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## Contents

<b>Editorial</b>	2
<b>Forum</b>	
Christoph Böttigheimer <i>The Bible as Point of Contention and Bond of Unity</i>	3
Möse Adeniran Adekambi <i>The Churches of the Reformation and Bible Translation in Africa</i>	13
<b>Projects and Experiences</b>	
The Inter-confessional Translation of the Bible in Contemporary Language (ITCL)	20
Inter-denominational Bibles: the TOB and ZeBible	24
Romande Biblical Animation, an Ecumenical Adventure	29
The Revised Einheitsübersetzung	31
<b>Bible and Art Forms</b>	
Saint Mary's Seat of Wisdom Chapel, AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Kenya)	33
<b>Federation News</b>	34
<b>Biblical Pastoral Publications</b>	39

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## Editorial

An old proverb maintains that: "Every translation is always something of a betrayal". However, every translation is an act of life, of sharing, of dialogue and of hope. This is especially valid for the sacred texts of a religion. In today's globalized context, the work of translating the Holy Scriptures becomes even more necessary due to the rapidity of socio-cultural changes, in order to transmit and spread the biblical message to different cultures. We know how important was the process of translating the sacred Scriptures in the context of Jewish and Christian religious traditions.

Over the centuries this process has been marked by strong contrasts, but also by dialogue and collaboration between the various Christian confessions. As early as 1965 the Conciliar Constitution *Dei Verbum* expressed the hope that "suitable and correct translations would be made into different languages, especially from the original texts of the sacred books" and offering the opportunity to realize these translations "in cooperation with the separated brethren as well, (so that) all Christians will be able to use them" (*Dei Verbum* 22). Recently the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (2010) intended to emphasize the importance of the translation and diffusion of the Holy Scripture among the believers. This task is entrusted to the professional responsibility of specialists, but must be done in consultation with the other ecclesial communities, so that no one will remain without access to the Holy Scriptures. Pope Benedict XVI goes on to say: "I would encourage the investment of resources in this area. In particular I wish to recommend supporting the work of the Catholic Biblical Federation, with the aim of further increasing the number of translations of sacred Scripture and their wide diffusion. Given the very nature of such an enterprise, it should be carried out as much as possible in cooperation with the different

Bible Societies" (Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* 115).

This issue of the *Bulletin* provides essential reflection on the work of translating the Bible and on the experiences of inter-confessional collaboration that have characterized the post-conciliar period. In the common journey of service to the Word, the various Christian confessions have produced inter-confessional translations by collaborating in a fruitful dialogue in the dissemination of the Holy Scriptures. The contribution of C. Böttigheimer, which summarizes the historical and conceptual stages that led to the collaboration of the ecumenical translations of the Bible, is enlightening. An important contribution illustrates the origins and implementation of Bible translations in Africa (M. A. Adekambi). Three other articles are dedicated to the European continent: the ecumenical journey that characterizes the service of Animation biblique œcuménique romande (M. Durrer), the deepening of the inter-confessional experience that led to the publication of the TOB (Traduction œcuménique de la Bible) and of the ZeBible in France (G. Billon) and the inter-confessional collaboration in the Italian setting, with the publication of the TILC (Inter-confessional translation in contemporary language: V. Bertalot).

Looking at the present situation makes us aware of the fruitful journey undertaken so far, but also of the work that awaits our communities in view of the ever greater diffusion of Scripture "so that the Word of God may speed on and triumph" (2 Thess 3:1).

*Giuseppe De Virgilio*

## Forum

## The Bible as Point of Contention and Bond of Unity

### Concerning the Ecumenical Approach between Catholics and Protestants when Dealing with the Bible

CHRISTOPH BÖTTIGHEIMER \*

Christianity sees itself as a religion that, in addition to God's revelation in the history of Israel, refers especially to the self-communication of God in Jesus Christ. Accordingly, the Bible, in which this history of revelation is first witnessed in writing, is of fundamental importance. This applies to all Christian Churches of all denominations; nothing unites them as much as the Bible. In relation to Protestantism, this may, among other things, be made clear by Luther's saying that that where the book ends the Church ends,<sup>1</sup> and looking at Catholicism through the words of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as it does the Lord's Body itself.<sup>2</sup> However, this statement must not obscure the fact that in the sixteenth century, despite or perhaps precisely because of this common esteem, the Bible stood at the centre of the dispute between the denominations.

Again and again, biblical questions triggered momentous disputes in the history of Christianity. How are they to be interpreted correctly in relation to certain religious questions? What is the relationship between Scripture and Tradition or Scripture and Church? May ecclesiastical authorities take an authoritative role in the right interpretation of Scripture? These and similar questions repeatedly tested the unity of Christendom. However, it should be emphasized that, in spite of all of the disagreements about the correct way of dealing with Holy Scripture, it has always remained a fundamental reference point for all denominations. Moreover, in the controversial theological issues raised in the Reformation period in the context of the Bible and its role in the Church, far-reaching convergences between Catholics and Protestants have been achieved, which will be further elaborated below in relation to the two main controversial issues: 1) How do Scripture



Chapel in Eldoret  
*A spirit of welcome and hospitality  
characterizes the tribal life.*

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<sup>1</sup> *M. Luther*, WA 53, 252,32-35.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. DV 21.

and Tradition relate to each other? And: 2) Who authenticates Scripture in the Church?

## 1. Scripture and Tradition

### a) *The Controversial Theological Issue*

Although Church tradition was always committed to the Scriptures, the question of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition was at the centre of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation movement. A fundamental issue in connection with the call for reform was aimed at the normativity of ecclesiastical tradition. Because of obvious ecclesiastical grievances among other things, the Reformers were convinced that Scriptures are normative in comparison with ecclesiastical tradition. Since they thought they saw many such contradictions in the late medieval Church, all Church tradition increasingly seemed to them a human invention.<sup>3</sup> This resulted in a fundamental controversy: what quality and authority does tradition have? Is it apostolic or non-apostolic, i.e., is it merely human or an ecclesiastical statute? Because this question was answered unevenly, there were also different, sometimes highly controversial, answers to theological questions.

