INTRODUCTION

The introduction to the first volume of this series, which covered the Epistle of James, presents a detailed description of Beza's project to translate and annotate the New Testament, including the goals he set for himself, the methodology employed, and the tools and sources at his disposal. The highlights of that story merit a retelling in the current volume, but a new volume also offers an opportunity to expand upon it with new theological and philological dimensions. In the original introduction, the prefaces of the various major editions supplied the bulk of the material for reconstructing how these translations and annotations assumed their form, while Beza's extensive correspondence provided additional context. But much more waits to be said. The minor editions, with their greatly abridged notes and removal of the Vulgate text, feature a different preface, extolling, according to the title page of the 1565 octavo edition, "the authority of the written Word and the true interpretation of it." This description promises something less technical than what is found in the major editions yet more pertinent to the target audience of the smaller volume. Here, Beza exhorts his readers in urgent and impassioned tones to stay the course of reform and to shake free from a lifeless and ossified *ecclesia* in favor of one reconstituted and revitalized, now submitted wholly and faithfully to the Word of God.

The two prefaces reflect Beza's vision for his New Testament scholarship from two vantage points. The prefaces of the major annotations speak to the academic requirements underlying the effort to produce a faithful representation of the Scriptures, while the preface of the minor annotations calls readers to align their minds and lives wholly with the revelation received from the prophets and apostles. The philological precision heralded in the greater folio volumes merges

seamlessly with the primacy of the Word exalted in the abridged octavo ones. When considered side by side, a fuller, more complete picture of Beza's work and aims comes into focus.

We begin, therefore, with a review of the prefaces to the major annotations, supplemented with substantive new information gleaned from the work on the letters of Peter and Jude, and follow with a summary of the argument presented in the prefaces to the minor editions of the annotations from 1565 onward. Juxtaposed in this way, the two prefaces present a coherent message: the deep conviction that God has revealed His character, expectations, and activity to His creation through the Holy Spirit by means of the Word. Faith, salvation, holiness, and reverence all find their surest—and indeed only—foundation in that Word; apart from it, humanity cannot be restored to wholeness. What, then, could be more fundamental to the health of the Church than possession of an accurate form of God's revelation, both in text and translation? The Word is the starting point of everything the Church does.

Beza expresses this conviction beautifully and succinctly in his defense of ecclesiastical discipline in the churches in the 1590 treatise on the Consistory, an institution of oversight he regarded as one of the marks of the true Church. There he reminds the reader that even the Church's moral court must concede ultimate power for the transformation of behavior to the Spirit working through the Word:

> Lastly, it cannot be denied, except wrongly, that external civil punishments achieve nothing—unless the Spirit of God is added—other than causing people to abstain from sins, at least somewhat, from fear of punishment; and, as a consequence, the threat of punishment does not cut the roots of sin, but only the branches, which will sprout again. This is because the power of the Holy Spirit alone can cut the roots, working through the Word of God, when

> it is preached both publicly and privately, and as it penetrates even to the division of soul and spirit.

The Church's influence over wayward members or those in open rebellion can only go so far in restraining and correcting behavior. By itself, the Church cannot change hearts or save souls; it cannot penetrate deeply enough to effect true spiritual transformation. That work belongs to the Word of God alone as it takes root in its hearers through the power of the Holy Spirit. Above all, this conviction formed the spiritual and intellectual framework within which Beza carried out his textual work on the New Testament.

Theodore Beza (1519–1605)

After Beza embraced the reformation of the Church and while still at Lausanne (before moving to Geneva in late 1558), he undertook the project that would occupy him throughout his life: the preparation of a new Latin translation of the New Testament accompanied by annotations explaining his interpretive choices. Amid the political and theological conflicts that followed Calvin's death—the persecution of the Huguenots in France, disputes with Lutherans over the Supper, and controversies with Jesuits—this scholarly labor offered him both respite and an opportunity, not just to defend and manage the Church, but tangibly to serve it. His aim was to produce a Latin version that translated as faithfully as possible the best reconstruction of the Greek text available.

Over his lifetime Beza issued five major editions of this translation. The first appeared in 1556 from the press of Robert Étienne. The Vulgate text stood in one column while Beza's new translation from the Greek appeared beside it, accompanied by annotations explaining the rationale for his interpretation. The volume opened with a letter "to the Christian reader" outlining his motives and method. A second edition followed in 1565, now including a Greek text—essentially that of Étienne's earlier

editions—and expanded annotations. Its preface took the form of a letter to Queen Elizabeth, in which Beza repeated and refined the arguments of his earlier letter. Here he also mentioned by name his principal rival and adversary in matters of translation, Sebastian Castellio, whose Latin version of the New Testament had appeared in 1551. The third edition of 1582 introduced still further revisions. Beza enlarged the annotations and made additional changes to both the Greek text and the Latin translation. In the accompanying preface he reported for the first time his use of the Syriac and Arabic versions and of the ancient manuscript now known as Codex Bezae. The fourth edition (1589) contained additional annotations marked with asterisks in the margin and updated indices reflecting the expanded material. The title page also announced a forthcoming concordance of the New Testament prepared at the Étienne press with Beza's assistance. Such tools, Beza believed, would serve as guides to the true interpretation of Scripture's words and confirm the principle he repeatedly stressed: the Holy Spirit chooses words deliberately, and a translation should therefore preserve their meaning as consistently as possible.

