Recovering the *Codex Argenteus*

Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie,
David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl and
Wulfila's Gothic Bible

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The *Codex Argenteus*, or Silver Bible, an early translation of the Gospels preserved at Uppsala University Library, is without doubt one of the world's most valuable and culturally significant manuscripts.[1] Dating from c. 520 AD, its importance lies perhaps primarily in its precious conveyance of the Gothic language to modern times through Bishop Wulfila's fourth-century translation of the Gospels, and the fact that its idiosyncratic script, comprised of Greek letters and runic signs improvised by Wulfila for his task, marks the earliest-known instance of any written Germanic language. As an aesthetic object too, the *Codex Argenteus* is quite remarkable: the silver letters that give the book its name glow out from imperial purple vellum, providing the viewer with a tangible sense of encounter with the alien splendour of the Ostrogothic empire of Theodoric the Great. So rich are the philological, theological, historical, aesthetical, and bibliographical treasures confined within its 187 leaves that the *Codex Argenteus* has inspired generations of scholars over three centuries to prepare transcriptions, editions, photographic facsimiles, commentaries, analyses, and estimations; and the Ostrogothic manuscript exerts a power and compulsion which is wholly undiminished today.

The silver binding

Given the scope and scale of the *Codex Argenteus*'s significance in so many important fields, it is perhaps unsurprising that relatively little sustained attention has been paid to its binding, a casing of beaten silver dating from the latter half of the seventeenth century (Fig. 1). The *Codex Argenteus* was housed in this heavy binding in 1668–69 by Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie (1622–86), the chancellor of Sweden and chancellor of Uppsala University. His purpose was to furnish the manuscript with a suitably splendid cover preparatory to donating it to the university in the single greatest cultural bequest in the institution's history. The *Codex Argenteus* was to be the centrepiece of a gesture of *munificentia* on 14th June 1669, when De la Gardie presented the university with a number of priceless manuscripts, including Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* and other works of Icelandic literature.
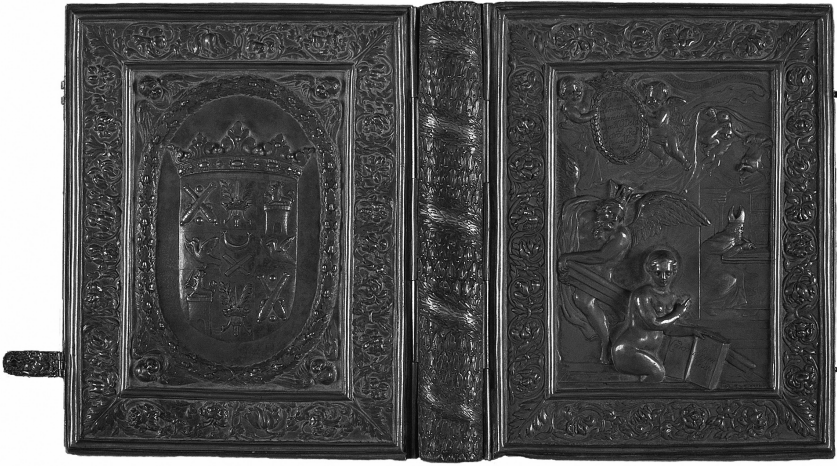
Fig. 1. Hans Bengtsson Sellingh, Binding for the *Codex Argenteus*. Silver, 1669. Photograph courtesy of Uppsala University Library.

The story of De la Gardie's pursuit of the *Codex Argenteus* is well known; his agent in the Netherlands, Esaias Pufendorf, had persuaded Queen Christina's one-time librarian, Isaac Vossius, to part with a manuscript that had formerly been in the Swedish royal library at a time when neither Christina nor Vossius were aware of its true significance.[2] When Vossius took the manuscript back to his native Holland in recompense for outstanding royal debts, the importance of the codex was recognized by his uncle, the learned philologist Franciscus Junius. As Junius prepared an edition of the Gothic Gospels for publication, De la Gardie got wind of this incomparable treasure, and through the conventional – if spurious – understanding of the Gothic people's Scandinavian provenance, appreciated the patriotic importance of the *Codex Argenteus* to an emergent Great Power. After some deliberations, Vossius accepted payment of 500 *riksdaler* for the manuscript, which was duly dispatched to Sweden.[3] On its way north, the ship carrying the manuscript foundered, but the codex was saved by the watertight wooden box in which it lay. A lead casket was provided for the second attempt to convey the book to Sweden: it arrived in Gothenburg without further mishap on 12th September 1662. Once secured, De la Gardie was able to savour his precious acquisition for a few years before endowing his *alma mater* with a bibliographical treasure of international prestige.

In providing a new binding for the *Codex Argenteus*, De la Gardie enlisted the help of the greatest practitioner of the visual arts in contemporary Sweden, the Hamburg-born court artist David Klöcker, later ennobled Ehrenstrahl (1628–98). Ehrenstrahl's design was then passed for execution to the court silversmith, the Swede Hans Bengtsson Sellingh († 1688).[4] Once completed, the manuscript's old binding, described as a

"shabby cover", was discarded, a decision lamented and deplored by later bibliographical historians.[5] De la Gardie's choice of binding was in many ways apposite; the precious material of the new cover alluded to the manuscript's common name, the Silver Bible. In addition, it formed a satisfying aesthetic unity with the silver script on the purple leaves. But it has also been suggested that De la Gardie was consciously imitating the heavy, costly bindings that encased important Bibles, Psalters, missals, and hagiographies from the early Christian era to the Middle Ages.[6]

In the absence of the *Codex Argenteus*'s long-lost original binding, likely to have been richly encrusted with pearls or gems, the silver binding by Sellingh restored an outward splendour to a book of commensurate value and importance. If it was De la Gardie's intention to recall precious bindings of past ages in the design for the *Codex Argenteus*, it was to be expressed in the register of Swedish Baroque taste. It was also his purpose to record his central part in presenting the book to the library: the back panel of the binding is taken up with De la Gardie's coat of arms, a seventeenth-century inscription of his role as donor.