The Reformers insisted on the unrestricted primacy of the Holy Scriptures over the tradition of the Church and its interpretation of Scripture. The more that Protestants emphasized the scriptural principle (*sola scriptura*) in the controversial theological argument, the more the Catholics emphasized the principle of tradition. The Council of Trent left no doubt about the authoritative character of ecclesiastical tradition. It, too, is of divine origin, which is why both the Scriptures and the traditions are to be revered “with the same feeling of gratitude and reverence.”<sup>4</sup> The conviction that only the Scriptures claim to be inspired did not come into its own. Rather, the Holy Scriptures became one *locus theologicus* among others. In fact, the attribution “Scripture and Tradition” was done using “et”, which in the post-Tridentine period led to the erroneous claim that the Council had spoken of Scripture and Tradition as two distinct sources of revelation. Ultimately, however, the Council left open the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, as did the First Vatican Council later on. In the aftermath of the Trent Council, the principle of authority even largely replaced the principle of Tradition; the ecclesiastical magisterium became increasingly the subject and organ of Tradition. As a result, Tradition and magisterium were often identified with each other until Pope Pius IX (1792/1846–1878) could even identify himself with tradition – “I am Tradition”.<sup>5</sup>

The ecclesiastical Magisterium regarded the Bible and Tradition less from a soteriological perspective than from a doctrinal one. While on the Reformation side Scripture was primarily based on the faith which it itself produced, on the Catholic side Scripture served as a testimony to the teachings of the Church, which claimed to represent the sacred doctrine. In this connection, the Magisterium of the Church maintained that it alone bore the responsibility of rightfully transmitting the *depositum fidei*, for which theology makes itself useful. Thus, from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries onward, the Shepherds kept for themselves the term “Magisterium,” and in so doing, reserved for themselves the teaching authority as well. University faculties of theology became totally dependent on (subject to) the magisterium. They had to comment on its statements according to the official meaning, show that these are in accordance with revelation and convey them to the faithful as to those who had to listen. Already in his encyclical *Humani generis* (Aug. 12, 1950) Pope Pius XII described as the task of the theologians “to show how the teaching of the living Magisterium teaches, in Scripture and in the divine 'tradition' – be it explicitly or not, be it inclusive or not.”<sup>6</sup> According to this understanding, not only was a theology as a free knowledge of the faith impossible, but also the Scriptures had become obsolete as *norma normans non normata*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. W.-D. Hauschild, Die Bewertung der Tradition in der lutherischen Reformation, in: W. Pannenberg, Th. Schneider (Hg.), *Verbindliches Zeugnis I: Kanon – Schrift – Tradition*, Freiburg i. Br. 1992, 195–231, 195.

<sup>4</sup> DH 1501.

<sup>5</sup> H. Meyer, *Das Wort Pius IX: „Die Tradition bin ich“. Päpstliche Unfehlbarkeit und apostolische Tradition in den Debatten und Dekreten des Vatikanum I*, München 1965.

<sup>6</sup> DH 3886.

b) *The Second Vatican Council*

The Second Vatican Council underwent a paradigmatic change in the theology of revelation and from an instruction-theoretical to a personalist or dialogical understanding of revelation, which entailed an altered theological understanding of tradition. Tradition handed down a living reality whose content was the life given by Christ. Scripture and Tradition thus stem from the same revealed Word of God; they owe themselves to one and the same Divine Word event, to which they testify without being identical with it. “Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture constitute the holy treasure of the Word of God left to the Church”<sup>7</sup> – Tradition and writing form an organic unity; they are two modes of passing on one and the same act of revelation.

Despite the emphasis on the *perichoresis* of Scripture, Tradition and Church, the Council Fathers, in epistemological terms, left no doubt as to the precepts of Scripture: in the Holy Scriptures, the Church has its “supreme rule of faith” (*suprema fidei suae regulam*) and is “one with (*una cum*) the sacred tradition”.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to the classical “*et*”, a clear differentiation and weighting is made, which makes it come very close to the Reformers’ *sola scriptura*. The remarks of the Second Vatican Council also reflect approaches to a Protestant understanding of tradition, when it is said that Scripture is God’s speech, while tradition merely conveys the word of God intact. It must be mentioned restrictively that different definitions of tradition are found in the Constitution on Divine Revelation. They were not only responsible for some misleading formulations, but also made further theological clarifications possible. For example, the important statement that the Magisterium of the Church serves the Word of God is obscured by the addition of “teaching nothing but what has been handed down.”<sup>9</sup> In general, according to Walter Kasper, the ecumenical central question about the special position of Scripture is “timidly evaded”.<sup>10</sup> From an ecumenical point of view, it would have been extremely helpful if the normative primacy of Scripture had been explicitly acknowledged. Instead, the unique scriptural authority experiences an apparent relativization in that the council Fathers noted that the Church does not derive “its certainty about everything revealed from Scripture alone.”<sup>11</sup> In spite of its high regard for Tradition, the Council also failed to explicitly teach versatility and to emphasize the normative character of Scripture for the post-canonical tradition, which does not include revelation beyond Scripture. To make matters worse, the Council has at no point explicitly emphasized the traditional and traditionally critical meaning of Scripture.



*Scene of community life.*

<sup>7</sup> DV 10.

<sup>8</sup> DV 21.

<sup>9</sup> DV 10.

<sup>10</sup> W. Kasper, *Schrift – Tradition – Verkündigung*, in: Th. Filthaut, *Umkehr und Erneuerung*, Mainz 1966, 13– 41, 18.

<sup>11</sup> DV 9.

Nonetheless, the Council Fathers of Vatican II rejected any additive or complementary classification of Scripture and Tradition, and formalized the primacy of Scripture in a clear-cut manner, bringing it closer to the Protestant position without, however, ultimately completely overcoming creating the fatal juxtaposition of Scripture and Tradition.

### c) Ecumenical Approaches

While on the part of the Catholics the normativity of Scripture and its reconnection to Tradition has been clearly affirmed, Protestantism attaches more importance to the idea that Scripture has become part of a broad process of tradition and interpretation, that is, that the Church cannot be thought of without tradition, it was possible, within the whole ecumenical movement, to gradually recover a holistic understanding of tradition. On this basis, the bilateral study "*Communio Sanctorum*" could justifiably retain that today, despite the high value placed on Tradition on the Catholic side, "it is generally recognized that the Holy Scripture adequately contains revelation within itself so that it does not need to be supplemented (material sufficiency). Tradition understood as a stream of transmission of the apostolic faith is therefore not a substantive addition to the Scriptures."<sup>12</sup> It also recalled the bilateral document "Communion in Word and Sacrament", and cited the following: "Together we teach the unsurpassable and irreplaceable authority of Scripture. [...] It is true of the whole Holy Scripture that, according to common conviction, it is the '*norma normans non normata*'".<sup>13</sup> This led to the common confession: "Holy Scripture is the first and most fundamental form of witness of the Word of God. It is the unalterable norm for Church, for the Church's proclamation and for faith. Therefore, all the other witnessing bodies must also be bound by it, insofar as they interpret it, investigate it more deeply, relate it to the respective situation and make it fruitful for Christian life."<sup>14</sup> Insofar as tradition is essentially the interpretation of Scripture, tradition is bound to Scripture and is obligated to it. The relationship between Scripture and Tradition must be defined in the sense of a dynamic interdependence, in which Scripture plays a decisive role. In the early 1970s, the "Malta Report" stated that "Scripture [can no longer] be juxtaposed exclusively with tradition because the New Testament is itself the result of early Christian tradition. But Scripture, as a testimony of the fundamental tradition, has a normative function for the entire later tradition of the Church."<sup>15</sup>

Ecumenical progress has thus come to a far-reaching convergence, combining the different theological accents of the great denominations: for the Roman Catholic Churches the authority of ecclesiastical tradition, for the Orthodox and Anglican Churches the continuity of the traditional Church process and for the Protestant Churches the traditionally critical function of Scripture. Scripture and Tradition were placed in a positive-critical relationship by making it clear that the Church takes the gospel from the living tradition, just as the fathers of the Second Vatican Council emphasized the close connection between Scripture and Tradition, and that Tradition stands under the normativity of Scripture.

