding to **notes 5-10** in my initial presentation.

Here I should perhaps clarify my criticism of the use of internal factors in choosing text readings. I made clear in **footnote 8** that I was not opposing *all* use of internal considerations—only those offering unrestrained discretion to the critic according to his literary views. Here are several additional items from Epp's list of internal criteria (cf. my presentation, **note 7**):

--A variant's status as the shorter or shortest reading

--A variant's status as the harder ot hardest reading

--A variant's fitness to account for the origin, development, or presence of all other readings

--A variant's conformity to Koiné (rather than Attic) Greek

--A variant's conformity to Semitic forms of expression

There is, in principle, nothing the matter with employing these more objective rules of the internal criteria—which differ markedly from choosing readings on the basis of a supposed consistency of the author's vocabulary and style, or conformity with what the critic supposes to be the author's theology or ideology.

Worth noting also are the potential conflicts in the choice of the internal criteria to be employed in any given instance. For example, non-Semitic-style readings would presumably be the "harder" readings. Do we, then, disregard the "Semitic" rule and choose a "harder," non-Semitic reading? A hierarchy of criteria has to be employed, but such a hierarchy is invariably *implicit*; it will perforce be chosen and applied *ad hoc* by way of the subjective judgments of the critic. This problem becomes especially acute when we recall that, for the thoroughgoing eclectic, *internal considerations always trump external MS evidence.*

The dangers are particularly great in the two areas we citied in our initial presentation: "A variant's conformity to the author's style, vocabulary, and rhetoric" and "A variant's conformity to the author's theology or ideology." But these are *the very criteria Kloha employs to argue for Elizabeth and not Mary as author of the* Magnificat.[35]

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[35] Martin R. Noland has suggested in a personal communication the following helpful rules for a proper handling of the external and internal criteria in choosing one variant reading over another:

-- (AGE) if a word or phrase comes from the oldest extant Greek MS, and there are no variants from that century in Greek, it should be considered the original text.

-- (GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN) if there are two or more variants for a word or phrase that come from the oldest extant Greek MSS, then the independence of the MSS witnesses indicated by differing provenance or geographical origins (if known) should determine which is the original text.

-- (GENEALOGY) if there are two or more variants for a word or phrase that come from the oldest extant Greek MSS, and such MSS have the same provenance or geographical origins, then the genealogy of the variants—determined by text types or the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method—should determine which is the original text.

+ Kloha agrees with Michael Holmes, advocate of "reasoned eclecticism" (cf. our initial presentation, **note 8**) that "hopes for some sort of genealogical or documentary method that will somehow bring clarity out of confusion are illusory" (Kloha's paper, pp. 15-16). This perhaps explains why the Editio Critica Maior and the Coherence Based Genealogical Method receive only cursory reference in two footnotes of the Kloha essay (notes 6 and 63). In point of fact, this revolutionary method, which will eventually be used throughout the Nestle/Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* and which has already provided the text of the Catholic Epistles in the 28th edition, offers a significant advance in text critical methodology. As Klaus Wachtel of the University of Münster's Institute for NT Research has said in his essay on "The Coherence Method and History": "Pre-genealogical coherence . . . is independent of any subjective element. It is based solely on the degree of agreement between witnesses" (*TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* [2015]: http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/v20/TC-2015-CBGM-history.pdf). This is not to say that the Coherence Based Genealogical Method or the Editio Critica Maior rejects the use of internal criteria; but these are employed in a better, less subjective, relation to the external, MS evidence.

+ In his presentation, Dr Kloha criticizes Bart Ehrman's argument that there has been "orthodox corruption" of early NT texts (p. 21). However, Kloha does not bother to mention that, in his doctoral dissertation, he himself approvingly cites Ehrman's argument in behalf of that very orthodox corruption! (See my initial presentation, **notes 4 and 16**.) Did Luther validate "orthodox corruption" theory by rejecting I John 5:7? Certainly not, for that verse is properly to be rejected owing to its appearance only in eight late MSS (none of them earlier than A.D. 1215, and four of them providing the reading as no more than a marginal note qualifying as a scribal commentary).

-- (MORE OBJECTIVE INTERNAL CRITERIA) if there are two or more variants for a word or phrase that come from the oldest extant Greek MSS, and geographical origins and genealogy are identical, then "the more objective" internal criteria may be used in order to decide which text is the most probable, with the alternates indicated in study bibles and Greek texts with apparatus—but subjective internal criteria, such as the author's alleged style, language, theological views, etc. should never be used to make these judgments.

+ Dr Kloha offers no repudiation of any of his previously published material—the source of the current concern with his views. Specifically, he apparently still has no problem with

(1) his assertion that "we now have a text of the NT that makes no claim to being fixed and stable, for it is subject to continuous improvement and change"; *and*

(2) his effort to substitute a continuous inspiration by way of the Holy Spirit's work in the history of the church, rather than centering, as do the Lutheran fathers, on the "single act of inspiration" through Apostolic authorship (which, he says, "leaves us vulnerable").

+ Only 2 ½ pages at very end of his 24-page paper touch on the **inerrancy** aspect of the topic, and he gives us *no definition of what he means by the term.* Does he believe that the biblical texts are *factually correct in all they say*? That, for example, the Apostle Peter is the author of II Peter and is speaking of his eyewitness presence on the Mount of Transfiguration (1: 1, 16-18)? How about the authorship of other NT materials, where the text explicitly names the author (e.g., I and II Timothy—or Kloha's favorite, I Corinthians)? Was Quirinius in fact governor of Syria and was there really a census at the time of our Savior's birth (Luke 2:1-2)?