But it is the front panel that draws the eye, and it is with this iconographical construction that we shall be chiefly concerned. The front panel of the *Codex Argenteus*'s new binding depicts an allegorical scene set within a floral border. It consists of three principal figures: that of Time, depicted as an elderly winged man lifting a grave-slab; a naked woman rising up from the tomb beneath; and, in the background, a bishop seated at a writing desk (Fig. 2). De la Gardie identified this last figure in his speech of donation from 1669; it is, he tells us, "Ulfilas […] shown seated, as if writing the said book".[7] He did not need to elaborate on the identity of the foreground figures, because as all educated contemporaries would have known, they represented the familiar iconographical pairing of Time and Truth. The scene is an enactment of the famous adage *Veritas filia Temporis* ("Truth is the daughter of Time"), an epigrammatic formula traceable to Aulus Gellius in the *Noctes Atticæ* of the 1st century AD, but of greater – if obscure – antiquity.[8]

According to this maxim, truth may lie concealed for a span of years, but in time will be revealed, a conception that implied either the uncovering of falsehood and wickedness, or the acknowledgement of unrecognized achievement, service, sacrifice, etc. The idea of Truth as the Daughter of Time was transmitted to seventeenth-century readers through collections of apophthegms and *sententiæ* – it appears, for example, in Erasmus's great *Adagia* (1500) – and through the burgeoning medium of emblem books.[9] It may well have been through the latter source that De la Gardie was acquainted with the idea. We know he was a careful and skilled reader of emblematic literature and had a large private library of emblem books, as well as elaborate decorative schemes in his many houses and palaces derived from emblematic sources.[10]

Fig. 2. Detail of front panel of binding for *Codex Argenteus*. Photograph courtesy of Uppsala University Library.

Certain elements in the Uppsala depiction of Truth recall an earlier formulation of the scene in an emblem book by Jacob Cats, the *Spiegel vanden Ouden ende Nieuwen Tyd* ("The mirror of old and modern times") of 1632.[11] In Cats's emblem Truth climbs unassisted from a tomb laid into the floor with a heavy lid like that raised by Time in Sellingh's panel (Fig. 3). As in the Swedish representation, she is depicted as naked and radiating strong beams of light. It was a conventional theme that also appealed to some foremost Renaissance and Baroque artists, including Botticelli, Rubens, Bernini, and Poussin. Ehrenstrahl himself painted a markedly different composition of Truth Revealed by Time in 1674; this
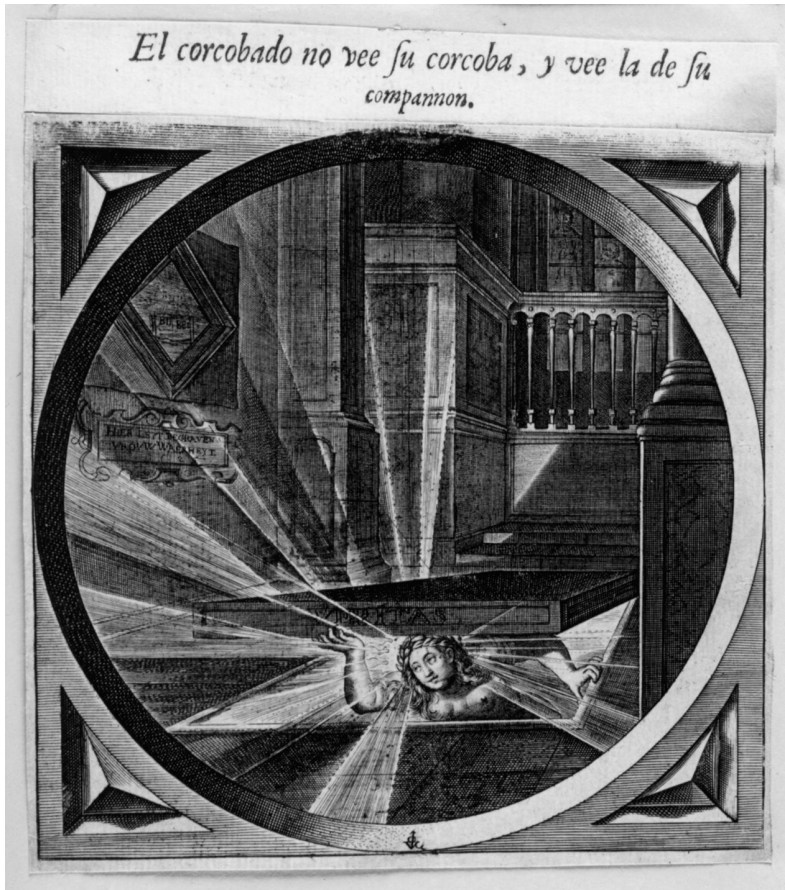
Fig. 3. Jacob Cats, Emblem from *Spiegel vanden Ouden ende Nieuwen Tyd*. Copper engraving, 1632. Photograph courtesy of the Librarian, Glasgow University Library.

later work included an expanded cast of allegorical types, with the introduction of Prudence and Justice.[12]

In Ehrenstrahl's interpretation of the trope on the Uppsala binding, Time, resplendent with vigorously fledged wings and with his traditional attribute of the hour-glass upon his head, raises up a heavy gravestone. Missing from his usual panoply of attributes is his familiar scythe, because that symbol of death and passing time is inappropriate to a scene of resurrection. The central actor in this scene is the young woman stepping out of the tomb; she is undressed because she represents the Naked Truth. In her left hand she holds a large folio volume inscribed "Codex Argenteus"; with her right hand she points round to a space behind her, a recessed room in which sits the figure of Wulfila. Subtle burnishing of the silver implies a nimbus or halo around Truth's head: her resurrection brings enlightenment. This intention is confirmed in an engraving of Ehrenstrahl's design carried out by Dionysius Padt-Brugge for the frontispiece to the