Today there is no doubt that Scripture should be considered *norma normans*. According to the World Conference on Faith and Order in Montreal, it is of outstanding importance for distinguishing true tradition from false tradition: "For the post-apostolic Church, the appeal to the tradition preserved by the apostles became the criterion, and since this tradition was contained in the apostolic writings, it was quite natural that these scriptures were used as an authority to

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<sup>12</sup> Bilaterale Arbeitsgruppe der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz und der Kirchenleitung der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands, *Communio Sanctorum. Die Kirche als Gemeinschaft der Heiligen*, Paderborn 2005, Nr. 53f.

<sup>13</sup> Bilaterale Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz und der Kirchenleitung der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands, *Kirchengemeinschaft in Wort und Sakrament*, Paderborn 1984, 18 (Nr. 12).

<sup>14</sup> *Communio Sanctorum* Nr. 72.

<sup>15</sup> Malta-Bericht. Bericht der Evangelisch-Lutherisch/Römisch-Katholischen Studienkommission „Das Evangelium und die Kirche“, in: *DwÜ*, Bd. 1: 1931–1982, Paderborn 1983, 248–271, 253 (Nr. 17).

determine where true tradition can be found.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, when the slogans *“sola scriptura”* and *“Scripture and Tradition”* became controversial, it has since become clear that they are merely denominational accents within the comprehensive structure of the tradition. That is why ecumenism has changed the meaning of the two controversial concepts – they no longer stand for dissent capable of dividing the Churches. This was clearly stated in the ecumenical document *“The Apostolicity of the Church”*: “Lutherans and Catholics are so far in sync with one another with respect to Scripture and Tradition that their different emphases do not by themselves justify the present separation of Churches. In this area there is unity in reconciled diversity.”<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, the different accentuation on the question of the normativity of Scripture continues to this day in a weaker form. According to the Ecumenical Working Group of Protestant and Catholic theologians, “there is still no explicit consensus about the critical function of Scripture vis-à-vis the Church’s understanding of Tradition”,<sup>18</sup> but rather a far-reaching convergence. In addition, it should be remembered that although Scripture is now recognized by all Churches as an important criterion for judging tradition, it is not simply a neutral arbiter outside confessional traditions. This means that every Scripture reading is based on a preconception shaped by the respective denominational tradition. So, the central question arises, as it was formulated in Montreal: “How can we get beyond the fact that we all read the Scriptures in the light of their own tradition?”<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Scripture and Church

### a) *The Controversial Theological Issue*

Because the Church recognizes in the Scriptures a significant testimony of faith of a formal and substantive nature, it always remains bound to the normativity of Scripture. Scripture is thus both a fundamental expression of the faith of the Church and a continual critical word of God addressed to the Church. Thus, the Holy Scriptures initiated a continuous, self-critical ecclesial faith process. In the Church, the Holy Scriptures want to be constantly interpreted anew and also self-critically implemented. With the implementation of the faith there begins over and over again a hermeneutic process. Because the believer understands the revelation recorded in the Scriptures from an ever new perspective, new dogmatic statements are by no means excluded, and the doctrine of the Church remains fundamentally open to the future.



*Sharing a pot of home-made brew is typical of the solidarity in the tribal community.*

<sup>16</sup> Vierte Weltkonferenz für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung, Montreal 1963, in: L. Vischer (Hg.), *Die Einheit der Kirche*, München 1965, 181–250, 199.

<sup>17</sup> *Die Apostolizität der Kirche. Studiendokument der Lutherisch/Römisch-katholischen Kommission für die Einheit*, Paderborn 2009, Nr. 448.

<sup>18</sup> Ökumenischer Arbeitskreis evangelischer und katholischer Theologen, *Lehrverurteilungen – kirchentrennend?* Bd. I: Rechtfertigung, Sakramente und Amt im Zeitalter der Reformation und heute. K. Lehmann and W. Pannenberg, eds. (Dialog der Kirchen 4), Freiburg i. Br. 1986, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Vierte Weltkonferenz, 201.

On closer inspection, it can be seen that the relationship between Holy Scripture and the Church since the time of the Reformation has been a controversial topic that is highly explosive. In the background lies the fundamental question of the authority of Scripture and its right interpretation. What role does the ecclesiastical magisterium play in the right interpretation of Scripture? What authority must be followed in the interpretation of Scripture? Catholic theologians, in the fight against the Reformation, sometimes took the overconfident view that Scripture would receive its authority from the Church. For example, John Eck (1486–1543) formulated that “Scripture is not authentic without ecclesiastical authority,”<sup>20</sup> and the Roman Dominican Sylvester Prierias (1456–1527) responded to Luther’s thesis on indulgences: “Those who do not conform to the teachings of the Roman Church and the Church’s Roman bishop as an infallible rule of faith, from which also the Holy Scripture receives its power and authority, is a heretic.”<sup>21</sup> In spite of such extremes, however, the real issue was not the superiority of Scripture, that is, the view that nothing in the Church has such a high authority as the Holy Scripture – that was general conviction – but the correct interpretation of Scripture. In the eyes of Rome, it seemed unacceptable that Scripture should be wholly opposed to the Church, and that Martin Luther would presume to understand the original and proper meaning of a particular Scripture passage better than the Fathers of the Church. That was the real issue. “God would never wish that a pious Christian man should correctly understand a passage of Scripture and form it in himself only then to reject the same because of some erroneous mind, ignoring his own right mind. Furthermore, we must disown Pope and Councils in order to save the Scriptures, for where this article is heretically bandied about, there the Gospel, Paul, and Augustine must go down in defeat. Before I do that, I want to use my Christian freedom and say: a ‘Council may be in error’.”<sup>22</sup>

For the Catholic side it was unacceptable that the Wittenberg reformer dared to set his own particular scriptural view over against the authority of the Church and to rebel against her tradition. While the Roman Church insisted that it was she who laid the foundation for the understanding of Scripture, Luther did not rely on his own error-prone reason, but on the self-interpreting power of Scripture. “Tell me – if you are able – according to which criterion will a dispute be decided if the statements of two Fathers of the Church contradict each other? Here the decision must fall on the side of the judgment of the Scriptures, and this is only possible if we give Scripture the first place in everything that is ascribed to the Fathers, that is, that Scripture itself is supremely certain, ‘easy to understand, clear and the interpreter of itself.’”<sup>23</sup> Thus, Luther derives clarity from the normativity of the Holy Scriptures. For Scripture could only be the *primum principium* if no human interpretation were required. Because God discloses Himself through the medium of writing, communicates Himself to the searching reader and appeals to him, therefore the believer is capable of authentic understanding (of Scripture) without any external assistance in interpretation. The principle for considering Scripture used by the Reformers is basically a formal and material principle. For sacred Scripture is materially as well as hermeneutically characterized by sufficiency. It possesses both external clarity (*claritas externa*) as well as internal clarity (*claritas interna*). Due to their external, philological clarity, the essential content of the biblical texts can be safely made out. Although the gospel’s literary meaning can be deduced from its core, it is only with spiritually-induced faith that true understanding can come from knowledge. Scripture “should be understood only through the Spirit by whom it was written, and that Spirit you will find nowhere more present and living, for He is present in His holy scripture which He has written.”<sup>24</sup> It is thanks to this Spirit that “inner clarity” is added to Scripture’s “outer clarity.” It is the same Spirit who, on the one hand, fulfils Holy Scripture and on the other hand allows the believer to understand the Bible. “Wherever Sacred Scripture is seen as the norm of Christian doctrine, its normative character is always based on the fact that it

<sup>20</sup> J. Eck, *Enchiridion locorum communium adversus Lutherum et alios hostes ecclesiae* (1525–1543), hg. v. P. Fraenkel (Corpus Catholicorum 34), Münster 1979, 27.