The fifth edition of 1598 reveals a degree of conservatism in Beza's approach to translation. Perhaps external criticism for some of his philological cleverness, among other factors, led him to temper some bolder renderings in favor of safer ones that stayed closer to the literal sense of the Greek. We also see him striving for more simplicity and consistency in his translation between the last two editions. He is not above reverting to the Vulgate's translation or borrowing a word or phrase from Erasmus or Castellio, though quietly so, with no mention of the source of the change. For example, at 1 Peter 5:5, Beza translates τὴν ταπεινοφροσύνην ἐγκομβώσασθε with *modestia estote intus ornati*, that is, *be adorned with modesty within*. While ταπεινοφροσύνη normally conveys the notions of *humility*, *meekness*, or *a lowering*, Beza in this instance has stretched it to mean *modesty*, thus continuing the metaphor from dress. The

Vulgate, however, translates with *humilitatem*, a mental disposition of humility, and changes the governing verb to mean, not *adorn oneself with*, but *insinuate* or *recommend*. In the 1598 edition, Beza retreats from his more venturesome, almost poetic interpretation and draws closer to the Vulgate's handling of it with *summissione animi*, his preferred expression for *humility*. The translation now has less color but also provokes less controversy.

We cannot know what role his age played in the alterations. Though in general, all this fits with Beza's expressed desire that the translation do less interpretive work and instead allow the reader to draw conclusions based on a Latin that adheres closely to the Greek. For this series, the determination was made to present the 1589 text with translation, because this version offers the freshest translation of any of the editions. And even if the 1589 edition pushes the envelope of meaning too far, the contrast with that of the 1598 edition, the Latin of which is also included here, highlights specific words or phrases that Beza mulled over through the years. In other words, seeing the two editions side by side and including notes from each has real value. It sheds light on Beza's thinking process as he grapples with subtleties and nuances in the Greek words and how they should best be rendered in Latin.

Examples of this value abound, but one will suffice to make the point. At 1 Peter 1:13, the apostle admonishes his readers, "Gird up the loins of your mind, being sober, put your hope wholly and genuinely on that grace which is bestowed upon you in the revelation of Jesus Christ." This translates the text as it appears in the 1589 edition. The Greek runs as follows: Διὸ ἀναζωσάμενοι τὰς ὀσφύας τῆς διανοίας ὑμῶν νήφοντες τελείως ἐλπίσατε ἐπὶ τὴν φερομένην ὑμῖν χάριν ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The two key words here are νήφοντες (*being sober*) and τελείως (*wholly and genuinely*), translated in Beza's 1589 Latin with *sobrii* and *integre* respectively. Beza's selection of *sobrius* in 1 Peter 1:13—at least in the 1589 edition—

undoubtedly reflects the influence of Étienne's *Thesaurus*, where it is presented as the primary Latin equivalent in the entry for νήφειν. The entry traces both the literal sense of *freedom from the influence of alcohol* and the figurative sense denoting *a disciplined and lucid mind*. Taken in this figurative sense, Peter exhorts his readers to remain free from excesses of passion and to fix their attention on the hope-filled message of the Gospel. The entry further underscores those instances in which this notion of focused attentiveness comes to the fore, with Étienne noting that the term also denotes one who is alert or watchful (*vigilans*), circumspect (*providus*), and cautious (*se caute gerit*). He points to parallels in Cicero, who pairs *sobrius* with *vigilans* at *Pro Caelio* 74 (*Quae nisi vigilantes homines, nisi sobrii, nisi industrii consequi non possunt*) and Plutarch. Influenced by these examples, then, Beza rethinks his original choice of *sobrii*—perhaps someone would be misled to think of the word in its most literal sense—and he opts to change it to *vigilantes* in the 1598 edition. Now Peter is unmistakably advising readers to gird up their minds and *stay alert*. In this case, Beza has emphasized for his readers one aspect of sobriety, a clear mind that is vigilant.

In the case of τελείως, which in the 1589 edition Beza renders with *integre* and which translates best as *wholly and genuinely* (sometimes a single Latin word requires two words in English to restrain its meaning to one specific sense), we find a more complex set of changes. In choosing *integre* as the translation instead of the Vulgate's *perfecte* (*perfectly*), Beza argues for a more nuanced meaning: in the note he glosses *integre* with *solide et sincere*, that is, *truly and sincerely*. The note of the 1598 edition, which has, oddly, *sincere* at this place as its lemma for comment, further explains that τελείως carries the sense of *unadulterated* and *genuine*. Therefore, when in the 1589 edition he renders τελείως with *integre*, he is thinking about the integrity or soundness of one's hope. Hope based on false premises leads one astray; instead, it should be unsullied by false

teaching or a false understanding of God's grace. With all that said, the text itself of the 1598 edition reads, not *sincere*, as the lemma would suggest, and not even *integre*, which he formerly glossed with *sincere*, but *ad finem usque*, meaning *all the way to the end*. He places the phrase ambiguously between *stay alert* and *hope*, though in his notes he specifically rejects the Syriac translator's placement with the former (where in this sense it feels more natural) instead of the latter. Again, Beza has found this meaning as a possibility in Étienne's *Thesaurus* under the entry for τελείως and seems to envision that Peter is calling them to an *unwavering* hope or one that lasts *all the way to the end*. This stands now as a possible rendering, but since the text and notes offer three distinct possibilities, *integre*, *sincere*, and *ad finem usque*, we are left only to observe the process of Beza's inner philological debate but not the resolution of it. The resolution, of course, might have concealed the process, so in this sense we are fortunate to see the unfinished product. Such revisions illustrate the continual process of reconsideration that marked his work. Even in his final edition Beza was still reassessing his choices and refining his translation.