--It is noteworthy also that Dr Kloha rejects the *higher criticism* without apparent awareness that his philosophy of *lower criticism* moves in precisely the same direction. The higher critic uses internal, stylistic considerations to discover allegedly earlier, "source" texts; Kloha (as his *Magnificat* analysis clearly shows) privileges internal, stylistic considerations to arrive at the proper choice of variants, and thus the true nature of the biblical text. He—mercifully—does not hypothesize earlier sources for the text, but he determines *the nature of the text itself* by employing subjective, internal, literary analysis. In both instances, the result is a "designer" Bible, the historicity of which is lost in literary "fit."

--Finally, let's look at *what he does emphasize*—at the very end of his paper (his page 24). Here we find material taken directly from the essay he delivered at last year's Lutheran Concerns Association's Annual Conference [2015] and is obviously so important to Dr Kloha that it warranted repeating on this occasion. Dr Kloha dismisses apologetic attempts to justify biblical inerrancy or, presumably, Christian truth-claims in general. I have

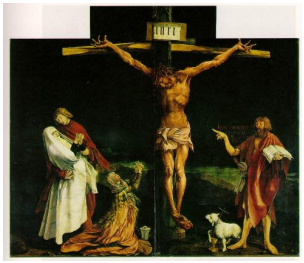
treated this in **note 32** of my paper, and I read from there. It also appears on the screen for your convenience.

Now, if I found myself trying to reconcile Dr Kloha's textual approach with biblical inerrancy, I, too, would doubtless have no choice but to jettison all objective apologetic argument and dive into the bottomless pit of presuppositionalism and fideism. Fortunately, if one doesn't go with Kloha's textual philosophy, such a perilous route need not be taken.

In conclusion, then, let us examine Kloha's assertion that all attempts to demonstrate the factual truth of biblical revelation are "self-referential" and "self-serving." In reality, these expressions are properly applicable, not to those who have a solid understanding of biblical inerrancy and present historical evidences for the Christ of Scripture to unbelievers, *but to the very fideism Dr Kloha substitutes for any kind of evidential foundation.* Offering evidence for Christ and a solid NT text shifts the ground from the believer to the Word, and is therefore 180° away from the "self-serving" or the "self-referential."

It is only when one sets dogmatic certainty against evidences that provide overwhelming historical probability, refusing to offer the latter to today's unbeliever, that the unbeliever will quite rightly see our evangelistic efforts as "self-referential and self-serving." Why? because then there is no reason to think that the basis for believing is anything other than the believer's personal faith, not an objective ground for accepting biblical texts as God's revelation.

Far from being "self-referential" and "self-serving," the defender of biblical truth *refers the unbeliever to Christ by way of reliable scriptural evidence.* His work, like that of John the Baptist, is to point *away from himself to the historical Christ* who died on the Cross and whose truth is attested by solid witnesses and solid historical documentation. (Cf. the crucifixion panel of the Grünewald altarpiece at the Unterlinden museum in Colmar, Alsace, France.)



Apologetic Finale

If one refuses to support biblical claims by evidence, one reduces Christian faith to the level of other world's religions and the cults. Two quick examples: one Islamic, one Mormonic (not moronic).

Some years ago, I debated Imam Shabir Ali at the Inns of Court School of Law in London. When pressed as to why he believed that the Gospel writers had perverted the original picture of Jesus, he answered: because the Qur'anic portrait of Jesus presents Jesus as a prophet, not as a "Son of God" and certainly not as divine. But, I queried, why accept the Qur'an on the subject—seven centuries after the time of Jesus and not written by eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus? Ali's answer: because the Qur'an is Allah's final revelation. Ali would not (and could not) offer evidence in behalf of the revelation in which he believed (in a 100% presuppositional, fideistic manner). Do we, as Christian believers and inheritors of Luther's replacement of inner, subjective conscience with the objective, perspicuous Word of God (as at Worms) want to present the biblical gospel as unfounded and unjustifiable to a fallen world, desperate for genuine divine truth?

About the same time as the Ali debate, two Mormon missionaries arrived at our flat in Strasbourg, France. I asked them why they believed in the Book of Mormon. Answer: because of the "burning in the bosom," i.e., the inner conviction of its truth. Sadly, they could not support the Book of Mormon by historical or archeological evidence, and appealing to Joseph Smith accomplished little (he never demonstrated deity by rising again from the dead). Do we want our evangelism to have no objective foundation and appear to the unbeliever as nothing more than another subjective claim to religious truth?

In broadest outline, here is the ***Christ-referential and Christ-serving*** **apologetic** we advocate:

(1) The NT materials can be shown to be reliable historical documents (cf. Montgomery, *History, Law and Christianity*)
(2) The writers can be shown to be reliable eyewitnesses (cf. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*)
(3) The eyewitnesses inform us that Jesus himself claimed to be the Divine Savior
(4) Jesus' claims are validated by fulfilled OT prophecies concerning him and by the miracles he performed, especially his resurrection from the dead
(5) Jesus considered the OT inerrant revelation and promised his Apostles a special gift of the H.S. to recall what he had taught them; apostolic writings thus have the same inerrant, revelational character (including Paul's writings, since he was accepted as a genuine Apostle by the original apostolic company—see II Peter 3:15-16).
(6) Conclusion: Jesus is indeed God incarnate, come to earth to die for our sins and offer us the way to eternal life; and all of Holy Scripture is God's reliable and inerrant revelation of the divine will for a fallen race.