

**ANDREW WILLET'S¹ EXEGESIS AND INTERPRETATION
OF ROMANS 16:25-27**

Preface

Andrew Willet (1562-1621) was a pastor in the Church of England. He authored 42 commentaries in Latin and English on selected books of both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. This paper deals with a portion of his commentary on the book of Romans. The book of Romans was originally written in Greek. Willet's research and writing engaged the on-going debates over which of the underlying Greek manuscripts, still in a degree of flux among the Protestant scholars, presented the superior basis for the English translation. Referring to commentator's throughout the course of church history, Willet argued for a rendering that received the approbation of the churchly exegetical tradition.² Willet's Romans commentary is 746 folio pages in length with an index of the questions raised in the text included at the end.

At issue is a single Greek letter ω which is a dative³ relative pronoun, which translated means "to whom." The debate surrounding this pronoun is multifaceted, each approach's trajectory to make grammatical and logical sense of the reading. Grammatically "to whom" cannot be dependent upon the clause "Now to him that is of power" because of the intervening dative "to God only wise." Also, by adding "to whom" it appears as if the proposition "to whom be glory through Jesus Christ for ever" does not occur until after the dative is completed in "to God only wise."

¹ Andrew Willet (1562-1621): pastor in the Church of England; chaplain-in-ordinary and tutor to Prince Henry; Hebrew and Greek exegete; encyclopedist of Church history and exegesis; British patriot.

² Exegesis' is the transliteration of a compound Greek word, $\epsilon\kappa$ meaning "out of," and $\alpha\gamma\epsilon\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ meaning "to guide, lead." 'Exegesis' then is drawing out of the text of the Bible through grammatical, syntactical and other linguistic convention, the meaning of the Bible.

³ Dative is the Greek grammatical construct of personal relation corresponding to the English indirect object. In this liturgical formulation, the dative stands as the subject "to him" that is, God.

One perspective is to deal with the pronoun on the textual level by asking the question of whether or not it properly belongs in this passage to begin with. If not, the immediate grammatical problem is solved. This was the final solution within the Reformation tradition. However, if the textual evidence determines the pronoun to be part of the text some explanation must be given for the unusual manner of its use. If the pronoun is present how should it be translated and what sense would the translation make. Willet's conclusion preserves the pronoun in the Greek text but does not translate it for the reasons he cites.

The section chosen for this editing project describes what most disciplines would consider a miniscule issue of grammatical quibbling. This evaluation is not however the case. During this stage of the Reformation, and the ecclesiastical⁴ and social struggle between Roman Catholicism and its dissenters and separatists, the source of divine authority was hotly contested with the relationship between authority and certainty taking center stage. If every element of exegesis could not be historically, logically, grammatically or otherwise substantiated, no matter how seemingly minor the point, the authority of the sacred text as God's word became suspect and thus on spiritual matters and existential issues of the soul and conscience no certainty could be obtained and thus no faith could be exercised. The competing sacred texts, Latin for Rome and Greek for Protestantism underwent exacting scrutiny by opponents to determine the superior rendering and thus the superior theological and ecclesiological tradition. Furthermore, whatever religious tradition won the day would also exercise immense political influence in England and Europe. For these reasons the struggle over

⁴ Church related

grammatical minutia occupied the scholarly theological minds of early 17th century England, including Willet.

Introduction

A high view of Scripture held by the Post-reformation exegetes did not reduce their zeal to argue through the intricacies of the Bible's original languages and subsequent translations. To illustrate this point, a "troubling" grammatical question is raised with reference to Romans 16:25-27. The debate revolves around the presence or absence of the Greek dative case, relative pronoun ω "to whom." The grammatical form of this doxology presents a noticeable anacoluthon.⁵ Willet observes that the clause in v. 27 "to whom be praise through Jesus Christ" cannot be grammatically dependent upon the clause in v. 25, "to him that is of power," because of the intervening dative, "to God only wise." Citing Erasmus, who thought it was "great impudence" to omit the relative ω , "to whom" (which is found in most Greek copies), in order to clean up the grammatical construction. The quandary of this apparent lack of grammatical sequence, led Erasmus to conclude that the Apostle "brought forth here an imperfect speech." To Erasmus' summary, Willet answered that Erasmus had overstated his conjecture by saying that neither Syrian interpreter had the relative, or the Complutensian copy, which Beza followed in this passage.

