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Dear Dr. Price:

Your "review" of my book, as it appeared in a publication called: *Frontline*, was brought to my attention by a third party. Strictly out of a sense of professional courtesy I herewith offer you corrections to the several misstatements you made in this publication as well as additional clarification, which I throw in not because I believe it will lead to a better grasp of my position on your part, but for the sake of those in the future who will read both my book and perhaps your review of it.

Let me begin by saying that neither Dropsie University nor Purdue University would have accepted such a "review" with anything like a passing mark. Hence, one wonders what is the purpose of the exercise of some independent Baptists getting higher degrees from recognized institutions of higher learning when they can only use their acquired knowledge in the cause of partisan, political, rhetorical writing, rather than in honest, vigorous, and fair analysis of an opponent's view point (values I am certain the above named institutions from whence you earned your higher degrees promote and demand from their students).

Yes, you had better be "concerned about my theological and textual views" because in time they will be the utter undoing of the "inerrant autographs only" paradigm. This is because my views are not *my* views at all. They are the orthodox consensus that was given to us by the Protestant dogmatists in the 17th century, which the neo-orthodox since Warfield's day have abandoned in favor of a modern pseudo-orthodoxy.

You misinform your readers when you say I have an animus against independent-separatist Baptists as I make perfectly clear in my book:

*May this treatise **not** be misunderstood as a polemic against all contemporary independent-separatist Baptists. Some of my dearest and closest friends are of this persuasion. Rather I have in mind **exclusively** the radical fringe separatists, found almost entirely on American soil, and unresponsive to any other Christian tradition (*The Ecclesiastical Text*, p. 163, note 22).*

I then went on to make my point as clearly as possible by citing a Lutheran group that was every bit as insular and bad spirited as the Ruckmanites and D.A. Waiteites I most obviously have in mind in my comments. Why would you not make this distinction clear to your readers and instead leave the impression that I am a Baptist hating Lutheran? How very unfair of you.

I do not regard myself as a “maverick.” *You* regard me as a maverick and should be honest enough to say so. The pejorative term is yours, not mine. Not one word of anything I say in my book is particularly original but is rather a *restatement* of historic Protestant orthodoxy (and here I am not the lone voice but perhaps the first historian’s voice to be heard on this matter since the arrival of Warfield when a curtain went down on the 17th century traditions). That what I write seems to be a position of a maverick says much more about you than it does about me.

That you consciously misrepresent my position time and time again by failing to define my terms as *I* use them is reprehensible. I defend “the Textus Receptus as the authoritative text, based on the authority invested in it by the so-called reformation [sic] ‘Church,’” so you say. By analogy, are you not bound by the very explicit “articles of faith” written by members of your Baptist community which under-girds Tennessee Temple Seminary? Could you not have explained to your readers that it is *in that sense* that I speak of the Reformation community’s doctrinal consensus on the text? An honest reviewer would have since there is no other sense in which I could have intended this unless I was a Roman Catholic who believed in the office of the magisterium as a source of theological authority within the Roman Catholic Church, something utterly repugnant to a confessional Lutheran which you acknowledge me to be at the beginning of your “review.”

You chasten me for not confessing “inerrant autographs alone” as authoritative—but how very ridiculous! One of the major themes of my book is that such language is a major *defection* from the historic, orthodox view; such language both betrays the historically defended *existing text* as *infallible* and final, and it invites naked science to “reconstruct” a lost text, a reconstruction that is the very precursor of the “reconstructed” Jesus of the Jesus Seminar! Why would I want to endorse *that*! My question to you is why are you not using the historic language of “infallible apographs” [copies], but rather choose to use the

language of what I call the *first* neo-orthodoxy (well before Barth stepped onto the scene), i.e. “Warfieldianism?”

Why do you refer to an “alleged” catholic consensus on defending infallible apographs when in fact my book makes perfectly clear it was an *actual* consensus? This is blatantly tendentious, as any impartial reader would acknowledge.