<sup>21</sup> S. Prierias, *Dialogus de potestate papae*, in: P. Fabisch, E. Iserloh (Hg.), *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri* (1517–1521), 1. Teil (Corpus Catholicorum 41), Münster 1988, 55.

<sup>22</sup> M. Luther, WA Br 1, 472, 251-285.

<sup>23</sup> Id., WA 7, 97, 19-35.

<sup>24</sup> Id., WA 7, 97,1-3.

has already been heard in the heart as an outwardly clear saving word.”<sup>25</sup> This Spirit eludes all ecclesiastical power of control, which is why the Church could not be understood to possess any infallible authority of interpretation. “Here the third ‘sola’, namely, ‘sola fide’ has its place, since knowledge only discloses itself to belief in a truth that is evident to a discerning man. [...] ‘Sola scriptura’ becomes adequately comprehensible only in the context of the ‘sola gratia’ and ‘sola fide’.”<sup>26</sup>

The inner clarity, therefore, coincides with the outer clarity. It stands for the insight into the truth of the Scriptures brought about by the Holy Spirit, which for Luther was always Christologically determined: “The whole of Scripture aims to teach us to recognize Christ. That is the basic theme of all Scripture, through which we are first given access to the Father.”<sup>27</sup> The truth of Christ is therefore the centre of Scripture, so that it is its own interpreter. Although Luther knew that Scripture also contains incomprehensible passages, he was nevertheless convinced that the hermeneutical key to understanding the “res” of Scripture was to be found within it and not outside of it. For in the light of what is clearly and intelligibly stated in the Bible as a witness to Christ, the dark places must also be illuminated. Moreover, the message of Christ is also the inner standard of Scripture itself. Therefore, on the basis of Luther’s criterion as to “whether they convey Christ, or not,”<sup>28</sup> even criticism of the Scriptures themselves should be practiced.

Thus the Council of Trent formulated “that no one, relying on his own skill, shall, – in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, – wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church, – whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures, – hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.”<sup>29</sup> According to this, the ecclesiastical teaching authority alone has the right of interpretation, which is why every member of the Church, and ultimately also the theological teaching office, has to be subordinated to it. However, the Wittenberg Reformation was extremely critical of the Church’s interpretive authority, insisting instead on the self-explicitness of Scripture.

#### *b) Difficulties of the Protestant Scriptural Principle*

Already during the time of the Reformation, their Scriptural principle could only have a limited integrating effect within the multi-layered reform movement. The Protestant Church historian Berndt Hamm (\*1945) found that: “The normative centre of the Reformation was completely unprotected against centrifugal tendencies of rival interpretations precisely because of its ‘sola’



*The apostles and disciples are sent on mission by the Risen Lord.*

<sup>25</sup> M. Coors, Vom Lesen der Bibel als Heiliger Schrift. Zur Grundlegung einer theologischen Schriftlehre, in: *NZStH* 45 (2003), 328–345, 344.

<sup>26</sup> M. Weinrich, Das reformatorische Schriftprinzip und seine gegenwärtige Bedeutung, in: J. Rist, Ch. Breitsamer (Hg.), *Wort Gottes. Die Offenbarungsreligionen und ihr Schriftverständnis*, Münster 2013, 115–128, 117.

<sup>27</sup> M. Luther, WA 24, 16,1–3.

<sup>28</sup> Id., WA.DB 7, 384,27.

<sup>29</sup> DH 1507.

simplicity. It found its way into quite different and conflicting legitimacy needs and operations.”<sup>30</sup> Placing sovereignty of interpretation over the Sacred Scriptures into the hands of mature laymen definitely also brought to light sociopolitical consequences (peasant wars), with the at times violent excesses of which Luther did not count on at first. In addition, he had to deal with the charge by his opponents that the Holy Scriptures in many places are uncertain, dark and sketchy, so that they could offer no reliable basis for the faith. Moreover, early on in the Reformation Churches, the need arose to secure their own understanding of the faith through textbooks and confessional texts.

Eventually, as a result of the Enlightenment and historical criticism, the Reformers’ understanding entered into a serious crisis, since the “sola scriptura” principle was characterized by an ahistorical general awareness of the truth. A growing awareness of the historical distance as well as a critical handling of the biblical texts revealed, among other things, their literary-historical dependence and conditioning by tradition, all of which led to an ever greater alienation from biblical writings. In this way, the authority of Scripture was undermined and consequently the Lutheran doctrine on Scripture was more and more shaken. Furthermore, it was challenged by the insight of literary studies and the fact that the reader would interpret a text according to his own life background and experience and not necessarily according to the sense of the author, by which process a text gains independence from its author. Between text and reader an interaction takes place, so that the meaning of a literary text changes according to the context of its reception. If the reader is involved in determining the biblical sense of the text itself, the Lutheran conviction of the simplicity and uniqueness of Scripture can no longer be so easily maintained. As diverse as are the readers and their different contexts of life and reading (psychological, sociological, existential, etc.), so diverse will the meanings of biblical texts become. But if that is the case, can the “sola scriptura” principle still be maintained? Such basic questions open up room for ecumenical manoeuvring.

### c) Ecumenical Approaches

In contemporary Protestant theology, a critical attitude towards the scriptural principle cannot be overlooked. The crisis of the scriptural principle, which the Protestant theologian Jörg Lauster even called a “fundamental theological crisis,”<sup>31</sup> leads to a fundamental uncertainty and ultimately to a crisis regarding Scripture. It is not only the self-interpreting power of Scripture that becomes problematic, but also its clarity, unity and authority, all of which ultimately makes ecumenical approaches possible. For it is undisputed in the ecumenical dialogue that, in the light of changing historical conditions, a scriptural interpretation is required in order to learn the relativity of biblical texts and to translate them for the present day. Evangelical theologians admit today that the doctrine of the self-interpretation of Scripture “does not exclude, but includes, the activity of the interpreter or interpreters in the process of understanding.”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, in the context of the need for a scriptural interpretation, there is an ecumenical consensus that the question of literary meaning is fundamental and authoritative, and that the Church’s faith in the interpretation of the Scriptures as a book of the Church is indispensable. The fact that the two-part Holy Scripture (Old and New Testaments) could only be read and understood properly within the heart of the Church was fundamentally never in dispute.