Augustine's entry in the *glossa ordinalis* repeats the word "praise" or "glory" twice to mean "to him, that is of power, etc., be praise and glory, to whom be all praise." Willet calls this rendering a "superfluous supply."

Although Chrysostome includes the relative ω in the text, he omits it in his

⁵Anacoluthon: A want of grammatical sequence; the passing of a new construction before the original one is completed. In this case, the dative $\tau\omega$ $\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu\omega$ ("to him that is of power") is resumed in $\mu\omicron\nu\omega$ $\sigma\omicron\phi\omega$ $\Theta\epsilon\omega$ ("only wise God") and again in the relative ω ("to whom") as if the proposition begun after the dative had been completed. Thus, the previous datives are left without grammatical government.

comment, *lectionis haec est consequentia*, this is of the consequence and coherence of the reading and sense, rendering the text "to him, that is of power, etc. be glory." Willet cites Ambrose in support of this interpretation. Lyranus interprets *cui*, "to whom," that is, to Christ. Tolet, *cui*, that is, *ipsi*, "to him." Still Willet argues that the sense of the words fit well together.

In working through this grammatical difficulty Willet sides with Beza who held the relative, "to whom," to be a pleonasm, "a filling of a superfluous word, according to the manner of the Hebrew tongue." Willet cites Eph. 3:21 and 1 Peter 2:24 where the pronoun *αυτος*, "himself" is used superfluously, but says that Pareus gives a clearer instance in Hos. 10:7. In summary Willet concludes, "And so in this place, this word, 'to whom,' may abound and be superfluous. But the sense and coherence is that which Chrysostome followeth."

Editing

Except for font type, the text for this assignment has been reproduced as printed in 1620. Footnotes include short biographical sketches for each person cited. Scripture references are given in the original language. As noted, it was Willet's practice to follow Greek, Hebrew and Latin quotations with the English translation. Additional information supplied for the reader in the footnotes allows an historic, theological and ecclesiastical connection to be made with the grammatical findings of the exegetes cited by Willet.

The Commentary

23. Quest. *Of the doxologie, that is, of ascribing glorie unto God, wherewith the Apostle concludeth his Epistle in generall.*⁶

1. Concerning the order and placing thereof; *Origen*⁷ observeth, that wicked *Marcion*⁸ the heretike, who had corrupted the Apostle's writings, putting in and out at his pleasure, had quite cut off these last two chapters from this epistle; beside, there is another difference among the Orthodoxall Expositors: for some doe place this *doxologie* in the ende of the 15 chapter,⁹ immediatly after these words, *Whatsoever is not of faith, is sinne*: and so *Chrysostome*¹⁰ doth treat of it in that place, but *Origen* placeth it here.

2. *Chrysostome* observeth this to be the Apostles holy manner, to shut up and conclude his exhortation with praier: for it belongeth unto a teacher, *non solum sermone*

⁶ Andrew Willet, *Hexapla: That is, a sixfold commentary upon the most divine epistle of the holy Apostle S. Paul to the Romans*. Printed by Cantrell Legge, Printer to the University of Cambridge. 1620, 734.

⁷ Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, eds., "Works of Origen," *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. IV, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 223-234. Origen (185-230-254 AD): surnamed Adamantius was probably born in Alexandria; prolific and highly influential writer and theologian; writing samples include *Hexapla*, *Stromata*, *De Principiis*; advocate of the Alexandrian school of theological thought and formulation emphasizing non-literal exegesis.

⁸ Jaroslav Pelikan, "The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)," *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 71-81. Marcion (c. 160): heretic in Rome; regarded the Hebrew OT as unauthentic; accepted only the Pauline corpus and Luke (who traveled with Paul) in the NT; the high volume of material directed against this heresy in the second and third centuries testified to the continuing influence of Marcion's teaching. Adherents of this heterodoxy, according to Origen, taught "that Paul was seated at the right hand of Christ in heaven, and Marcion on the left."