Again you say that I say “the ‘Church’ provides the *Textus Receptus* with its authority as the infallible Word of God” because I quote the 39 Articles of the Church of England. Dr. Price, the Church of England broke from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century. This is in fact an orthodox *Protestant* as well as a *Baptist* position that the Church is “witness and keeper of holy writ.” Do not your Baptist pastors *tell* their parishioners that the Bible is the Word of God? Here is *their* witness. Do your pastors not make a decision *not* to use or promote for example, the *New World Translation* of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, but rather one of the several approved Bibles in the land; and do they not make deliberate decisions about not allowing certain ones and allowing others to be used from the pulpit? Do they not generally provide their parishioners with pew Bibles of a specific choosing, either by the pastor, the board of elders, or the board of deacons? Here they are “keepers” of holy writ. I am not a Roman Catholic. Just what is the message you are trying to give your readers?

You are offended that I acknowledge that the Church collected the various books of the Bible and made decisions about what was canonical and what was not. Who do you at Tennessee Temple teach were the instruments of the Holy Spirit in this process, Gnostics and Essenes? According to Eusebius, the earliest historian of the orthodox Church, my account accords exactly with what happened. Again, what is it you are trying to imply to your readers, that I am somehow a Roman Catholic?

You do not tell the truth when you say:

He [Letis] holds that the Church’s role in “configuring as well as canonising [UK spelling – it was composed while I lived in the UK, no “sic” required here] and transmitting the text of Scripture” is what grants it authority.

If I ever said anything of the sort I would be drummed out of my church body. I have never said this, in writing or in other ways. That is the position of the Roman Catholic Church. I am a Lutheran, Dr. Price, and so this offends both because it is not true, but also because you have besmirched the reputation of my church. Here is what I have actually said:

*Regarding the Lutheran dogmaticians Preus is careful to note, “only Scripture in the original languages is the **norma normans** [the only norm that norms] of theology.... The important parallel between Rome and the Protestants, however, is found in their both making **ecclesiastical** determinations as to the exact locus of Biblical authority [just as do Baptists as I cited above]. Specific ecclesiastical recensions of the Biblical texts were sanctioned.... As with the canon of Scripture, however, Protestants maintain that they were recognizing God’s providence working in and through the Church, while Roman Catholics maintained it was the Church’s authority itself which gave the texts their authority and sanction (**The Ecclesiastical Text, pp. 32-33, note 5**).*

Here I have made perfectly clear to *my* readers the very substantial difference between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics and you have quite intentionally left an injuriously false impression with *your* readers that I have made no such distinction. What is this but clear and simple intentional misrepresentation of another’s views on a rather important point, intended to turn readers against me and my research?

You are also simply wrong about there being no “Protestant Catholic Church.” You are, after all an Old Testament instructor, not a church historian. Every Protestant body that accepts the Nicene Creed is a Catholic body, because they accept Catholic orthodoxy’s definition of who Christ was. This also holds true for the Apostle’s Creed also affirmed by many Protestant bodies throughout the world where on any given Sunday you can hear the reciting of the words: “I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.” This, however, when cited does not have as its reference the Roman Catholic Church. This division is, after all, what the Protestant Reformation was all about! These are simple, basic, but all so necessary distinctions which by omitting you either leave the impression that your knowledge of such matters is seriously defective, or else by just neglecting to make them you leave a very deliberate false impression, either option reflects rather poorly on yourself.

Of course there was no settling of every minor difference between the various editions of the Textus Receptus, just as there are minor differences between any two Greek manuscripts of the five thousand plus that exist. That *that* text type *was* decided upon, however, in spite of these minor differences, is a basic historical point, as acknowledged by no less an authority than Kurt Aland:

*...it is undisputed that from the 16th to the 18th century orthodoxy’s doctrine of verbal inspiration assumed [the] Textus Receptus. It was the only Greek text they knew, and they regarded it as the ‘original’ text (**Ecclesiastical Text, p. 30**).*

Hence, on both points, that which is oblivious to you, i.e. 1) a Catholic Protestant Church with an agreed-upon confessional standard, and 2) an agreed upon text-type, do exist!