Fig. 4. Dionysius Padt-Brugge, Frontispiece to Georg Stiernhielm's edition of the *Codex Argenteus*. Copperplate, 1671. Photograph courtesy of Uppsala University Library.

edition of the *Codex Argenteus* prepared by the court poet Georg Stiernhielm and his Board of Antiquities in 1671.[13]

In this version, Padt-Brugge shows Truth positively effulgent with light, casting illumination upon the figure of Time, the manuscript in her hand, and onto the face of the bishop seated behind her (Fig. 4). There are grounds for supposing that Sellingh attempted to capture this effulgence through other means. The figure of Truth is raised in very high relief from the plane of the binding. At the highest point, the line of her upper arm,

the relief stands almost 20 mm from the field of the panel. While this is obviously dictated by Truth's foregrounded position in the composition, it also allows more light to reflect off the smooth surfaces of her arm, belly, thighs, forehead, and – of course – the precious book she holds. Time's uncovering of Truth is echoed in the background scene, where four winged *putti* lift a curtain to reveal the bishop seated at his desk with pen in hand. Two more *putti* bear up a cartouche similar in shape and form to that enclosing De la Gardie's heraldic achievement on the rear panel of the binding. In this cartouche is the inscription "Vlphila redivivus et patriæ restitutus cura M[agnus]G[abriel] De la Gardie R[egni] S[veciæ] Cancellarij Anno 1669" ("Wulfila brought back to life and restored to his native land by Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie, Royal Chancellor of Sweden, in the year 1669"). The inscription unites the twin themes of the overall allegory, the resurrection of Truth and the scene of Wulfila at work.

Reformation Truth

Scholarly analysis of this deployment of the Truth and Time allegory in conjunction with Wulfila has been slight.[14] Perhaps it has been thought self-evident that De la Gardie or Ehrenstrahl alluded to the act of donation being a patriotic recovery of a manuscript that had long lain concealed. After all, in his speech of donation, De la Gardie celebrated the fact that he was able to "restore [the manuscript] to the nation once more after it had been for so many centuries in the hands of strangers".[15] Now his act of magnanimity would allow the Gothic Gospels to assume their proper place of prominence through scholars' open access to the literary and cultural treasures of Wulfila's translation. Yet while all of this is uncontroversial, it by no means exhausts the allegorical intentions established by artist or patron for this important commission. By locating the composition of the binding in the allegorical and emblematic tradition, the artist and his patron were aiming for representational complexity, ambiguity, and polyvalency; as a result, the semiotic language of this scene encloses a more tendentious and involved *didaxis* than has been generally supposed.

The only scholar to enquire further into the allegory of Sellingh's cover has been Allan Ellenius, who briefly considers the Padt-Brugge engraving in his analysis of the frontispiece of Olof Rudbeck's *Atland eller Manheim* (1679–1702).[16] In this discussion professor Ellenius notes that the Time Revealed by Truth *topos* bore particular fascination for Protestants, who saw it as a cipher for Psalm 85, v. 11: "Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven", a verse regarded as typologically foreshadowing the Reformation. It might here be added that a text from Matthew 10 was understood in a similar fashion: "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be

known". In another passing reference, this time in his monograph on Ehrenstrahl, professor Ellenius observes that the figure of Truth in Padt-Brugge's engraving and Sellingh's binding should be understood as "synonymous with God's Word".[17]

It is from precisely this Protestant perspective that we need to view De la Gardie's commission and Ehrenstrahl's design, because the silver binding of the *Codex Argenteus* is not adorned by a theologically neutral allegorical scene. For all its splendour and craftsmanship, Sellingh's work articulates a robust and controversial interpretation of the Gothic Bible's significance, rhetoricizing the ancient manuscript as a proto-Protestant document, and re-imagining it as allied to the reformers in the protracted Reformation controversy. Evidence for the location of Wulfila's Visigoth Gospels in the Protestant, specifically Lutheran, milieu is signalled by the words set into a banderole at the extreme top of the panel in the manner of an emblematic *inscriptio*. The legend reads "verbum Domini manet in æternum" ("The Word of the Lord endures forever"), the text from the First Epistle of St Peter that served as the fundamental tenet of Lutheranism, the logocentric conviction of the primacy of Biblical authority over all doctrines and teachings of the Church. The mysterious cultural survival from the Ostrogothic empire is hailed as proof of the inexorable force of God's Word, but also claimed as heterogeneous with seventeenth-century Protestant belief.

In this way, the Silver Bible for its seventeenth-century custodians was more than an antiquarian and bibliographical rarity, valuable and awe inspiring as it might have been. An iconographical approach to the silver binding allows us to extend our perception of the reception history of the *Codex Argenteus* among its early Swedish patrons. To appreciate some of the semiotic encodings with which Sellingh's silverwork is imbued, we need to look more closely at the role of the Truth Revealed by Time *topos* in the iconography of the Reformation.

Appropriately, some of our evidence can be found – like Sellingh's relief-work – on the front of books, in the verbal or visual compound of printers' devices, to be precise. As Fritz Saxl demonstrated in his classic study of the *Veritas filia Temporis* theme, it first appeared in 1521 as the device of the Protestant printer Johann Knoblauch of Strasbourg, publisher of works by Luther, Melanchthon, and Erasmus, and whose name was later to be included on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* (Fig. 5).[18] His wood-block device showed the Naked Truth rising up from out of a cave and was moralized by the text from Psalm 85 noted above. The image made an early appearance in England in the mid 1530s as frontispiece to William Marshall's *Goodly Prymer in Englyshe* (1535), an egregiously vernacular prayer book by a zealous advocate of reform.[19]

This depiction is more iconographically sophisticated than Knoblauch's device; it shows the winged Time leading naked Truth from a cave with

Fig. 5. Printer's device of Johann Knoblauch. Woodcut, 1521.

the texts, "Truthe, the doughter of tyme" and "Tyme reveleth all thynges". Similar to this is the printer's device of Conrad Badius of Geneva, a publisher associated with the Calvinist community. The motto accompanying his woodcut emphasizes Time as subject to Providence: "God by Time restoreth Trvth and maketh her victorious." In all of these conceptions, Truth is implicitly linked with the agents of Christian reform; for long concealed, True Religion is revealed to the light. Printers, of course, played a central role in this dissemination of the revealed Truth. It was their mass-produced editions of disputations, expositions, and polemics that did so much to broadcast the radical agenda of reformed theologians.