What is controversial is not the meaning of Scripture for the Church and the faith nor the need for its interpretation, but the question of its correct interpretation. Recent scientific biblical exegesis has largely confirmed the Reformation idea of the self-interpretation of Scripture with its

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<sup>30</sup> B. Hamm, *Einheit und Vielfalt der Reformation – oder: was die Reformation zur Reformation machte*, in: Id., B. Moeller, D. Wendebourg, *Reformationstheorien. Ein kirchenhistorischer Disput über Einheit und Vielfalt der Reformation*, Göttingen 1995, 57–127, 80.

<sup>31</sup> J. Lauster, *Schriftauslegung als Erfahrungserhellung*, in: F. Nüssel (Hg.), *Schriftauslegung*, Tübingen 2014, 179–206, 180.

<sup>32</sup> Ökumenischer Arbeitskreis evangelischer und katholischer Theologen, *Kanon – Schrift – Tradition. Gemeinsame Erklärung*, in: W. Pannenberg, Th. Schneider (Hg.), *Verbindliches Zeugnis I: Kanon – Schrift – Tradition*, Freiburg i. Br. 1992, 371–397, 392.

findings regarding biblical interpretation: Holy Scripture was created by updating, rewriting and overwriting, whereby the commentary on the text becomes itself text and thus part of the Bible. Thus, canonical intertextuality is an inner-biblical phenomenon and the self-interpretation of Scripture is grounded in it. In addition, from the Catholic side one can make out an approach to the teaching of the autopisty of Scripture, as the concept of inspiration is explicitly extended to the biblical reader, i.e., as the working of the Spirit in dealing with the Scriptures is specially emphasized. According to the bilateral ecumenical document "Communio Sanctorum", "the self-interpretive power of the Word of God, which in modified form is also part of the Catholic faith, can be assumed."<sup>33</sup> This does not mean, however, that all the questions have now been solved. In order that the doctrine of the self-interpretation of Scripture in the full sense can be regarded as confirmed, the Protestant side must show beyond the inner-biblical interpretation how a consistent biblical interpretation can succeed with the help of the self-interpretation of Scripture. Conversely, Catholic theology and the Church must make it clear that "the authentic and in certain circumstances unerring teaching is an instrument of God, which, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, serves to assert His truth in the Church, and thus does not stand in opposition to the self-interpreting power of Sacred Scripture. If, on the Lutheran side, it is possible to not consider oneself automatically opposed to this Catholic understanding of the self-interpretation (*autopisty*) of the Word of God, further communication possibilities open up."<sup>34</sup>

### 3. Outlook

In the meantime, there have been clear ecumenical approaches to the question of the role of Scripture within the Church. Not least because, while on the Catholic side, the word-theological understanding of the Church was taken over from Lutheran theology: the Church has existence only through and in the Word of God; as such, it has no power over God's Word. The ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council is deeply influenced by this. The Council intended itself to be both the hearer and the observer of the Word of God. The Preface of "Dei Verbum", the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation contains the words: "Hearing the word of God with reverence and proclaiming it with faith."<sup>35</sup> This determines the function for the Council and the whole Church. This explicit subordination of the Church to the Word of God opens ecumenical approaches. Thus, for example, the ecumenical document "The Apostolicity of the Church" affirms reassuringly: "Catholic doctrine, thus, does not hold what Reformation theology fears and wants at all costs to avoid, namely, a derivation of scriptural authority as canonical and binding from the authority of the Church's hierarchy which makes known the canon."<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, on the Protestant side there remains the fear that the subordination of ecclesiastical authority to the authority of the Word of God in the "derivation of the extraordi-



*Animated by the spirit of Pentecost, the Church as the Body of Christ, carries the good news of the Jesus to the four corners of the world, baptizing, teaching, assembling the community and healing.*

<sup>33</sup> *Communio Sanctorum* Nr. 68.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 68.

<sup>35</sup> DV 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Die Apostolizität der Kirche* Nr. 400.

nary magisterium of the Pope and his infallibility” has not really been admitted to.<sup>37</sup>

The consensus today is that the three dimensions of Scripture, Tradition and Church are all intertwined in the Gospel tradition. As with tradition, so the Church is subject to the Word of God as witnessed in the Holy Scriptures, and conversely Scripture comes from the Church and should be read and interpreted in the light of the faith. As the Bible was created within the context of a religious community, so too it presupposes faith for its correct interpretation. “The Bible is a ‘book of the Church’. Only from such a life movement does it come to that ‘agreement’ about what the Holy Scripture wishes to proclaim.”<sup>38</sup> Of course, this does not rule out that even non-Christians can read and understand the Bible out of a purely human interest. But they would find it hard to have a full and in-depth understanding. “Adequate use of scripture,” which is a “common ground rediscovered in ecumenism” [...], is only to be hoped for within the “community of communication and responsibility of the Church in the unity of the Spirit of Christ”,<sup>39</sup> and in particular in the liturgical proclamation of the Word of God for its self-realization. However, denominational accents are still evident in the closer association of the three dimensions of Scripture, Tradition and Church. For example, Catholic theology emphasizes even more than the Protestant, that although the Scriptures have a priority over the Church, their interpretation takes place within the context of the Church, which is why it rejects a strict and principled opposition of the Scriptures to the Church, as was demanded for example on the Evangelical side by Karl Barth or Oscar Cullmann. Still valid today is what Henri de Lubac (1896–1991) wrote in regard to the constitution of the Second Vatican Council as follows: “Nothing, then, would contradict the spirit of this Constitution more than a kind of hostile competition between Scripture and tradition, as if one could take from the one something that one ascribes to the other. Never had a council text put forth so well the principle of tradition in all its breadth and complexity; never before has Scripture been given so much room.”<sup>40</sup> It cannot be inferred from the statement that the Scriptures are to be read in the Church that ecclesiastical doctrines and dogmas are objectively prior to reading Scripture, and that Scripture therefore has no authority critical of tradition. To concede this again and again is an important Catholic contribution to ecumenism and a Catholic insight from the Reformation.



*Saint Mary's Seat of Wisdom Chapel on the Gaba Campus, Eldoret, Kenya.*

<sup>37</sup> H. Döring, Die ekklesiale Dimension der Schriftinspiration. Überlegungen zur Selbstausslegungskraft des Wortes Gottes im Anschluss an das Dokument „Communio Sanctorum“, in: *Cath(M)* 56 (2002), 1–27, 17.

<sup>38</sup> U. Kühn, Traktat II. Offenbarung – Schrift – kirchliche Lehre, in: W. Beinert, U. Kühn, *Ökumenische Dogmatik*, Leipzig 2013, 31–69, 53.

<sup>39</sup> Ökumenischer Arbeitskreis evangelischer und katholischer Theologen, *Kanon*, 392.

<sup>40</sup> H. de Lubac, *Die göttliche Offenbarung. Kommentar zum Vorwort und zum ersten Kapitel der dogmatischen Konstitution „Dei verbum“ des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils*, Einsiedeln 2001, 251.

