What Is the Conservative Bible Project and Why Is It Dangerous?

By Dr. Paul M. Elliott

The Conservative Bible Project is the work mainly of unregenerate men, using unreliable source texts, employing an ungodly translation philosophy. The result is an error-filled rendition of the Scriptures that can change literally every day.

General Background

The Conservative Bible Project was launched in 2009 by Andrew Schlafly, founder of the website Conservapedia.com. He is a son of conservative political and social activist Phyllis Schlafly. Like his mother, Andrew Schlafly is a Roman Catholic. He is a graduate of Princeton University and Harvard Law School, and is a lawyer and conservative political activist. Schlafly's Conservapedia is billed as "The Trustworthy Encyclopedia" - an alternative to Wikipedia, which has a generally liberal ideological bias.

The Conservative Bible Project is embedded within the Conservapedia framework. According to its official website within Conservapedia, the Conservative Bible Project is based on the assertion that "we [the public] should translate [the Bible] for ourselves, or in a collaborative effort with others we personally trust."¹ According to the companion Conservative Bible website, the project is uniquely built on two bedrock principles:

- online translating using the collaborative wiki software improves the final result if guided by good rules
• the rules guiding this translation are to use and be informed by conservative insights and terminology

To the best of our knowledge, this project is the first to utilize either of the above principles in translating the Bible. The "good rules" are, as we shall see, not good rules at all. The definition of "conservative" used in this project is not theological but political. It defines "conservative" as follows:

A conservative adheres to principles of personal responsibility, moral values, and limited government, agreeing with George Washington's *Farewell Address* that "religion and morality are indispensable supports" to political prosperity.

According to its website, "The Conservative Bible Project is a project utilizing the 'best of the public' to render God's word into modern English without liberal translation distortions." According to Conservapedia, "the 'best of the public' is an approach to education, scholarship, and biblical translation" and is summed up thus: "The best of the public is better than a group of experts."

The Conservative Bible Project's first public version of the New Testament was completed on April 23, 2010. The Old Testament is still in process.

**Anyone Can Participate**

The Conservative Bible Project's use of the "best of the public" means that the so-called translation effort uses the "wiki" model employed on many Internet sites. The project is open to anyone who wants to participate. People from various "Christian" religions can freely take part - Roman Catholics like Schlafly himself; members of mainline Protestant churches; Evangelicals; members of cults such as the Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses; even people of no specific religious identity.
A Flawed Methodology

Schlaflly explained the Conservative Bible Project's methodology — if it can be dignified by that term — in a television interview. He began by saying, "I believe in objective truth," but quickly revealed that his definition of "objective truth" is thoroughly postmodern and therefore false. "Objective truth," in his view, is not truth given by Divine revelation and illumination, but truth arrived at by processes of human intellectual discovery.

To justify this assertion, Schlafly cited what he claimed to be the example we find in mathematics. "Objective truth becomes clear over time," he said, by the development of consensus. He asserted that the mathematical formula 2+2=4 is a truth that came into existence through the consensus of human discovery.

This, he told the interviewer, justifies the use of the "wiki" model of open participation: "You might change the wording [of a particular passage in the Conservative Bible] today, but another contributor might come along and change it back tomorrow."

The project's website further justifies this approach by claiming that Biblical writers such as Mark and John developed what they wrote through a process of "open-mindedness" in viewing events, not Divine inspiration. (This, perhaps not coincidentally, echoes the philosophy of the postmodern Biblical Theology movement.)

Source Text Bias

The Conservative Bible Project states no preference for a particular body of Old Testament Hebrew source texts, but it does state a strong bias toward the inferior Nestle-Aland/Westcott-Hort text for the Greek New Testament. This is a highly unreliable text based largely on a handful of incomplete and unreliable manuscripts including Codex Vaticanus. The Nestle-Aland/Westcott-Hort text is an arbitrarily
eclectic Greek text that did not exist in any form before the Anglican liberals Westcott and Hort published it in 1881.