The degree to which Truth Revealed by Time had become integrated into the lexicon of controversy is illustrated by a case of what cultural historians term a "war of images" that broke out in England in the middle of the sixteenth century. In 1553, Edward VI, sickly Protestant son of Henry VIII, died at the age of fifteen. During his reign, an anonymous balladeer had accused English Catholics of locking Lady Truth in a cage, but expressed confidence that Time, "the father of Veritie", would rescue

her from fraud and deceit.[20] When Edward was dead, his Catholic half-sister Mary, wife to Philip II of Spain, implemented the re-Catholicization of England, a move that drove many Protestant thinkers into exile in the so-called Cities of Refuge, such as Frankfurt-am-Main, Strasbourg, and Geneva. Mary took as her personal motto "Veritas filia Temporis", wherein she subverted the Edwardine imagery by presenting herself as the daughter delivered by Time to be true heir to her father's throne.[21]

This device was repeated on coins of the realm, the Great State Seal, and in her personal arms. It was seemingly in direct response to this self-fashioning that Mary's half-sister Elizabeth in turn laid claim to the notion of Truth, the Daughter of Time in her own iconography. She did not hesitate in taking over the imagery for propagandistic purposes; it appears as early as her triumphal entry into London on 14th January 1559, the day before her coronation. During the course of the procession, the royal party was detained by a carefully stage-managed interlude performed to one side of the route at Cheapside. The elaborate pageantry with Protestant overtones is described by a contemporary eyewitness:

> Between […] hylles was made artificiallye one hollowe place or cave, with doore and locke enclosed; oute of the whiche, a lyttle before the Quenes Hyghnes commynge thither, issued one personage, whose name was Tyme, apparaylled as an olde man, with a sythe in his hande, havynge wynges artificiallye made, leadinge a personage of lesser stature then himselfe, whiche was fynely and well apparaylled, all cladde in whyte silke, and directlye over her head was set her name and tytle, in Latin and Englyshe, "*Temporis filia*, The Daughter of Tyme" […] And on her brest was written her propre name, whiche was "Veritas", Trueth, who helde a booke in her hande, upon the which was written, *Verbum Veritatis*, the Woorde of Trueth.[22]

The informant goes on to describe how "Veritas" gave the book to the queen's pensioner Sir John Parrat, who passed it to Elizabeth, whereupon, "as soone as she had received the booke, [she] kissed it, and with both her handes held up the same, and so laid it upon her brest". The significance of this action was that the book offered to her was an English translation of the Bible, a book which had been banned by Mary. This was a carefully arranged display of reformed piety, because the queen had foreknowledge of the proposed pageant. When she had first spotted the stage, as yet empty of actors, Elizabeth is reported to have asked her advisors what entertainment was intended: "And it was tolde her Grace, that there was placed Tyme. *Tyme?* quoth she, *and Tyme hath brought me hether*".[23] Her response shows the ubiquity of the Time–Truth conceit, as well as her willingness to perform the mythopoeic role created for her. The layers of subtle iconographical significance extended still further. As David Daniell has sensationally discovered, the precise version of the English Bible presented to the queen was the 1557 edition of the New Testament printed
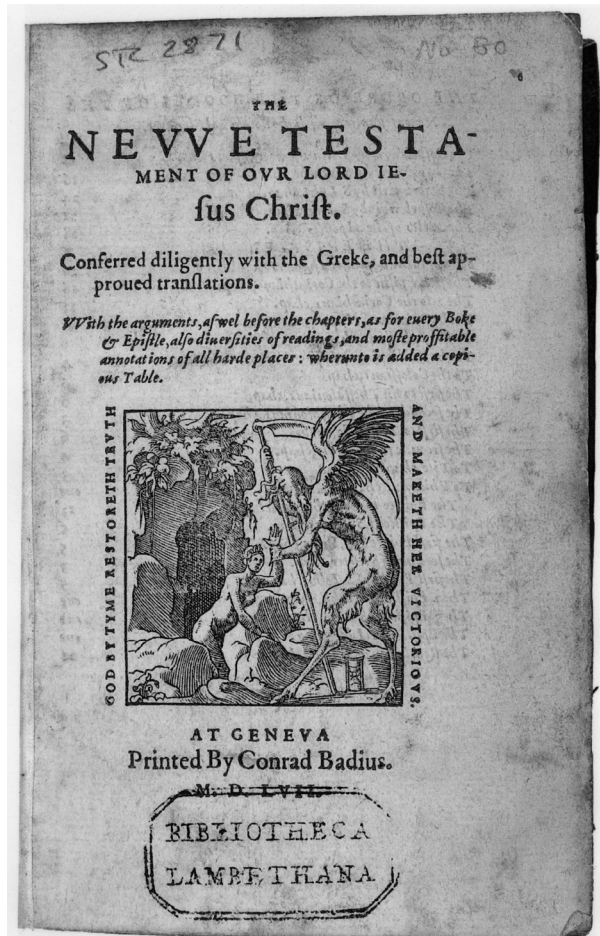
Fig. 6. Title page of *The Nevve Testament of Ovr Lord Iesus Christ* (Geneva, 1557). Photograph courtesy of Lambeth Palace Library, London.

by Conrad Badius in Geneva, which carried on its title-page his printer's mark of Truth Revealed by Time (Fig. 6).[24] Elizabeth assured the London crowd that she "would oftentimes reade over that booke".[25]

For reformers across Europe the essential truth that needed to be revealed was the contents of Holy Scripture, released as from a cave from the ecclesiastical language of Latin into the free understanding of the vernacular. Indeed this concept was dramatized in an emblem from the 1560s by the French Protestant noblewoman Georgette de Montenay, later adapted for English readers by Geffrey Whitney.[26] In this emblem, de Montenay shows an open Bible borne aloft by divine wings, tearing the book from chains binding it to Satan lurking below in a cave (Fig. 7). In Whitney's *subscriptio* we learn that "Thovghe Sathan strive, with all his maine, and mighte, / To hide the truthe, and dimme the lawe deuine:

Fig. 7. Georgette de Montenay, Emblem from *Emblemes ou devises chrestiennes*, second edition. Copper engraving, 1571. Photograph courtesy of the Librarian, Glasgow University Library.