Translation and Annotation: A Herculean Labor

Beza began the translation project around 1552 while still teaching at Lausanne. Calvin hinted at the undertaking in a letter to Pierre Viret, noting that Robert Étienne intended to involve Beza in a scholarly project beneficial to the wider Church. Étienne had already produced influential editions of the Greek New Testament and now sought a new Latin translation to accompany it.

Beza himself later admitted that he accepted the task only after repeated urging from Étienne, Calvin, and other friends who believed his abilities suited him for it. Calvin read and evaluated the entire manuscript before publication, giving Beza

confidence that the work might stimulate others to contribute to its improvement. From the outset he envisioned the translation as a collaborative effort in which scholars would continue to advise him and propose revisions.

The project demanded enormous labor. In letters written during the 1550s Beza repeatedly complained of the limited time he could devote to the annotations amid his other responsibilities. To Guillaume Farel he remarked that he was completely absorbed in writing notes on the New Testament; elsewhere he lamented that the demands of teaching and ministry continually interrupted the work. Yet the task remained for him a welcome refuge from the controversies that dominated much of his public life.

In the preface to the 1556 edition Beza addressed two questions that he assumed many would raise: why produce another Latin translation when several already existed, and what principles guided the new translation? He began with the Vulgate, the traditional Latin Bible of the Western Church. Although widely revered, it suffered from numerous textual corruptions and often diverged from the Greek manuscripts. These problems, Beza argued, had serious consequences for the Church, since faulty translations could introduce doctrinal errors. Learned scholars had long recognized the need for correction, though many continued to defend the Vulgate either out of ignorance or from less honorable motives. Beza praised earlier attempts to revise the Latin text but found them insufficient. Some scholars had merely collated Latin manuscripts, while others consulted Greek sources without adequate attention to variant readings. In many cases editors silently chose the readings they preferred rather than informing the reader of alternatives.

Erasmus received particular attention. Beza acknowledged the immense service he had rendered by returning to the Greek sources, yet he criticized both his translation and his editorial practices. Erasmus, he argued, often

used the same Latin word for different Greek expressions and failed to recognize the significance of individual terms through which the Holy Spirit might veil divine mysteries. Moreover, Erasmus had neglected the testimony of Old Latin versions that sometimes preserved readings closer to the Greek text. Throughout the annotations, then, Beza feels the need to report Erasmus' reading and often critiques it—sometimes wondering out loud how Erasmus could miss an obvious point—though he maintains a respectful tone and is more than willing to highlight translations he views in a favorable light.

Guiding Principles

Beza articulated several principles for his own translation from these criticism of other attempts to translate the Scriptures into Latin. First, Beza sought to deviate as little as possible from the Greek manuscripts and from the text long received in the Church. While willing to discuss conjectures in the annotations, he refused to alter the Greek text on the basis of mere speculation.

Second, he adhered carefully to the *proprietas verborum*, the propriety of words. Avoiding unnecessary synonyms, he aimed to translate individual Greek terms consistently unless context required otherwise. This principle reflected the rhetorical teaching of Quintilian, who urged speakers to pursue clarity and precision rather than ornamentation. A single Greek word should ordinarily be rendered by the same Latin equivalent, seeing that the Holy Spirit often conveys meaning through the repetition of particular expressions. Third, he sought to preserve the Hebraic character of the New Testament's Greek. Because the language of the apostles was shaped by Hebrew idiom, perhaps, in some cases, even written in Hebrew first, Beza preferred to retain such expressions rather than replace them with elegant Latin paraphrases. In this respect he criticized Castellio, whose classical style often obscured the Semitic flavor of the text. Underlying all these principles was

Beza's conviction that Scripture speaks with a divinely inspired simplicity. The translator's task is therefore to preserve that simplicity and allow the profundity of the message to emerge without rhetorical embellishment.