## The Churches of the Reformation and Bible Translation in Africa

MOÏSE ADENIRAN ADEKAMBI \*

The Dogmatic Constitution of Vatican II on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, is not only dogmatic. Like the Council itself, it is pastoral in its teaching and guidance. No. 22, in particular, has had a major impact on the work of translating the Word of God, with respect to its place in the life and mission of the Church: “Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all Christians.”

In recent times, I have had to provide various services of the Word, including to represent the Episcopal Conference of Benin in the Bible Societies of this country and work with its Administrative Committee and then as director of BICAM. These various services have allowed me to witness the collaboration between United Bible Societies (UBS) for the Africa Region and the diocesan Churches of the continent. This contribution is therefore essentially a testimony to what I call “Ecumenism around the Bible”.<sup>1</sup>

### The Global and The African Ecclesial Context

In 1995, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, Pope John Paul II spoke in these terms: “Greater efforts must be made to provide access to the Sacred Scriptures, especially through full or partial translations of the Bible, prepared as far as possible in cooperation with other Churches and Ecclesial Communities” (No. 58). In 2008, the Synod on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church noted: “During the Synod, it was clear that a number of local Churches still



The tabernacle surrounded by the mural painting:  
“The New Earth and the New Heaven under the Risen Lord”

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<sup>1</sup> Moïse Adeniran Adekambi, “Ecumenism around the Bible. The case of Benin, *Symposium on “Evangelization and Ecumenism”* CERAO (Episcopal Conference for the West Africa Region) – Centre Sainte Therese de L’Enfant-Jesus, Bingerville, 19-22 February 2002 (Unpublished.)

lack a complete translation of the Bible in their own languages" (*Verbum Domini* 115). From the pen of Pope Benedict XVI, there comes as an admission of failure: "How many people today hunger and thirst for the word of God yet remain deprived of the 'widely available access to Sacred Scripture' desired by the Second Vatican Council!" Of course, this sad recognition is followed by a call for translation work at the level of the whole Church, and for greater investment in resources and that this "should be carried out as much as possible in cooperation with the different Bible Societies" (*ibid.*).

How has Africa sought to meet this challenge of collaboration from 1965 to the present, with its great moments along the ecclesial journey and pastoral challenges posed by the synods, especially those of 1994 and 2008?

### **Interdenominational Translations in Africa: Collection and Processing of Data**

Nonwithstanding my own research there is a lack of updated and reliable statistics, but I have tried to assess the reality of translation and interdenominational Bible distribution in Africa based on reference materials<sup>2</sup> and my field notes between 2002 and 2011. A combination of these three data sources facilitates an accurate analysis.

The key document is the work of Piet Rijks who conducted a review of translations of the Bible in Africa from the beginning up to 1988, a year before its publication<sup>3</sup>. As the author said in the preface, "'Bible translation' here covers varied areas: not only the translation of a book or books of the Bible, but also works such as 'sacred stories', prayer books, the lectionary, etc."<sup>4</sup> However, the following analysis focuses on the Gospels edited or subsequently collected in one volume, the New Testament, and the complete Bible with the Deuterocanonical books. This choice is moved by the priority task set for the bishops in *Dei Verbum*: "It devolves on sacred bishops 'who have the apostolic teaching' to give the faithful entrusted to them suitable instruction in the right use of the divine books, especially the New Testament and above all the Gospels. This can be done through translations of the sacred texts, [...]" (DV 25).

In addition, for reasons of clarity, it is necessary to make a double distinction between interdenominational Bible translations and collaboration between Bible Societies and the Catholic Church. First, from an institutional point of view, there are translations in which Catholics have been working in a personal capacity, for different reasons and to different degrees: strictly speaking, these cannot be called "interdenominational" translations. This latter category applies only to translations where UBS and the Catholic Church<sup>5</sup> – a diocese, episcopal conference, national, provincial or even regional – are involved as partners in all aspects of the translation of the Bible. A good example of such a truly interdenominational translation is the *Bible Word of Life*, involving UBS and the Regional Episcopal Conference of West Africa (RECOWA). This first distinction is necessary because of the number of other denominations and Church organizations which operate in the vast field of Bible translation in Africa. This clarification is required for the effectiveness of the study and its ecclesial dimension.

A second distinction is important, this time from the standpoint of "results". There is a category of Bibles, published by UBS, which contain the deuterocanonical books. To be sure, they are witnesses of the openness of UBS to the "Catholic world" and are justified by another important goal

<sup>2</sup> Apart from the key study of P. Rijks mentioned below, our principal sources are twofold. First, the most reliable data: UBS sites, Biblical Societies of African countries, the Bible Societies in Canada, France, the United States and the United Kingdom; the prime sources of information are the UBS annual reports of translations 2011-2015. Then there are sites, with less reliable data, with information about the state of the translations of the Bible worldwide: [www.bibleinmylanguage.org](http://www.bibleinmylanguage.org); [www.worldbibles.org](http://www.worldbibles.org); [www.worldscriptures.org](http://www.worldscriptures.org); [www.findbible.org](http://www.findbible.org); etc.

<sup>3</sup> Piet Rijks, *A Guide to Catholic Bible Translations*, Vol. 2. *Africa*, Stuttgart, World Catholic Biblical Federation, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> *Piet Rijks, A Guide*, p 1.

<sup>5</sup> On the UBS site, the page devoted to *TMS Interconfessional Project Status Report* (<https://ubscommunity.org/wp-content/uploads/digital/tms/searchTMSByPartner.php>) offers a window to select the chosen partner, with two options: Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox Church.

of UBS: to distribute the Scriptures in the service of all faiths. Indeed, thanks to them, access to Scripture is readily available to Christians. However, I hesitate to describe these editions as interdenominational.

In contrast, among the “Bibles with deuterocanonical books,” there are those that are interdenominational through their protagonists. It is indeed a common practice, especially in Africa, for interdenominational Bible translations to be published in two different editions: one without the deuterocanonical books (Protestant edition) and one with them (Catholic edition). Both are denominational Bibles that are also truly interdenominational<sup>6</sup>. In my view, this would account for some duplication in the statistics. For this reason, in Africa, we must acknowledge the rising number of interdenominational Bibles. But beyond the issue of numbers, these Bibles are the testimony to the value, in every sense of the word, that UBS and the various denominations that it serves contribute to the interdenominational dimension of the Bible.<sup>7</sup>

At the pastoral level, this *modus operandi* invites a broadening of the concept of interdenominational to include the three stages of the service of Bible translation: the translation itself, publication and dissemination. We will come back to this issue later.

Finally, in the treatment of data collected under the above criteria, the approach adopted is to follow each translation project from the publication of the Gospels (first fruit) through the New Testament (mid-term) up to the publication of the integral Bible.<sup>8</sup>

### Some Figures

The following summary table, presented by regions<sup>9</sup>, witnesses primarily to the growth between 1966 and 2016 of the number of interdenominational bible projects in Africa and Madagascar, at the same time indicating the level of implementation.