⁹ Extant evidence indicates some ended the book after chapter 15 but Willet means chapter 14 as evidenced by the preceding verse and his reference to the orthodox expositors which include Chrysostom (as cited), Cyril, Theodoret, Ps-Theodulus, Ps-Poecumenius John-Damascus. United Bible Societies 3rd ed. Greek NT, 577.

¹⁰ Philip Schaff, ed., "St. Chrysostom," *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. IX (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 5-23. Chrysostom (347-370 AD): John Chrysostom "is the greatest pulpit orator and commentator of the Greek Church"; Chrysostom means "the golden mouth"; Patriarch of Constantinople (389-404 AD); prolific writer – homilies on *Matthew* and all the *Pauline Epistles*; falsely accused and banished in 403 and 404 he died in exile on September 14, 407.

instruere, not only to instruct by speech,¹¹ but to entreat also the divine helpe.

3. Three arguments the Apostle coucheth together, whereby he setteth forth the praise of God: *his power*, in being able to confirme them: his wisdom, in keeping secret the great mysterie for many years, and manifesting it now: his goodness, in revealing the same, and making it known unto the Gentiles

4. But concerning the reading of this place, it hath much troubled interpreters, how it should be joyned together in a good construction: because in the last verse, it is added, *To whom be praise through Jesus Christ*: which can not hang upon this clause, v.25, *to him that is of power &c.* *Erasmus*² thinketh it were great impudencie to put out the relative ω , to whome; which is found in most Greeke copies: and therefore he professeth, he can not tell what to thinke, but that the Apostle after this manner, *orationem imperfectam*, &c. brought forth here an imperfect speech.¹³ But 1. this were no such boldness or impudencie, as *Erasmus* thinketh: for neither hath the Syrian interpreter¹⁴

¹¹ Willet follows his Greek, Hebrew or Latin citations with the English translation throughout his English commentaries.

¹² Desiderius Erasmus, (1469-1536): humanist and greatest scholar of the northern Renaissance; lectured at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge; in 1516 produced and introduced the Greek NT of the Eastern Church into the West as a contender to the Latin sacred text thus providing the textual basis for the Protestant Reformation.

¹³ Zane C. Hodges, Arthur L. Farstad, eds, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, 2nd ed., (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), 506. This majority text places 16:25-27 at 14:24-26 and reads in v. 26, $\delta\iota\alpha$ $\text{I}\eta\sigma\upsilon$ $\text{X}\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$, ω η $\delta\omicron\zeta\alpha$; H $\text{K}\text{A}\text{I}\text{N}\text{H}$ $\text{D}\text{I}\text{A}\text{Θ}\text{H}\text{K}\text{H}$, (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 1976), 306. The *Textus Receptus* at 16:27 reads, $\delta\iota\alpha$ $\text{I}\eta\sigma\upsilon$ $\text{X}\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$, η $\delta\omicron\zeta\alpha$ omitting the relative.

¹⁴ 'Syrian interpreter' refers to the unknown translator of the Syriac *Peshitta* (150 AD), the Syrian translation of the first century Greek text, which in translation shows striking continuity with the Reformation Greek NT.

that *relative*, nor yet the *Complutension* copie,¹⁵ which *Beza*¹⁶ followeth. 2. *Augustine*,¹⁷ as he citeth by the ordinarie glosse,¹⁸ will have the word, *praise* or *glory*, to be twice supplied, in this sense: *to him, that is of power, &c. be praise and glory, to whom be all praise:* but this were a superfluous supplie. 3. *Chrysostome*, howsoever he readeth that word in the text, yet he omitteth it in his comment: *lectionis haec est consequentia*, this is of the consequence and coherence of the reading, and sense: *to him, that is of power, &c. be glory:*

¹⁵ Jaroslav Pelikan, "Reformation of the Church and Dogma (1300-1700)," *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 4, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 307. The *Complutension Polyglot* was printed in Acala de Henares, Spain 1514 but not circulated until 1522. It was edited by the inquisitor general and cardinal archbishop of Toledo, Francisco Ximenez de Cisneros. The Latin name for the university he founded was 'Complutum' and called 'polyglot' because it contained a number of languages in addition to the Greek. This edition of the Bible included in its fifth volume the Greek NT, the first printed NT in Greek preceding Erasmus' work.