In the previous volume, we mentioned several times that Beza was motivated in this task to create as precise a rendering of the Greek into Latin as possible. He sees a certain sloppiness in the Vulgate's interpretations, to be certain, but also a carelessness and lack of attention to subtlety in other previous efforts at Latin translation. The notes, with their detailed explanation of any deviation from traditional renderings, imply that he directed every bit of his philological learning and theological sensitivity, along with a deep reverence for the sacredness of the Scriptures, to represent the text in Latin faithfully. His handling of 2 Peter 1:15 illustrates especially well the extent of this effort. The Greek there reads as follows: Σπουδάσω δὲ καὶ ἑκάστοτε ἔχειν ὑμᾶς μετὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ἔξοδον, τὴν τούτων μνήμην ποιεῖσθαι. Beza translates: *Sed et studebo subinde ut vos possitis post exitum meum, horum mentionem facere*. The phrase in question is the last phrase in Greek, τὴν τούτων μνήμην ποιεῖσθαι. Modern translations have, essentially, *so you can remember these things*, which suggests a personal, internal calling to mind of what Peter said. Such also is Calvin's translation of the passage. But this interpretation ignores the Greek idiom completely, an idiom well established in the best authors, of the verb ποιεῖσθαι governing μνήμην plus the genitive (or either περί or ὑπέρ followed by the genitive), meaning *to make mention of x*. Herodotus (1.184), for example, writes, "There are in Babylon many other things worthy of viewing, especially the works of Semiramis and Nitocris—of which I shall make mention." The relevant Greek construction at the end is τὼν ἐγὼ μνήμην ποιήσομαι. Aristotle (*PA* 645^{a}32) has μὴ περὶ τῆς ὕλης ποιεῖσθαι τὴν μνήμην, that is, *not to make mention of the material*. Therefore, Beza's more literal and philologically accurate translation of the phrase τὴν τούτων

μνήμην as *horum mentionem facere* (*to make mention of these things*) overturns the Vulgate understanding of the Greek—to make *memory* of these things—that influenced so deeply later interpretations. Instead of creating memory, Peter, in Beza's understanding, hopes that he is leaving behind a community that interacts with one another in positive ways. In Beza's mind, the phrase evokes notions of conversation, exhortation, and preaching, which is more in line with reformed thinking and its emphasis on the spoken word. But it is also consistent with the apostles' constant refrain that believers should encourage and build up each other in the faith. Memory or mindfulness occurs in the communal context.

Annotations

Because translation inevitably involves interpretation, Beza accompanied his Latin text with annotations explaining his decisions. These notes address primarily the reasoning behind particular translations and the interpretation of difficult passages. Although capable of displaying extensive classical learning, Beza deliberately tempered such displays. He included references to ancient authors only when they clarified the meaning of a word or phrase. The annotations thus served two purposes. They justified Beza's translation choices and invited other scholars to participate in refining them. In this way the notes supported his broader aim of producing a Latin translation that might eventually achieve widespread acceptance among scholars and theologians.

In preparing his translation and accompanying annotations, Beza drew upon a wide range of sources. Among earlier scholars he acknowledged his debt to Lorenzo Valla, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, and Erasmus, whose philological work laid important foundations. At the same time, he exercised independent judgment rather than following them uncritically. He also relied on numerous Greek manuscripts, many of which

had been collated by Robert Étienne from the Paris library. Printed editions such as the Complutensian Polyglot likewise contributed to his textual comparisons. From these materials Beza attempted to determine the most reliable reading of the Greek text before translating it. Patristic authors provided additional evidence. Beza frequently consulted writers such as Basil and other Greek and Latin Fathers, recognizing that their quotations of Scripture could preserve ancient textual readings. He also drew upon the commentary tradition, especially the catenae attributed to Oecumenius, which gathered excerpts from earlier Fathers including Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria, and Eusebius.

Hebrew scholarship also played an important role. Beza made extensive use of the *Thesaurus* of Santes Pagnino, revised by Jean Mercier, Antoine Chevalier, and Corneille Bertram, to understand Hebrew idioms underlying the Greek text. Two scholars in particular assisted him in these matters: Johannes Drusius, whose expertise in oriental languages provided insights into Hebraic expressions, and Johannes Piscator, whose careful reading of Beza's annotations yielded numerous suggestions incorporated into later editions. Piscator's influence was so significant that Beza marked many of his contributions with marginal asterisks. Their interaction illustrates both the collaborative and competitive dimensions of Reformation scholarship: while Beza welcomed criticism, he remained the final arbiter of the translation.

Beza envisioned the translation as a cooperative enterprise within the Republic of Letters. Scholars throughout Europe were encouraged to send him observations and corrections. Letters from figures such as Geronimo Zanchi reveal the respect his work commanded among contemporaries, even among those hesitant to depart from the familiar Vulgate.

This spirit of collaboration shaped the successive editions of Beza's New Testament. Each revision incorporated advice from colleagues, reconsideration of earlier decisions, and

newly available evidence. Beza himself acknowledged that no single scholar could complete such a task definitively. His hope was that through ongoing discussion and refinement a translation might emerge capable of serving the international community of Protestant scholars.

The Manuscript Question

In the introduction of the James volume, we listed some of the manuscripts that lay behind Beza's editions of the Catholic Epistles, readings that Beza possessed through the collation work of the Étiennes while they lived in Paris. In the list we included GA 5, GA 6, GA 38, and GA 2298 and signaled that there were others. Without question, that list can be supplemented with GA 398, whose variants Étienne designated with ιγ΄ in his own editions of the Greek New Testament. Still, other readings cannot be assigned to just these manuscripts, especially in cases where Beza says (as in the note at James 4:2) that he has more manuscripts with a particular reading than found in the known list.

