

#56, Jerome and the Latin Bible

By Alvin Petty
retired area minister

One of the most influential scholars of the Western Church was Jerome of Dalmatia (342-420 CE). He studied literature and rhetoric in Rome. He fled the Germanic and Eastern European tribes invading Rome from the North. He traveled in Antioch and Egypt, finally settling in Bethlehem where he founded a monastery.

In his early studies of scripture, he was very attracted to the Alexandrian allegorical method of interpretation, which always examined a scripture until it could be made to stand for something else that pointed to the story of Christ. For example the book of Ruth, Ruth became the Bride of Christ, the church, and her kinsman redeemer husband, Boaz, stood for the Lord Jesus Christ.

This type of allegory has some validity and was used to accomplish a great deal of good. For several centuries, it was the only way that many church people could make any sense out of the Old Testament. But it was simply reading the New

Testament story back into the Old Testament and missing its original message.

As one old preacher said, "Son, that will preach!" And it has and it will. But such allegorizing pays no attention to the historical context and the lesson of the plain or literal sense of the scripture's meaning for the people to whom it was written. And this makes us miss the lesson that was meant for us that would improve our humanity. Going so far with allegory misses the humanity of the Bible which is half its message. Ruth is really about the beautiful love and loyalty of a gentile woman to a Jewish woman that was an example of what friendship and love are really about.

But allegory did not claim Jerome for long, for he was a gifted linguist, rare in his day, for he was a master of the Greek and Hebrew language both. His greatest contribution was translating the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament into Latin. It was called the Vulgate, which meant the vernacular. It remained the standard Biblical text in Europe until the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century.

Jerome loved the truth he found in the Hebrew Bible. He wanted to exclude the Apocrypha, which was about 15 books written in the 200 years before Christ. Jewish rabbis excluded them from their canon. But Saint Augustine, Jerome's good friend, pressured him to trans-

late them and he did. They are still part of the Catholic Bible today.

Due to his extensive work on the Bible, Jerome more and more in his commentaries focused on the Bible's literal and historical sense. This today is the main focus of all good biblical scholarship.

One poor translation by Jerome was the Latin word *chose* for *repent*. It greatly affected Catholic doctrine and practice. Repent means to change your mind and turn from your wrong thinking and doing and enter into a right pattern of thinking and doing. You are to do this with abhorrence for the sinful self you have been and diligently seek to do better. But Jerome's Latin translation meant "do penance." Thus it became Catholic teaching and practice to confess your sins to the priest and do the penance he gave you. It could be something constructive, but sometimes it was simply saying a few rote prayers such as "Hail Mary" or the "Our Father." Sometimes this practice promoted poor morals and character.

The Vulgate was read in the Church in Latin for many centuries, even when the common people did not know Latin. You were to ask the priest for understanding. This led in Medieval times to the understanding of faith as believing whatever the Church teaches. This kind of faith was lacking in meaningful transformative power. What you believed was more important than what you actually did. Some people still operate this way.

When you're the first one up, be quiet about it.

Remember that a minute of anger denies you 60 seconds of happiness.

Include a recent family photo when writing a loved one.

To help your children turn out well, spend twice as much time with them and half as much money.

—H. JACKSON BROWN, JR.

Commissioners Charge Committee With Study Of Courthouse, Jail

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moved to the Appraisal District building when the Dept. of Human Services (a federal agency) moved to a new building.

The courthouse is not fully in compliance with the American Disabilities Act. Since the courthouse is considered historic, several ADA exceptions are available.

Gerber said he'd like to see all county offices housed in the courthouse. He added that a representative from the State Historical Commission will be visiting and making an assessment. He also pointed out that there are no present grants from the Historical Commission because their funding has been cut by the state legislature.

"I think the project is more than we five need to be making," said Gerber. Thus, the Committee. He mentioned a bright spot—"...interest rates are low."

Clara Vick of the Castro County Historical Society said that the Works Project Administration built the original part of the existing courthouse. She said, "We need to look at its preservation, but we need to fix things."

Gerber asked "How do you justify the expense of fixing something that won't justify our needs?"

Vick said that there is a way to fix the electrical and plumbing. Gerber again mentioned the encasement of much of this in concrete.

Gerber told the Committee member present to organize themselves and meet. Commissioner Smith asked the Committee to talk to the public and get their views.

A list of committee members was handed to those present: Clara Vick, David Schaeffer, Jim Bradford, Bill Settle, Gerald Franks, Coy Myrick, Stanley Dyer, George Bennett, Martha Ybarra, Pedro Gonzales, Mary Helen Flores, Chevo Lumbrera, Margo Garza, Donna Reinart, Dianne Parker, Maria Flores, Keith Hoelting, Dale Acker, Rene Castillo, Roger Malone, Bruce Schulte, James Baker and John Nino.

A previous bond election for a separate law enforcement center, held in the 1990's, failed by a margin of less than 20 votes.

To prevent or even reverse sun damage, one can exfoliate. To achieve smooth skin, remove dead skin cells on outermost layer of skin with either a chemical exfoliant containing alpha hydroxyl acids or betahydroxyl acids or a mechanical exfoliant scrub containing an abrasive material, such as sugar or salt crystals.

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Letters to the editor are welcomed and will be published as space permits. Letters should be personally written and signed. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Letters will be edited for length and libelous content. Letters endorsing candidates are considered advertising.



Weather
Neoma Williams
U.S. Weather Observer

| | Hi | Lo | Pr |
|------------------------|-------|----|----|
| Thursday | 57 | 25 | |
| Friday | 65 | 24 | |
| Saturday | 67 | 30 | |
| Sunday | 66 | 32 | |
| Monday | 57 | 32 | |
| Tuesday | 77 | 28 | Tr |
| Wednesday | 45 | 20 | |
| November moisture..... | Tr | | |
| 2013 moisture..... | 15.54 | | |
| 2012 moisture..... | 9.17 | | |

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