/ Yet to his worde, the Lorde doth giue such lighte, / That to the East, and West, the same doth shine". It might even be possible to suggest that the triumph of *Veritas invicta* ("Invincible Truth") is reiterated through the architectonics of the plate, where the inclines of the hellish ravine, and the radiance of the Holy Book, combine to present a giant "V", an encoding of the *Veritas* theme.

The controversy between the reformers and Rome concerning free or mediated access to the Bible was virulent and divisive. The intractability of the problem was sealed by the pronouncement issued by the Council of Trent on 8th April 1546 prescribing that the Latin Vulgate translation of St Jerome should "be regarded as authoritative in public lectures, disputations, sermons, and expository discourses, and that no one may make bold to presume to reject it on any pretext".[27] It is not necessary to outline the positions adopted by competing theologians in this dispute; it is enough to observe the hostility felt by one side towards the impenetrability and textual corruptions of the Vulgate, and by the other over the interpretative liberties taken in vernacular translations of scripture. Some of this debate is reflected in the design set down by Ehrenstrahl for the

binding of Wulfila's translation of the Gospels into his vernacular Gothic tongue.

This can be discerned in the manner in which the Gothic bishop is portrayed in Ehrenstrahl's composition. He is seated at a writing desk, eagerly bent forward as he works on the large folio volume set before him. Behind him stands an arched doorway – perhaps echoing the textual "portals" that are such a conspicuous feature within the codex itself – and a wall lined with bookshelves. In the manner of librarianship of the early modern period, the clasped books are displayed with fore-edges outermost. Of course, this general iconography recalls traditional representations of the evangelists, the holy writers that Wulfila emulates in his version of the Gospels.

In addition, as evangelist to the Gothic people, he assumes local significance as an apostle. But certain factors in this representation of Wulfila compel us to see another iconographic template behind the image of the scholar in his study. There seems little doubt that in presenting the bishop within this configuration, Ehrenstrahl was consciously appropriating the iconographical terms of a well-known and long-established artistic tradition within medieval and early modern sacred painting: the visual trope of St Jerome in His Study. An identical semiotic matrix is common to both: seated scholar, translator, or priest, desk, manuscript, pen, bookshelves, ecclesiastical clothing, enclosed space, seclusion. In the seventeenth-century Swedish context this paradigmatic representation of the holy man inspired by God to labour over an authoritative and enduring scriptural text is appropriated and reinvented. The renovated image displaces Jerome from his sanctified position as conduit of God's Word to mankind; an alternative narrative of divine inspiration granted to Wulfila supplants the traditions of the Roman Church, which – ironically – had argued that Jerome's text was written before "Roman eloquence was corrupted […] by Gothic barbarism".[28]

While men with literary and intellectual reputations had from antiquity been depicted reading books at desks within studies or scriptoria, painters had focused specifically upon the figure of Jerome in this guise with particular frequency from the end of the fifteenth century. It was to become an ever-more popular trope throughout the sixteenth century, and was treated in the seventeenth by such figures as Caravaggio, Rubens, De la Tour, and Vouet. But perhaps the most typical configurations of the theme conformed to the contours laid down by artists like Nicolás Francés, Ghirlandaio, Antonello da Messina, Van Eyck, and Dürer (Fig. 8). These representations show Jerome, the *doctus maximus*, seated at his desk in the act of reading or writing.[29]

Symbols of learning surround him in the form of books and writing utensils, and often in the Catholic lexicon, evidence too of saintly miracles associated with his life, such as the lion from whose paw Jerome had
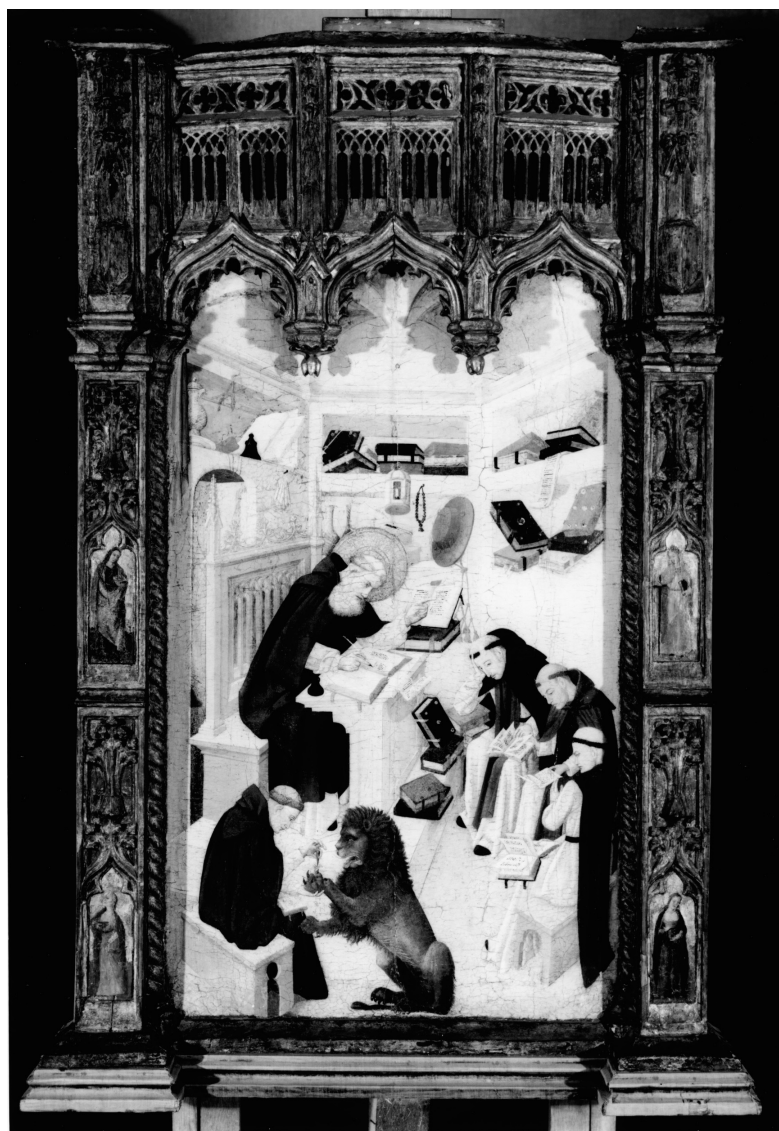
Fig. 8. Nicolás Francés, *St Jerome Translating the Gospels*. Tempera on panel, c. 1450. Photograph courtesy of the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.