A letter written by Beza to Basel scholar Johann Jakob Grynaeus only deepens the mystery. In it we learn that certain maneuvers by the Duke of Savoy that threaten to cut off Genevan supply routes along the lake have prompted Beza to entrust his newly revised annotations to his friend in Basel for safekeeping. Étienne, he says, will not be able to begin work on the new edition—eventually the 1589 edition—at his press under the current stressful circumstances. What is especially intriguing, however, is that Beza remarks that he is also sending his 1582 edition, now collated in the margins against the evidence of "two manuscript codices of venerable old age." The two items together, the revised annotations and the 1582 edition with new collations, Beza calls his κειμήλιον, a treasure, and encourages Grynaeus to look over them to make suggestions. But besides raising the question whether Grynaeus did make suggestions

that found their way into the notes, the letter alerts us to at least two manuscripts used for establishing the text of the fourth edition that were not used in the earlier editions. As the editors of the letter indicate in a footnote there, we do not know what manuscripts these are. Did Étienne himself provide new readings that friends had sent to him, or had someone sent previously unseen manuscripts to Étienne or even Beza himself? Could there be other manuscripts that Beza had of which we are unaware?

The current work on 1 and 2 Peter and Jude has brought some clarity or at least offered some reasonable candidates as to the additional exemplars. In many instances, noted throughout this volume, GA 307 emerges as the only solution for identifying a manuscript that is unaccounted for in Beza's lists. For example, in his note at 2 Peter 1:10, Beza mentions "seeing" two Greek manuscripts that could be the source of the Vulgate's reading, *ut per bona opera efficiatis*, but only one of the manuscripts we have already identified above, GA 5, has the Greek text to support it. As in many cases throughout these letters, the only manuscript remaining in the list with this reading that Beza likely could have seen (or whose reading he likely saw) turns out to be GA 307, which is now Coislin Gr. 25 in the Bibliothèque Nationale. We know that the bibliophile and statesman Pierre Séguier owned this manuscript in Paris in the seventeenth century before it passed, as many of the manuscripts in the list above, to the Duke of Coislin. It would be surprising if Étienne was not aware of its previous owner, especially if it resided at Paris in the hands of someone else in the nobility or among the intellectual elite. Additionally, the note at 1 Peter 5:6 would seem to suggest another candidate. There, Beza comments that the Vulgate reads ἐπισκοπῆς, *of visitation*, after the Greek phrase ἐν καιρῷ, *in time*. He adds that two of his manuscripts also exhibit this reading, though he considers it an interpolation from 1 Peter 2:12. Now, GA 6 and GA 38 are not extant for this verse. GA 398 and GA 2298 omit this reading altogether, as does GA 307. The reading does

appear in GA 5, which is one of Beza's primary known texts. But what other manuscript reading does he see? The only reasonable candidate is GA 33, which does seem to underlie other readings throughout these books. Evidence shows that economist and statesman Jean-Baptiste Colbert owned the manuscript in Paris in the seventeenth century and that it eventually made its way to the Bibliothèque Nationale, much like GA 307 did. It is difficult to see how any of the other manuscripts containing the reading *of visitation* could have been known to Beza.

We should at least mention another possible candidate since we reference it in various places in the footnotes. At 1 Peter 4:3 Beza mentions a reading that he could have only reasonably known from minuscule GA 88. The same manuscript seems to support other readings in these epistles, though not solely. Although GA 88 was owned by the Farnese family and eventually made its way into the library at Naples, there were brief intersections between owners and Parisian society that could account for Étienne's knowledge of it. Perhaps future volumes will help to confirm this as a manuscript that informs Beza's text. For now, it will suffice to list instances where it seems to relate to a reading that Beza knows.

An Exhortation to Transform the Church

As noted above, Beza prefaced his octavo editions of the New Testament with a letter to the French nobility in which he exhorts them to accord sole authority in the Church to the Word of God. In this letter he places upon the magistrates the responsibility of defending the primacy of the Word against those who would seek to shape the Church according to their own perverse designs. Evidently concerned that political leaders might attempt to enforce a reconciliation between the opposing religious parties at the expense of doctrinal integrity, or even capitulate wholly, he calls not merely for a reformation of the

Church—if that means correcting a few obvious abuses but for the most part leaving the unscriptural apparatus in place—but for its thorough transformation. The lamentable course of the Church's development over the centuries—marked by the accumulation of humanly devised rites, fabricated doctrines, and an ecclesiastical authority imposed upon an untaught people—has, in his view, left the faithful remnant no alternative but to withdraw and return to the one source of renewal, the Word itself. The present moment, therefore, demands complete submission to God, the rejection of all innovation, and a resolute commitment to restore His Word to its original purity.

When Beza speaks of *transforming* the Church, he does so, not to reject the preferred term *reform*, but to counter the objections of Flemish theologian George Cassander and French jurist François Baudouin. These two along with their followers complain that the rebellion and splintering seen in their day is not an effort to *reform* the Church, but a misguided attempt to overturn or *transform* it into something stark and unrecognizable. They agree that the Church requires a degree of reforming to purge it of abuses that have crept in, but, to them, to rid it of its external rituals, icons and images, and clerical structure essentially strips it of its beauty. These ecclesiastical treasures, they say, rest on the authority of the apostles themselves and are transmitted through the various writings that compose the Apostolic Traditions. Their prescriptions for liturgy and discipline do indeed contribute to the beauty and ordered life of the Church and as such should be retained.