You are also absolutely wrong about what you say about F.F. Bruce. He quite clearly admitted that there was more than one form of the book of Romans and hence no one “autographic” form. Now you can choose to anathematize this conservative text critic and part company with him, clean his books from your library shelves in the seminary, but you do not have permission to distort what he said. You had better read that source again.

That body of scholars I have referred to in my writings who today have serious doubts about the possibility of ever discovering one autographic form of any book of the Bible are all legitimate authorities in the field. I am an historian whose writings I have left to be judged by the international community of scholars in my field. I do not write for an in-house community as I suspect you do from your concluding remarks. I do not have the convenience of quoting only those who already agree with me on various theological points. To make my case I must refer to genuine authorities in the field or on the specific point I am addressing. That you have misgivings about their theological stance might well be of importance to you and your community but it amounts to nothing more than *ad hominen* fallacy in terms of my argument, as you are well aware, even if your readers are not. *Why* should I not quote them, because they disturb your private and ever so *modernist neo-orthodoxy* defense of *only* the autographic form of the Biblical text? Should you not pay attention to what they say when they say this does not exist? Perhaps the orthodox Protestants who deliberately handed on one form of the text as opposed to another knew what they were doing after all.

That you understand me to leave “the distinct impression that the Reformation ‘Church’ regarded the *apographa* as more authoritative than the *autographa*” is one of the few accurate statements found in the entire review. This had to be the case because no autographs existed in the 16th century, so the authority of the “autographs” was nil!

Your lengthy quote from Jerome and the shorter one from Calvin says absolutely nothing about autographs over apographs. They are merely confessing scribal copying errors in MSS, something all MSS of the Greek N.T. and published forms (typographical in this case) share together, and something all defenders of the Textus Receptus from the sixteenth century forward acknowledged. No Church father or post-Reformation community ever posited the autographs over the apographs. In fact, they tended to say explicitly the opposite. Note for the record,

Dr. Price, what the 17th century Lutheran orthodox theologian, Dannhauer, said about the status of the “original autographs”:

...it is as needless and foolish to suppose that we must have the autographa today as to think that we need the cup from which Christ drank before the Eucharist can be rightly celebrated (the Ecclesiastical Text, p. 39, note 14).

Now why was he saying this in the 17th century? Was he a proto Rogers/McKim challenging the “Council on Biblical Inerrancy?” No! —he was replying to his post-Tridentine Roman Catholic critics, all of whom appealed to “the original autographic” form of the Greek and Hebrew texts, claiming the *Vulgata Latina* was based upon them and the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Protestants were all “corrupted.” So... we see that finally the Roman Catholic Church comes into play on this issue, but they are on your side, not mine!

It was only the Roman Catholics who appealed to original autographs in the 16th century, claiming their Latin Vulgate was derived from them as opposed to the editions used by the Protestants.

Finally, that Brevard Childs (with impeccable credentials and as one familiar with Biblical criticism in all its dimensions) appeals to the Textus Receptus/Ecclesiastical Text as the only *canonical* form of the New Testament that has ever functioned in the believing communities, must be significantly troublesome to one still on the misguided 19th century quest for “inerrant autographs.” It is, however, actually a matter of great comfort to those holding to these texts that someone as astute as Childs, a Yale University Professor of the Old Testament, has made such a judgment. The Spanish have a saying, *Dios me libre de hombre de un libro*. I say fear the one who has just enough knowledge to be dangerous. Listen to the *bona fide* authority: Childs is an absolute master in the field of the Old Testament and has judged that the received text alone constituted canon for the early Church! Ehrman is also a well armed authority, one who has blasted such a hole in the fortress of Westcott and Hort’s dogmatic assertion that no textual variants ever affects doctrine — a key tenet within the system of Warfieldian neo-orthodoxy — that those who have been duped into following W&H and Warfield would naturally find Ehrman’s evidence disturbing in the extreme. Did you know that he started out as a fundamentalist believer in “inerrant autographs only?”

It seems Warfield has fallen on very hard times, indeed! May his neo-orthodoxy go the way of all such false orthodoxies, sooner rather than later.

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Director