drawn a thorn. The work Jerome is preoccupied with in these repeated scenes is, of course, his translation of the Bible from Greek to Latin, known from the 1590s as the Vulgate, and established by Tridentine edict as embodying unchallengeable authority. While the Church was careful not to proclaim that Jerome's work shared equal sanctity with the divinely inspired Holy Writ of the evangelists or prophets, it was thought "a special providence of the Holy Spirit had acted directly on the translator to guarantee his trustworthiness."[30]

Fig. 9. Albrecht Dürer, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*. Engraving, 1526.

The re-application of the scholar-in-his-study iconography associated with Jerome to another figure seems to have had a precedent elsewhere in northern Europe, although on the other side of the confessional divide. Erasmus, great editor and champion of Jerome, established his international reputation upon the merits of his four-volume edition of Jerome's *Epistolæ*. This huge editorial undertaking, almost half of the full *Opera omnia* published by Johannes Frobenius in 1515 and sponsored by Pope Leo X and the emperor Maximilian, offered reconstructed texts free from the corruptions and scribal errors Jerome's words had accumulated over centuries. Having worked for so long upon his author, Erasmus came to feel he had a unique empathy with Jerome's mind and methods. But as Lisa Jardine has shown in her provocative study of Erasmus, there are moments in the scholar's prefatory *Vita Hieronymi* where "the attentive reader might judge that Erasmus is claiming Jerome as his own."[31]

She advances the idea that "Erasmus chose to inhabit the familiar figure of Saint Jerome, with all the grandeur and intellectual *gravitas* that might thereby accrue to him", evidence for which she finds in written and graphic portraits of the scholar.[32] Her argument is compelling; in all of the familiar images of Erasmus, those by Metsys, Holbein, or Dürer, we find him poised at his study desk, books to hand and on shelves, in every line, the man of letters (Fig. 9). His academic cap can be mapped onto Jerome's cardinal's hat, his ascetic face captures the dedication of the *divis litterarum princeps*. The texts worked on by both men are often one and the same, the later

scholar restoring the precious words of his forebear. The intense, private atmosphere, isolated from the common business of men, is discernible in each. One might even say that as Erasmus reconstructs Jerome as a humanistic author in his edition, so Erasmus, by an act of representational synthesis, translates himself onto the figure of Jerome in his study, the archetypal icon of scholarly integrity, high purpose, and unshakable conviction.

Erasmus's melding of his own identity with that of the Doctor of the Church was no act of humility or sublimation; in fact, it was just the opposite. The alignment of his character with so great a mentor amplified Erasmus's reputation before Europe. And, as professor Jardine highlights, he actively forged these comparisons in his writings. He advances a particularly bold claim twice in epistles, the idea that through his scholarly endeavours, Jerome is restored to life (*Hieronymi redivivus*). In the dedicatory epistle of the Jerome volumes addressed to William Warham, archbishop of Canterbury, Erasmus declares: "I have borne in this such a burden of toil that one could almost say I have killed myself in my efforts to give Jerome a new lease of life."[33] But the work has been worthwhile, because through it, Jerome has been "recalled to the light from some sort of nether region".[34]

In a second letter, this time addressed to cardinal Raffaele Riaro, Erasmus asks: "I wonder if Jerome himself expended so much effort on the writing of his works as they will cost me in the correction? At least I have thrown myself into this task so zealously that one could almost say that I had worked myself to death that Jerome might live again."[35] This idea of "Hieronymi redivivus", broadcast through Erasmus's printed correspondence as well as the prefatory matter of the Jerome edition, seems to have developed into the familiar currency of praise. In one letter of acclamation to Erasmus, Albrecht von Brandenburg, archbishop of Mainz, marvelled that through the scholar's efforts "Jerome has returned to the light of day, and is as it were raised from the dead".[36] Another plaudit was offered by François Deloynes: "I fancy I see Jerome himself […] returning to the light of day […] in a new garment of immortality and restored to his original and native glory."[37]

Seventeenth-century Sweden and Gothic proto-Protestantism

It is tempting to see a knowing allusion to this encomiastic literature of "Hieronymi redivivus" in the phrase chosen for De la Gardie's cartouche in Sellingh's silver binding, and in the iconography of the revitalized fourth-century bishop at work in a seventeenth-century library – not to mention Truth glowing with light as she steps out from the grave. The inscription in the cartouche echoes the Erasmian panegyria: De la Gardie's donation effects "Vlphila redivivus", the restoring of Wulfila to life. Once again, as in the iconographic superimposition of Wulfila in his study for

the figure of Jerome, the desert father is displaced from the formula, and Wulfila given rightful pre-eminence. The great advocate of monasticism, clerical celibacy, Marian devotion, and author of the Roman Bible is pitched from his chair to be replaced by the Gothic bishop. But to what effect is this suppression of Jerome deployed, other than as an obvious gesture of Lutheran antagonism towards Roman sanctification of the Vulgate and its author?[38]