Beza frames his argument for ecclesiastical reformation—or, from Cassander's perspective, transformation—in terms of error. The Church has accumulated errors over the years, driven by ambition, malice, and ignorance and leading to corruption. Its leaders and doctors have instituted a plethora of erroneous and superstitious practices that damage the flock by turning their focus from Christ as a source of strength, help, and truth to ritual actions and signs that

supposedly have their own inherent power, to prayers directed at martyrs as more immediate support in times of trouble, and to fabricated doctrines that fill the people's minds with superstitions. Councils and respected Fathers, he laments, have issued false decrees and canons, while Satan himself has presided over some of their deliberations. He points to several causes for this rot that seeped into the Church, including, at the forefront, the devotion to Greek philosophy. Ancient pagan thought, especially doctrines of Plato and Aristotle, began to influence Christian doctrine (against the warnings of Colossians 2:8) to become speculative in many areas, adopting, by Plato's influence, a notion of Purgatory, and by Aristotle's influence, a false understanding of human autonomy and the nature of contingency. Added to these are practices and teachings whose effect is to strike at the foundations of salvation: indulgences, the supremacy of the pope, and the use of merits. Also, allegorical interpretations of Scripture proliferated under the influence of Origen, whom some disliked, but many respected because of his knowledge of languages and his intellect. Due to him, people began to treat Scripture as one long allegory, thus opening it up to all sorts of abuse. While this was going on in the East, he continues, in the Latin West Pelagius and Donatus arose to plague the Church with false doctrines, though graciously the Lord sent Augustine to preserve the chief points of religion. At the same time, however, superstitions even beyond those already mentioned were growing in the Church (though not universally), namely, the excessive adoration of monks and the rule of celibacy, which even Jerome endorsed.

Beza declares that the Church has a sure remedy against such corruption and ignorance, and it comes directly from God Himself. God provided the one norm for judging heresies and the single reliable standard for correcting the accumulated errors of the Church when he spoke through his prophets and apostles in Scripture. The Roman Catholics believe that their mealy God descends to take the form of bread and wine in the Eucharist, but

while there he remains mute. What kind of God does not speak, Beza asks? But, he explains, we do not need him to speak now when he has already spoken so clearly for centuries, and we have a record of it in our hands. Scripture holds the answer to all doctrinal questions and is the standard of all things. Yet it is not the Church or tradition that judges its interpretation; Scripture interprets Scripture, and God explains God. We must therefore adhere to apostolic teaching as it appears in the Word, passed down for centuries, not a succession of persons nor a long string of traditions. Traditions do not override Scripture, he adds; no, they fear it.

Someone may object that the Fathers and their interpretations should stand as the standard of ecclesiastical practice and doctrine. They have antiquity and authority on their side. But what Fathers? Baudouin, Beza notes, argues that we should favor the doctrines and rites from the time of Theodosius the Great in the fourth century, when, according to Baudouin, the greatest of the Fathers lived. Beza counters that these Fathers in no way always agree with one another and some even contradict themselves! Others either promoted ideas such as Purgatory that have no basis in Scripture or instituted rules and practices that suited their own time but not necessarily later ones. Scripture remains the test in either case: in Acts 17:11 the Bereans earn praise for examining even Paul's words against the Scriptures to judge their validity. The *agape* feasts of the early Church, for example, began as an act of unity and love, but soon certain wicked people began to abuse them for their own delight and prestige. In that case, Beza says, the Church had to revoke them, understanding that some things have an appropriate time or place that does not hold universally. But why even introduce new ceremonies when Jesus came to abolish the ceremonies of Moses? Cassander retorts that such ceremonies preserve the Church's beauty, provided that the Church appoints monitors to ensure that "no one strays from the king's highway"—that is, that the ceremonies lead no one into corruption or superstition.

Under these conditions, they serve to adorn the bride of Christ. But, Beza says, it is better to remove suspect ceremonies than try to keep them safe with monitors. Let Jesus and the apostles set the pattern for the Church; that represents its most beautiful face. As for the argument based on antiquity, when certain practices and teachings were introduced, Beza notes, they too were innovations at the time and were no more valid than any subsequent innovation, unless they withstand scrutiny under the Word. If someone brings in non-scriptural practices, they are, in fact, overthrowing the Word, not obeying it.

In the end, Beza argues, we must learn to trust that the Holy Spirit gave His people what they need for faith and life. Thus, after lamenting the many false prophets and Antichrists that have sown confusion in the churches, he goes on to extol the Word as the single remedy for restoring the Church to God's truth. He writes:

> But one would be hard pressed to find reliable remedies for these diseases unless he understands their causes. Numerous though they are, they all flow forth, as it were, from a single fountainhead, that is, from the fact that people have turned away from the Word of God (by which I mean that Word contained in the books of the prophets and apostles) to their own inventions. You see, once that light is withdrawn—the one who cannot see that it holds a unique and wholly singular place in the Church of God obviously sees nothing at all—what else could have resulted than that the blind wander in darkness?"