¹⁶ Richard A. Muller, "Prolegomena to Theology," *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), 42. "Theodore Beza (1519-1605); studied at Paris, Orleans, and Bourges. In 1548, Beza visited Geneva, Tübingen and Lausanne, solidifying his connection with Calvin and receiving an appointment as professor of Greek at Lausanne. In 1558 Beza went to Geneva where he became an increasingly important spokesman for the Reformed faith and, ultimately, Calvin's successor (1564). His most significant doctrinal works are: *Confession de la foy chrestieene* (1558); *Quaestionum et responsionum Christianarum libellus* (1570); second part (1576). The *Summa totius christianismi* (1555) with its famous *Tabula praedestinationis* should also be mentioned."

¹⁷ St. Augustine, *City of God*, (New York: Doubleday, 1958). Augustine (354-430) was born in North Africa, receiving a classical education and teaching rhetoric in North Africa and Milan. After an early reprehensible life and nine years of Manicheism, Augustine's life was forever changed by becoming a Christian. Later he was consecrated Bishop of Hippo in 395. For the remaining 35 years, he wrote 118 doctrinal and exegetical treatises including the most famous spiritual autobiography of all times, *The Confessions*.

¹⁸ Richard A. Muller, "Holy Scripture: The Cognitive Foundation of Theology," *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 14. "Although certain elements of the Gloss were derived from commentaries written in the ninth and tenth centuries, the actual production of a running commentary on the whole text of Scripture belonged to the twelfth century and was the work of Anselm of Laon and his assistants. Between 1100 and 1130, the scholars of Laon gathered together all of Jerome's prologues, joined them to other prefatory material, and copied out the whole together with the text of Scripture and with a composite, running commentary consisting in marginal and interlinear discussion of the text." The *Glossa ordinaria* thus was the standardized interpretation of the sacred text. Over time, the distinction between of the commentary and the sacred page was blurred, a problem remedied by the Reformation exegetes. Gloss: A word inserted between the lines or in the margin as an explanatory rendering of a word in the text; also, a comment, explanation, interpretation.

so also *Ambrose*¹⁹: *Lyranus*²⁰ interpreteth, *cui*, to whom, that is to Christ: *Tolet*,²¹ *cui*, that is, *ipsi*, to him: but yet the sense of the words should not hang well together.

4. Wherefore, I think with *Beza*, that this particle ω , *to whome*, is a pleanisme,²² a filling of superfluous word, according to the manner of the Hebrew tongue: as he giveth instance of the word $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$, himselfe, used superfluously, Eph. 3:21.²³ 1 Peter 2:24.²⁴ but *Pareus*²⁵ giveth a fitter instance, Hosh. 10:7,²⁶ *succisus est Samaria rex eius, the king of the Samaria, of it, is cut off*: and so in this place, this word, *to whome*, may abound, and be superfluous; but the sense and coherence is that which *Chrysostome* followeth.

¹⁹ Philp Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., “St. Ambrose: Selected Works and Letters,” *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. X, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), xv-xvii. St. Ambrose (340?-397), Bishop of Milan (374); taught baptismal regeneration; bodily presence of Christ in the Mass; strongly held to the perpetual virginity of all women; and to the four-fold interpretation of Scripture. This hermeneutic comprised the *glossa* referenced above. See Muller, “Holy Scripture,” 17-18. “There we read that the four senses of the text are ‘*historia*, which tells what happened (*res gestae*); *allegoria*, in which one thing is understood through another; *trtopologia*, which is moral declaration, and which deals with the ordering of behavior; *anagoge*, through which we are led to higher things that we might be drawn to the highest and heavenly.” The three latter or spiritual meanings reflect the Christian virtues, faith, love and hope: allegory *teaches* “things to be believed” (*credenda*), tropology “things to be loved” or “done” (*diligenda* or *agenda*), and *anagoge* “things to be hoped for” (*speranda*). The *speranda*, it should be noted, could be understood either in a mystical or in an eschatological sense.”