I think we can usefully resolve this problem by considering the competing claims Swedes advanced concerning what they understood to be their native translation of scripture, and that written by Jerome. It was known to seventeenth-century scholars that Wulfila (c. 311–383 AD) and Jerome (c. 342–420 AD) were close contemporaries, with the crucial seniority lying with Wulfila. The Gothic Bible, therefore, could be confirmed as pre-dating the Vulgate of Jerome and having claim to greater authority and legitimacy.[39] We know that considerable symbolic importance concentrated on the Gothic Bible; a generation of Swedish scholars in thrall to Olof Rudbeck's patriotic agenda discerned in its pages vital indications of holy learning and piety among their ancestors. To their understanding, the book was now at last naturalized among its own people, as De la Gardie proclaimed in his donation speech and through the inscription on the cover. In the former, De la Gardie let it be known that he was moved to present the book to the university out of consideration for "the love [he bore] for the antiquities of [his] native land".[40]

There must have been some who saw rich irony in the manuscript's recent history, in that its true value had gone unrecognized by Queen Christina, a woman infamously blind to Reformation Truth. The restoration of the book to its Protestant homeland bore nuances that would have been unseemly to articulate in too frank a manner.

Moreover, the act of translating Holy Scripture from Greek into the vernacular tongue of the Gothic people demonstrated that Wulfila shared the instincts of his latter-day heirs, the Protestant reformers. The iconography of Sellingh's binding points towards the superiority of Wulfila's Gospels over the text of Jerome. This is further reflected in the patriotic publication of the *Codex Argenteus* prepared by Stiernhielm and published two years later. This polyglot edition sets out its four texts in pre-meditated and deliberate order of precedence: Gothic, Icelandic, Swedish (called Swedo-Gothic), and finally "vulgar Latin". The term used for the great language of the Romans on the title-page is *vulgata Latina*, strictly "common Latin", but with an accessible pejorative connotation. It is also noteworthy that the Council of Trent's institution of Jerome's Bible referred to it as "*hæc vetus et vulgata editio*" ("the translation in common use").[41] To what extent might we see the stooped figure of Wulfila leaning over his desk in Sellingh's silver binding and Padt-Brugge's frontispiece as an encoded claim that the Swedish people, through their progenitors, the

Goths, acknowledged the light of True Religion many centuries before it was enkindled within the breasts of Luther, Zwingli, Melanchthon, Tyndale, or Calvin?

The idea that the silver casing for the *Codex Argenteus* may articulate strong patriotic ideas inflected with reformist ideology corresponds to findings by historians working within the visual culture of late seventeenth-century Sweden. Art-historical scholars have drawn attention in recent times to the effects of a nationalist competitive tendency in Swedish art of the *Stormaktstid*, a mentality driven by a patriotic urge to rival and challenge more established European nations in the arena of representation and prestige.[42]

Some of these tendencies are present in Ehrenstrahl's composition for the silver binding of the *Codex Argenteus*. In addition to celebrating De la Gardie's bounty and benevolence, the cover expresses patriotic pride in an artefact that was believed to form a link between contemporary Sweden and a glorious Gothic past. But more than this, the codex showed signs of an early and vibrant religious feeling among the Gothic people, a faith uncontaminated by the errors infecting the Roman Church, and only revived in Sweden since the reforms of Olaus Petri. Wulfila provided a Bible for his people a generation before Jerome set the Word into the language of the Vulgate, a Gothic gesture of evangelical openness that echoed the simplicity of the primitive church. With the text of Wulfila in every sense recovered, the Swedes could appeal to a precious relic of their supposed forebears, and find in it a reassuring line of continuity as Goths, ancient and modern, faced the world with sword in one hand and Scripture in the other. It was in celebration of this alternative narrative of the Gospels' transmission to Christendom that Ehrenstrahl designed a cover approved by De la Gardie, and raised in beaten silver by Hans Bengtsson Sellingh. The composite intellectual and aesthetic outcome of their shared endeavour assumes a place of honour alongside the *Codex Argenteus* in Uppsala to this day.[43]

Notes

1 The famous book bears the proud catalogue number UUB DG 1. The text can be read in various editions, principally the photographic facsimile made by the university in the early twentieth century. See Otto von Friesen & Anders Grape, eds, *Codex Argenteus Upsaliensis jussu senatus universitatis phototypice editus typis expressit* (Malmö, 1927). See also the definitive scholarly edition: Anders Uppström, ed., *Codex Argenteus sive sacrorum evangeliorum versionis Gothicæ fragmenta* (Uppsala, 1854). Of the

voluminous secondary material, see especially Lars Munkhammar, *Silverbibeln: Theoderiks bok* (Stockholm, 1998); Otto von Friesen & Anders Grape, *Om Codex Argenteus: Dess tid, hem och öden* (Uppsala, 1928); Tönnes Kleberg, *Codex Argenteus: The Silver Bible at Uppsala* (1955), 6th ed. (Uppsala, 1984).

2 See especially Anders Grape, "Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie, Isaac Vossius och Codex Argenteus", in *Symbola Litteraria: Hyllningsskrift till Uppsala universitet vid jubel-*

festen 1927 från universitetsbibliotekets tjänstemän och universitetets boktryckare (Uppsala, 1927), 133–147; Jan-Olof Tjäder, "Silverbibeln och dess väg till Sverige," in *Religion och Bibel: Nathan Söderblom-Sällskapets Årsbok* 34 (1975), 70–86; Munkhammar, 133 ff.

3 Munkhammar, 136 ff.

4 Little is known of Sellingh's life or career. See Knut Andersson, "Hans Bengtsson Sellingh", in *Svenskt konstnärs lexikon*, eds Johnny Roosval et. al., vol. 5 (Malmö, 1967), 115; Gustaf Upmark, *Guld- och silversmeder i Sverige, 1520–1850* (Stockholm, 1925), 60.