It may seem reasonable, he adds, to counter that the broad consensus of the Church should hold sway, since, after all, that is what *Catholic* means. But, Beza responds, this only raises another question: which version of this supposed consensus should we follow, when the councils, the ancient canons, and the orthodox Fathers do not always agree? We must instead change our way of thinking, judging traditions and ceremonies not by

authority or antiquity, but by the Word of God alone—the one standard by which the faithful can discern false prophets. The Fathers, doctors, and councils remain valuable resources for the Church, and their teachings and decisions merit careful study, but they too must be tested against the Word. They may *confirm* doctrines found in God's Word, to be sure, but they cannot *create* new ones. To do so is the role of Satan himself.

This means, then, that God's people should diligently study the Word to the best of their ability and align their lives and thinking to it. Meanwhile, though, the flock should be aware of false prophets and know that controversies always plague the Church; apostates like Baudouin will try to seduce God's people to return to Satan's innovations; heretics like the Antitrinitarians and Anabaptists will continue to trick the unlearned with unskilled interpretations of Scripture. When in doubt, Christians should take refuge in the Word.

Now, if the Word stands as the arbiter of Church doctrine and practice, and if even Christ himself refuted heresy by quoting Scripture, it stands to reason that the Church needs to possess as sound a copy of it as possible, a copy as faithful to what the prophets and apostles themselves wrote as the surviving manuscripts will allow. And for those who have not mastered the original languages, the Church benefits greatly from having a translation that renders those languages accurately into the language that crosses borders and is known by many, that is, Latin. Yet, Beza acknowledges, the Church already has a Latin version, the Vulgate, that everyone has adopted. Why does the Church need a new version?

In response to that question, Beza reiterates many of the principles already articulated in the prefaces to the major editions of his annotations to explain both his vision for a new Latin translation of the Bible and the method by which he pursued it. As stated above, we treated these arguments at length in the introduction to the James volume. At the center of his defense, though, lies a striking self-awareness regarding the

historical moment in which he lived. Powerful intellectual and spiritual currents had converged in this age and, indeed, had come together in him with remarkable force. In earlier centuries, the Church had grounded itself upon traditions and the authority of men, while almost imperceptibly weakening the supreme authority of the Word by failing to preserve its purity and accuracy and by diminishing its efficacy as it kept it beyond the reach of most believers. But now, equipped with the skills cultivated under his childhood teacher Melchior Wolmar, Beza had drawn deeply from the well of learning and theological preparation made possible by the new tools of classical humanism: a profound familiarity with the treasures of antiquity, a passion for recovering ancient manuscripts in the original languages, a reverent concern for the sanctity of the text, and fresh methods of reading and interpretation. Concentrated with unusual vigor and balance in a single scholar, these virtues harnessed the potential to bring the Latin Bible into closer conformity with the intention of the prophets and apostles. As Beza writes:

> This cause therefore drove me to come to the aid of those who desire a purer translation by comparing diligently and intently the various codices and weighing the sentences and judgments of as many learned men as I could, especially those of the linguistic scholars that this age has brought forth. I have no doubt that they exceed in number and surpass in learning any that the Church has produced since the time of the apostles. And to make it more profitable and valuable, I have added annotations in which I compared various interpretations and, to the best of my ability, strove to clarify the sense and meaning of all the dark places.

His ability both to establish the text accurately through neglected manuscripts and a long history of linguistic judgment and to elucidate the meaning of difficult passages positioned

him, in his own estimation, as uniquely suited among sixteenth-century scholars for such a task.

That said, Beza possessed sufficient humility to recognize that the task of replacing the venerable Vulgate translation, which had become deeply embedded in the mental reflexes and life of the Church, with one more faithfully reflecting the underlying Greek and Hebrew texts exceeded the talents and learning of any single individual. He therefore envisioned the project as one of continual refinement, nourished by the *Res Publica Litterarum*, that international community of scholars possessing linguistic expertise, historical insight, or access to manuscripts and variant readings in the various regions in which they lived. Though he could take satisfaction in each edition as it emerged from the press, his confidence increased with every successive revision that he was drawing closer to a translation shaped by scholarly consensus and capable of serving the Church across national boundaries.

Beza openly acknowledges that his translation and interpretation of particular passages rest upon what he calls "the chief points of religion." By this he means that, when confronted with difficult texts of Scripture, he turned to the established confessions of the Church for guidance. At first glance, such an approach might appear to reverse the proper order of interpretation and the one that he himself espoused. Yet the confessional formulations, at least within the Reformed tradition to which Beza belonged, were themselves grounded upon a reading of the entirety of Scripture and therefore sought to account for the full scope of the Holy Spirit's work of revelation. A rightly constituted confession does not establish doctrine upon a single obscure passage; rather, it formulates its theological judgments with the whole counsel of God in view. Consequently, instead of confining the interpreter to the isolated verse or pericope under consideration, the confessions provide sound interpretive starting points derived from the principle of comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Beza concludes the letter to the French nobility with an extended reflection on the role of ecclesiastical discipline within the churches. For many years he had advocated the establishment of consistories composed of pastors and elders charged with overseeing the moral and spiritual life of the flock. On this issue he engaged in prolonged disputes with theologians and controversialists such as Thomas Erastus and Sebastian Castellio concerning Geneva's rigorous enforcement of moral discipline—though, in Beza's judgment, the city magistrates frequently weakened its effectiveness through their interference. The editors of the French version of the preface remark that Beza "now turns to his favorite topic of ecclesiastical discipline, as if it is something that God requires of His churches," thereby giving the impression that, driven by an obsession for moral oversight, he has digressed into a matter largely tangential to his argument for a purer translation of Scripture. In reality, Beza is addressing one of the principal functions of consistory discipline: the suppression of heresy and the defense of the Word against every assault. If, as he hopes, the magistrates would take seriously their responsibility as guardians of the truth and defenders of the inviolable authority of Scripture, that is, as God's representatives on earth, heresy would diminish and the Church would possess in the civil authorities the very champions and protectors whom God had appointed for that task.