Region	Completed	Completed?	Unfinished	Ongoing	Total	Languages from/to
West Africa	10	1	12	23	47	15/47 triple
East Africa	25	3	10	13	51	31/51 + 60.78%
Central Africa	6	2	8	8	24	14/24 + 60.86%
Southern Africa	11	3	9	4	27	20/27 + 30%
Indian Ocean	2	0	0	0	2	1/2 double
<b>Total SECAM</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>81/150</b> <b>+ 84%</b>

<sup>6</sup> This is the case, for example, of the *Bible in Basic French*, *Bible in Jula* and *Bobo Mandare*, Burkina Faso, or *Bhaibhiri Idzva Rechishona* (2007) in Zimbabwe, to cite these two countries.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, "Scripture Translation and the Churches" and "Guidelines for UBS Scripture Translation" *UBS Global Board Reading*, UK, April 2004. See also the Guidelines concerning interfaith cooperation on this subject, co-signed by UBS and the Vatican in 1968 and 1987. In October 2008, at the Synod on the Word of God, a joint communiqué was signed by UBS and the Catholic Biblical Federation, Rome, at the Pontifical Council for the Unity of Christians, marking a step in the launching of UBS: "From then, agencies of Bible Societies could publish Bibles in which the order of the books followed the Catholic biblical canon and with aids to help readers to a better understanding of the text reflecting the teaching and tradition of the Catholic Church."

<sup>8</sup> The revision projects are not considered save where they have an interdenominational character.

<sup>9</sup> Two reasons justify such presentation by regions. Firstly: the national borders were a colonial inheritance; most languages are transnational. Second: The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) is organized into geographical regions bringing together, in general, one or more associations of episcopal conferences.

The last column shows how the number of languages, and therefore thus the number of interdenominational translation projects, has increased in impressive proportions. This number is tripled for West Africa. It increased by over 60% in East Africa and Central Africa. It rose from 20 to 27 in Southern Africa. Some countries are exemplary in this respect: Burkina Faso and Togo have moved from zero to 8 and 6 projects respectively; Kenya has more than doubled the number of languages (7 to 16). In addition, in all countries where there were no translation projects in an African language there are at least two today: Benin (3), Mali (2), Eritrea (2), Congo Brazzaville (2), Gabon (2), Chad (3). Despite this increase, it should be noted that the length of time under consideration suggests that we could have done better. Indeed, what do these numbers mean in twenty to forty years compared to the multitude of languages in the dioceses and countries of Africa?

In terms of implementation rates, few are the interdenominational projects identified by P. Rijks to have been completed. These include, for example: 1 project for Nigeria (Hausa), Kenya (Luo), Sudan (Bari), Cameroon (Fulfulde), Zimbabwe (Ndebele); 2 projects for Malawi (Chichewa and Tumbuka); 3 projects for South Africa (Sepedi, Sotho and Tswana) and for Namibia (Kwangali, Ndonga and Otjiherero); and 6 for Zambia (Bemba Chitonga, Ichilamba, Ichinamwanga, Lozi and Nyanja).

The 54 translations completed have been carried out in two different blocks of time, 28 for the period from 1966 to 1988 (see the review by P. Rijks) and 26 for the period 1989 to 2016. In contrast the number of unfinished, incomplete projects is striking. In the first period (1966-1988), there were 41, of which 39 were virtually abandoned, either because the project was halted or because its goals were met by a non-interdenominational publication, with or without the Deuterocanonical books (DC); and 3 are judged to be in the execution phase<sup>10</sup>.

The status of projects between 1989 and 2016 seems hardly more encouraging. Of 67 projects, 26 were completed and 41 are in progress; that is an achievement rate of 38.80%. Fortunately, the state of UBS projects in which the Catholic Church is engaged globally indicates percentages above the average when it comes to Africa: 35 of 51 global projects are in Africa, that is, 68.62%. This shows a marked increased collaboration between UBS and the Catholic Church in Africa, with even greater involvement of the latter. While there is reason for optimism, we must still take stock of challenges to be met.



*The Risen Lord and the new earth and the new heaven  
(detail of the mural painting).*

<sup>10</sup> Lamba (Togo), Otetela (DRC) and Domwe (Mozambique) Projects.

## Strengths and Weaknesses of the Collaboration between UBS and the Catholic Church in Africa

### *The Denominational Factor*

The challenges facing ecumenism with respect to the Bible in Africa are many. They are of two kinds: denominational and theological and pastoral issues. Despite the non-denominational character UBS, it is considered by some, Protestants and Catholics alike, as a Protestant initiative<sup>11</sup>. At the level of pastoral practice, interdenominational Bible translation points to a wider responsibility: that of Christian Unity. It is not coincidental that the Catholic Biblical Federation is linked to the Pontifical Council for the Unity of Christians which oversees the agreements signed between UBS and the Catholic Church. In this precise area of unity around the Bible, the "deconfessionalization" of UBS is progressing in Africa thanks to a double opening: at the administrative level and at the practical level.

Administratively, UBS has sought to include Catholics in its structures. In most countries, representatives of Episcopal Conferences sit on the boards of directors of national Bible Societies, witness to the enthusiasm for sharing with their fellow believers their experience in this structure dedicated to serve the Word of God. At the continental level, SECAM has done substantive work, through its organ BICAM, for all national episcopal conferences to be represented in the Bible Societies of their country.

Obviously, the ecumenism promoted by the Churches of the Reformation and the Catholic Church remains a movement with varying degrees of conviction or commitment. Thus, in Africa, collaboration between UBS and the Catholic Church depends in part on the commitment of both, starting with pastors, priests and bishops. Administrative reconciliation is not enough. There is need for appropriating the UBS objective. It is in this direction that the leadership of BICAM has sought to travel from its inception in 1981 up to the present day. They cultivate good working relations with UBS leadership for the Africa Region and especially play an advocacy role for UBS with the Secretariat of SECAM and national or regional episcopal conferences, also building on the formal consultation meetings on matters of common interest.



*A global view of the mural painting in the Blessed Sacrament chapel.*

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, from the Protestant side, Russell R. Standish & Colin D. Standish, *Modern Bible Translations Unmasked*, Hartland Publications, Rapidan, VA 2006<sup>2</sup>. It is astonishing that such a book, published in 1993, could have been reprinted in 2006.