5 Cited in Kleberg, 18.

6 Munkhammar, 147 ff.

7 "Ulphilae beläte sitter lijka som skrifwandes bem:te bok". Cited in the transcript of De la Gardie's speech of donation published in *Uppsala Universitet Akademiska Konsistoriets Protokoll*, vol. 8, ed. Hans Sallander (Uppsala, 1971), 241 ff. The speech is discussed in Leif Åslund, *Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie och vältaligheten* (Uppsala, 1992), 184 ff.

8 Aulus Gellius, *The Attic nights*, English trans., 3 vol. (Cambridge, Mass., 1927), II, book XII, 11, 393 ff.

9 Erasmus, *Adagiorum opus* (Basle, 1526), 436. Samuel C. Chew perhaps overstates his case when he suggests that "no emblem is more familiar than that of Time leading forth his daughter from a cave or dungeon", but it appeared in well-known emblem books by authors such as Hadrianus Junius and Geffrey Whitney. For a discussion of the trope, see Samuel C.Chew, *The pilgrimage of life* (New Haven, 1962), 19 ff.

10 See Göran Lindahl, *Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie: Hans gods och hans folk* (Stockholm, 1968), 72–82; Allan Ellenius, "Bild och bildspråk på Magnus Gabriel De la Gardies Venngarn", *Lychnos* 1973–1974, 160–192; Hans-Olof Boström, "Love emblems at Ekholmen and Venngarn", *Nationalmuseum Bulletin* 3 (1980), 91–110; Ingrid Rosell, "Venngarns slottskapell", *Sveriges kyrkor: Konsthistorik Inventarium* 206 (Stockholm, 1988); Ingrid Rosell, "Hjärtats skola: Vägen till enheten med Gud", *Iconographisk Post* 2 (1994), 14–32; Simon McKeown, "Venngarn's emblem panels: Some Swedish political paintings and their Polish sources", *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 74:1 (2005), 12–24.

11 Jacob Cats, *Spiegel vanden Ouden ende Nieuwen Tyd* (The Hague, 1632), 44 ff.

12 The painting is preserved today at Drottningholm Palace, cat no. Drh. 457. It is discussed in Bengt Dahlbäck, ed., *David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl* (Stockholm, 1976), 62; Allan Ellenius, *Karolinska bildidéer*, (Uppsala, 1966), 86 f.; Axel Sjöblom, *Ehrenstrahl* (Malmö, 1947), plate 40.

13 *D. N. Jesu Christi SS. Evangelia ab Ulfila Gothorum in Moesia Episcopo Circa Annum a Nato Christo CCCLX Ex Græco Gothice translata, nunc cum Parallelis Versionibus, Sveo-Gothica, Norræna, seu Islandica, & vulgata Latina edita* (Stockholm, 1671).

14 Aside from passing mention in the prefatory matter of the 1854 and 1927 editions of the *Codex Argenteus*, the cover is mentioned in Friesen & Grape, *Om Codex Argenteus*, 150 f.; Munkhammar, 147 f.; Kleberg, 18.

15 "det [Bible] hafwer kunnat Patriæ igen restituera, sedan det så månge hundrade åhr hafwer främmandes händer swäfwat". Cited in Tjäder, 70, n. 5.

16 Allan Ellenius, "Olof Rudbecks atlantiska anatomi", in Allan Ellenius, *Den atlantiska anatomin: Ur bildkonstens idéhistoria* (Stockholm, 1984), 20 f.

17 Ellenius, *Karolinska*, 87.

18 Fritz Saxl, "Veritas Filia Temporis", in *Philosophy & history: Essays presented to Ernst Cassirer*, eds Raymond Klibansky & Herbert J. Paton (Oxford, 1936), 197–222.

19 The image is reproduced by Saxl, 205.

20 Cited in Chew, 19.

21 Saxl, 207.

22 John Nichols, *The progresses, and public processions of Queen Elizabeth: Among which are interspersed, other solemnities, public expenditures, and remarkable events during the reign of that illustrious princess*, 3 vol. (London, 1788–1823), I, 50.

23 Ibidem, 48.

24 David Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its history and influence* (New Haven, 2003), 276 f.

25 Nichols, 48.

26 Georgette de Montenay, *Emblemes, ou devises chrestiennes* (Paris, 1567), 72; Geffrey Whitney, *A choice of emblemes* (Leiden, 1586), 166.

27 Cited in Eugene F. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1985), 185.

28 Ibidem, 84.

29 For a discussion of the Dürer engraving, see Walter L. Strauss, *The complete engravings, etchings & drypoints of Albrecht Dürer* (New York, 1972), 162 f.

30 Rice, 181.

31 Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, man of letters: The construction of charisma in print* (Princeton, 1993), 68.

32 Ibidem, 4. Her thesis is elaborated particularly in Chapter 2, "The in(de)scribable aura of the scholar-saint in his study: Erasmus's *Life* and *Letters* of St Jerome", 55–82. Jardine's argument is informed by Rice, 116 ff.

33 Cited in Jardine, 68.

34 Ibidem, 71.

35 Ibidem, 78.

36 "Brandenburg to Erasmus, 13th September 1517", in Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Collected works 5: The correspondence of Erasmus, letters 594 to 841, 1517 to 1518*, English trans., 12 vol. (Toronto, 1979–2003), V, 118 f.

37 "Deloynes to Erasmus, c. 25th November 1516", in Erasmus, *Collected works*, IV, 155.

38 Martin Luther had remarked in his *Table talk* that "There is more learning in Æsop than in all of Jerome", and that "There is no writer whom I hate as much as I do Jerome. All he writes about is fasting and virginity."

39 The two translations were separated by a span of 20–25 years.

40 Åslund, 187.

41 Rice, 176.

42 This idea is strongly represented in the collection of essays by Swedish scholars edited recently by Allan Ellenius, *Baroque dreams: Art and vision in Sweden in the Era of Greatness* (Uppsala, 2003).

43 I am grateful to Lars Munkhammar, Chief Librarian of Maps and Prints at Uppsala University Library and leading authority on the *Codex Argenteus*, who graciously read a draft version of this paper and offered valuable comments upon it.