Beza appeals to the magistrates not to fall into the trap of compromise as an easy way to calm the societal and ecclesiastical disorder caused by these rebels against the truth. Compromise comes at the expense of the truth and does not create legitimate unity. Instead, it turns the flock from a respect for the authority of the Word and elevates falsehood to a position of dignity. In his letter to the churches of Rodez and Limoges (see Appendix 2), Beza censures Le Prévost, the "troublemaker" in question, for attempting to forge a middle path between those who distort the Word to promote doctrines about Purgatory, the

invocation of the saints, and the dormition of souls, reminding those churches that "a lie is overthrown by the truth, not more lies." But if the Church is to emerge from the long dark ages of ignorance and corruption, establish itself as a fortress of truth in the world, and flourish as the body of Christ, it must, to Beza's mind, recover and safeguard the purity of God's revelation to it.

Beza expresses his vision for a healthy Church elegantly and forcefully in an emblem depicting true religion as a winged, bare-breasted woman. The poem first appeared, without illustration, as a series of elegiac couplets prefixed to his *Confessio Christianae Fidei* (1560), where it served to symbolize the humanist's transfer of his literary talents from secular pursuits to the service of the Gospel. There it bears the fuller title, "A Picture of Religion, Not Papist, but Truly Evangelical," and lacks the woodcut image that would later accompany it in the *Icones/Emblemata* of 1580. In that collection, and in subsequent printings, text and image assume the following form:



Quaenam sic lacero vestita incedis amictu?

Religio, summi vera Patris soboles.

Cur vestis tam vilis? opes contemno caducas.

Quis liber hic? Patris lex veneranda mei.

Cur nudum pectus? decet hoc Candoris amicam.

Cur innixa cruci? Crux mihi sola quies.

Cur alata? homines doceo super astra volare.

Cur radians? mentis discutio tenebras.

Quid docet hoc frenum? mentis cohibere furores.

Cur tibi mors premitur? mors quia mortis ego.

The poem may be translated as follows:

Who are you, who walk clothed in tattered garb?
I am Religion, the true child of the Father above.
Why are your clothes so paltry? I scorn fleeting riches.
What book is this? The venerable Law of my Father.
Why the bare chest? This befits the friend of Candor.
Why are you leaning on a cross? I rest on the cross alone.
Why are you winged? I teach men to fly above the stars.
Why are you radiant? I dispel the shadows of the mind.
What does this bridle indicate? That I rein in unruly passions.
Why are you crushing death? Because I alone am the death of death.

In this dialogue between an inquirer and personified religion, many of the themes that structure Beza's exhortation to the French nobility already appear in concentrated form. The woman's exposed breasts symbolize the transparency and candor of divine revelation, over against a Church that, in Beza's estimation, had lost itself in a labyrinth of rites and ceremonies obscuring the believer's direct encounter with Christ. The book she carries exalts God's written instructions as the sole trustworthy guide for the faithful, the light that dispels the darkness in which human philosophy gropes vainly after wisdom. The bridle suspended from the cross—that single

source of the believer's repose—signifies the necessity of discipline and excommunication so long as Christians continue the struggle of putting off the old man and defending the flock against the assaults of Satan's agents. True evangelical religion, therefore, supplies all the gifts necessary for victory over sin and death, and every one of those gifts, from the right ordering of one's priorities to the attainment of true wisdom, is grounded in the revealed Word.

Conclusion

Beza's translation and annotations constitute one of the most ambitious scholarly enterprises of the Reformation and mark a new epoch in the history of New Testament textual scholarship. Drawing upon Greek manuscripts, ancient translations, patristic writings, and the labors of contemporary scholars, he sought to produce a Latin version of the New Testament firmly grounded in the Greek text and capable of serving the needs of the international Church. The extensive annotations underneath the text seek to clarify the linguistic choices and at the same time to shed light on difficulties, be they historical, linguistic, or theological. From the outset, Beza understood the project as both provisional and collaborative. Each successive edition revised its predecessor in light of newly available evidence and the counsel of trusted colleagues. Through this continual process of refinement, Beza hoped that a translation might gradually emerge reflecting the collective wisdom of the Church's most learned interpreters.

The texts translated in this volume belong to that lifelong undertaking. They reveal a scholar devoted not only to philological precision, but also to the edification of the Church, continually reexamining the text of Scripture in order to understand and communicate its meaning with ever greater clarity.