²⁰ Jackson, ed., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 7, 99. Lyranus (1270-1340); French exegete Nicolas of Lyra in 1322 published a commentary on Genesis and in 1326 a commentary on Isaiah. He also wrote commentaries on Peter Lombard. His voluminous *Postillae* went through numerous editions and “enjoyed extra-ordinary popularity in the middle-ages.” The *Postillae* consisted of fifty books of running commentary on the entire Bible, including the Apocrypha, followed by thirty-five more books on *moralia*; the whole was preceded by three prologues. Lyra utilized the literal sense in his exegesis and had a strong connection with Rashi the Hebrew Exegete. Luther consulted Lyra for his interpretation of Genesis, as did Melancthon and other Reformers for their exegesis. A Reformation axiom read, “If Lyra had not played the lyre, Luther (or, those learned in the Bible) would not have danced.”

²¹ Toledo (de) fra Giovanni (or John of Tolet, or Toletus, or Toletto, or Toledo); made part of the Cistercion order by Pope Innocence IV; master in theology, July 13, 1275; Roman Catholic exegete and polemicist.

²² Pleonasm: the use of more words in a sentence than are necessary to express the meaning; redundancy of expression.

²³ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omega$ η $\delta\omicron\zeta\alpha$ $\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon$ $\tau\eta$ $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\lambda\eta\sigma\iota\alpha$ $\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon$ $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omega$ $\text{I}\eta\sigma\upsilon\varsigma$ $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ $\tau\alpha\varsigma$ $\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\alpha\varsigma$ $\tau\omicron\upsilon$ $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\omicron\varsigma$ $\tau\omega\upsilon$ $\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon\omega\upsilon\omicron\upsilon$. $\alpha\mu\eta\upsilon$.

²⁴ $\omicron\varsigma$ $\tau\alpha\varsigma$ $\alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\iota\alpha\varsigma$ $\eta\mu\omega\upsilon$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ $\alpha\eta\eta\upsilon\epsilon\gamma\kappa\epsilon\upsilon$ $\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon$ $\tau\omega$ $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha\tau\iota$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ $\epsilon\pi\iota$ $\tau\omicron$ $\xi\upsilon\lambda\omicron\upsilon$, $\iota\upsilon\alpha$, $\tau\alpha\iota\varsigma$ $\alpha\mu\alpha\rho\tau\iota\alpha\iota\varsigma$ $\alpha\pi\omicron\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\omicron\mu\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon$, $\tau\eta$ $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\upsilon\upsilon\eta$ $\zeta\eta\sigma\omega\mu\epsilon\upsilon$: $\omicron\upsilon$ $\tau\omega$ $\mu\omega\lambda\omega\pi\iota$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ $\iota\alpha\theta\eta\tau\epsilon$.

²⁵ Willet cites Pareus’ exegesis favorably throughout his commentaries but no further data is presently available on this historic figure.

²⁶ Hosea 10:7.

Printed by John Legat, Printer to the University of Cambridge. 1614

The Epistle Dedicatorie, 2 pages.

The Preface to the Reader, 9 pages

Certain advertisements to the reader (description of methodology), 1 page.
Commentary, 49 pages.

Proscriptum ad Amilum, 1 page.

A table of the principal matters handled in these three last treatises, 5 pages.

¹ Andrew Willet, *Hexapla: That is, a sixfold commentary upon the most divine epistle of the holy Apostle S. Paul to the Romans*. Printed by Cantrell Legge, Printer to the University of Cambridge. 1611, p. 734.

¹ Origen (185-230-254 AD): surnamed Adamantius was probably born in Alexandria; prolific and highly influential writer and theologian sampled in *Hexapla*, *Stromata*, *De Principiis*; advocate of the Alexandrian school of theological thought and formulation emphasizing non-literal exegesis.

Pleonasm: The use of more words in a sentence than are necessary to express the meaning; redundancy of expression.