The Conservative Bible Project website specifically states that the passages found in the more reliable Received Text of the Greek New Testament, but not included by Westcott and Hort, are "later-inserted inauthentic passages" that must be "excluded."

In an incredible twist of logic, the project website says that the account of the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53-8:11) must be excluded because "liberals commonly put their own spin on" it. (If we applied that kind of logic generally in deciding what should be in the Bible and what should not, we would have no Bible at all. The liberals gainsay everything in it!)

A Political/Economic Focus

When Schlafly and the other participants in the Conservative Bible Project use the term "conservative" they are not speaking of theological conservatism. They are speaking of political and economic conservatism. In the television interview, Schlafly stated that "most of Jesus' parables were economic parables." According to the project website, "political issues [addressed in the Conservative Bible] can become a pathway to evangelizing liberals." It also claims that "Socialistic terminology permeates English translations of the Bible."

The project website makes it clear that it is the intention of those leading the effort to change the wording of the Conservative Bible as changes in the political, social, and economic landscape dictate. Their stated motivation is so that it can, in the view of Schlafly and others, be a continually effective tool for combating evils in those spheres.

Ecumenical Focus

The project website states that "this project has a unifying effect on various Christian denominations, and serves as an important counterweight to liberal efforts to divide
conservative [political] candidates based on religion." It defines "Christian" in big-tent terms to include members of all of the religious groups we mentioned above who can participate in the translation project. This is the same kind of thinking we find in the Evangelicals and Catholics Together documents, the Manhattan Declaration, and gatherings such as the 2010 Glen Beck "Divine Destiny" rally in Washington.

**A Sampling of Translation Problems**

The Conservative Bible is loaded with inaccurate and heterodox translations. Four examples from Romans chapter one will give readers an idea of the kinds of problems to be found:

**Romans 1:1**

King James Version: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God..."

Conservative Bible: "Paul, devoted to Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, obeying the Gospel of God..."

The Conservative Bible website comments, "Paul uses 'slave' to Jesus, but 'devoted to' captures this better in modern terminology."

Comment: "Servant" or "bondslave" describes the God-ordained position of every believer. "Devotion" is a specific term of Roman Catholicism, indicating a willingness and desire to dedicate oneself to serve God, in order to gain His favor and reduce time in Purgatory, usually through prescribed pious acts or the veneration of the saints or Mary.

**Romans 1:4**

King James Version: "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead..."
Conservative Bible: "And recognized as the Son of God, with power fueled by a spirit of holiness, as evidenced through His resurrection from the dead..."

Comment: In keeping with the project's philosophy that objective truth is not given by Divine revelation and illumination, but arrived at by processes of human intellectual discovery, God's declaration that Christ is the Son of God here becomes instead man's recognition of that fact.

**Romans 1:16**

King James Version: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Conservative Bible: "The gospel of Christ does not embarrass me, for it is the power of God leading to salvation all who believe: first to the Jew, and then to the Greek."

Comment: The formulation "leading to salvation all who believe" is acceptable to Roman Catholics and others who teach justification not by faith alone, but by a process of faith-plus-works.

**Romans 1:18**

King James Version: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness..."

Conservative Bible: "For God's punishment of atheism and immorality of men who disregard the truth is revealed from heaven..."

Comment: This formulation limits the focus of the Divine indictment of sinful man, couching it in terms reflecting the agenda of documents like
the *Manhattan Declaration* that seek to unite all "Christians" in combating certain present-day social and political evils.

**Conclusion: Not a Bible for Bible Believers**

The Conservative Bible Project is the work mainly of unregenerate men, using unreliable source texts, employing an ungodly translation philosophy. The result is an error-filled rendition of the Scriptures that can change literally every day. Its main objective is not the faithful translation of God’s inspired, infallible, inerrant and forever-settled Word from the original languages into English, but the hijacking of Scripture to promote an ever-changing political, social, and economic agenda.

The Conservative Bible is not a *theologically* conservative Bible at all. Let God's people beware.

**References:**

2. Ibid.

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