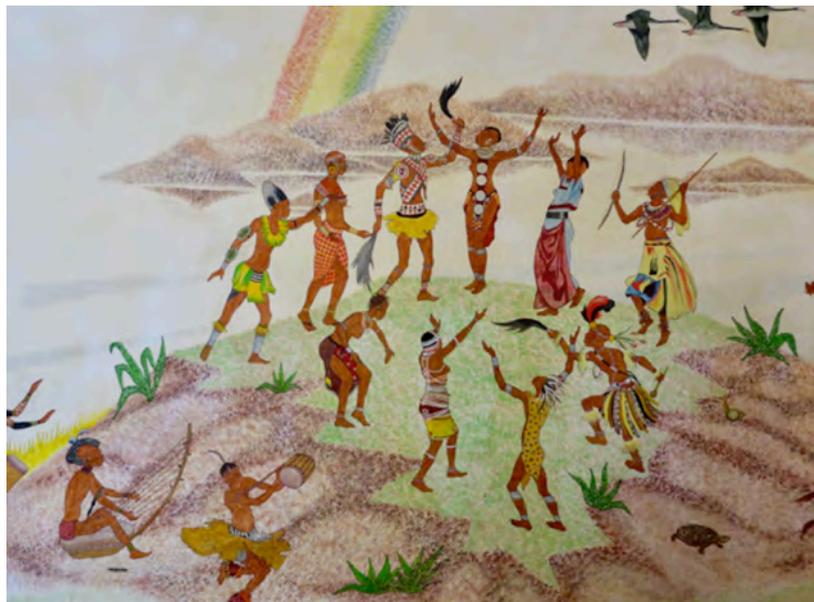
The UBS initiative is not just administrative; it also affects concrete actions. It seeks to meet the expectations of the Churches, particularly the Catholic Church, for example regarding the canon of Scripture. In Africa, the implementation of UBS international goals is usually carried out through the division of labour: the deuterocanonical books (DC) are translated by Catholics, while proto-canonical books can be translated by Catholics or non-Catholics. Practice is evolving. At the 2008 workshop seminar on DC, organized by UBS in Tema (Ghana), I did not fail to stress this advance and invite UBS to go one step further: do not wait for Catholic Church involvement in a translation project before including the translation of the DC<sup>12</sup>.

Finally, denominational focus is also reflected in the practice noted above of the publishing of two editions of religious interdenominational Bible translations. On the negative side, this highlights that ecclesial adherence is a factor present in thought and deed. Positively, it shows respect for all faiths in an interdenominational work in a multi-religious structure. Unwillingness to take this into account would certainly lead to a form of non-denominationalism detrimental to true ecumenism which integrates unity and diversity even in the common service of the Word. The development of this policy is a sterling tribute to UBS.

### **Bottom-up Theological and Pastoral Initiatives**

The difficulty for the Catholic Church to engage "body and soul" in the three major activities of UBS which are the translation, production and distribution of the Bible, and to dedicate adequate human, financial and material resources to them, certainly harks back to a centuries-old theology and method of evangelization. The *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) of the pastoral focus of the Reformed Churches has had obvious consequences on the life and mission of these Churches, in which the Bible became the manual par excellence, if not the only evangelization manual of catechesis, of spirituality... For the Catholic Church, this is not the case. We must however recognize that even if the opposition to *Sola Scriptura* does not mean *sine scriptura* (without Scripture), it surely leads to a loss of the place and role of the Word of God in the life and mission of the disciple as well as of the Church. After five centuries we can evaluate the impact on the life, mission, thought and pastoral life of the respective Churches. With the 1965 Conciliar Document on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) and the 2010 Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church (*Verbum Domini*), the Catholic Church has given its sons and daughters, and especially its ordained ministers and pastoral workers, benchmarks embraced by UBS for better cooperation. One of the key formulas of *Verbum Domini* is the concept of the pastoral Biblical ministry or biblical apostolate as a "biblical animation of all pastoral life" (No. 73).

Such a "biblical animation of all pastoral life" makes the Bible not only "the soul" but also the "cutting edge" of all pastoral life: concretely, pastoral ministry *cum Scriptura* (with Scripture). This requires of all the pastors that they are at the same time



*Celebration*  
(detail of the mural painting).

<sup>12</sup> Moïse Adekambi, "Deuterocanonical Books' Translation in Africa. A Catholic Perspective", *DC Workshop for Anglophone Countries in Africa*, His Presence Hotel, Tema, Accra, 10 – 20 February 2008. Unpublished.

agents and “militants” for the biblical formation of God’s people, as well as for the translation, publication and distribution of the Bible in all languages. It is in this spirit that, in all countries of the continent, there are being organized days, weeks and months of the Bible under the auspices of UBS and with the active participation of the Catholic Church; this contributes to allaying suspicion, reticence and fears of commitment and cooperation with UBS. Collaboration and constructive interrelationship are not without effect on softening and balancing approaches to theological or pastoral positions.

### Learning from the Reformed Churches

UBS has brought a great deal to the African Catholic Church in matters of translation and distribution of the Bible. It was not possible to identify all interdenominational translations of the continent, but enough to show that they are far more numerous than Catholic confessional translations. In most countries, Protestant denominational translations preceded those of Catholics; and the latter have used the New Testament translations naturally and without problem, even during liturgical celebrations. This shows the importance of the contribution of UBS in this area.

In No. 22 of *Dei Verbum*, II Vatican Council says, “Should the opportunity arise, and the Church authorities approve, if these translations are produced in cooperation with the separated brethren as well, all Christians will be able to use them.”

I personally believe that the time is now quite favourable for a stronger commitment, more affective and effective of the Catholic Church to and with the Bible Societies. Here, too, we must learn from the Reformed Churches that continue to demonstrate openness, initiative, creativity and responsiveness to the signs of the times.



*The eschatological feast on God’s mountain in harmony with all animals  
(detail of the mural painting).*

## Projects and Experiences

### The Inter-Confessional Translation of the Bible in Contemporary Language (ITCL)

The Bible, that is the Scripture, is today the ecumenical text par excellence, and yet from about the year 1500 of the second millennium it represented an element of division among the Churches as regards its role in the Churches themselves and in the Christian witness to be rendered in the world. It became part of the affirmation of confessional identity, as for example in the expressions "*Sola Scriptura*", "*Bible and Magisterium*", but in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries we see a cause-effect relationship between the binomial "*Bible and Ecumenism*" in the life of the Churches. In fact, if many say that the twentieth century is the century of the Church or rather, of Ecumenism, this is true because the nineteenth century was above all the century of the Bible.

In the nineteenth century we witness a profound renewal of Bible studies, continued and developed further in the twentieth century, which revolutionized our approach to the biblical texts.

The research and application of new methods of literary analysis (think for example of literary research and the discussion concerning the Homeric question), affirmation of new sciences such as the archaeology of the Ancient Near East (think of the great discoveries made in Mesopotamia) and linguistics (especially the comparative and the Semitic ones, think only for example the Hebrew-language dictionary of Gesenius, patriarch of Hebrew lexicography), all contributed to delineate the historical, geographical and cultural context of the Bible much more precisely. Despite a strong initial opposition, this commitment to research progressively saw first convergence and then mutual communication and collaboration on the part of scholars belonging to different Christian confessions.

Moreover, in an examination, even if not in-depth, of the history of ecumenical dialogue, the Bible is always among the first reasons for the proposal of a possible meeting point and, in many cases, it is precisely starting from such a meeting around the Bible text that ecumenical dialogue has developed.

The two "ecumenical" events of the twentieth century, which we can call *epochal*, have a very close link with the Bible; they are:

- the birth in 1948 of the World Council of Churches (WCC), with its particular commitment to the study of the Bible and the Bible's relevance in the life of the Churches, was reaffirmed in the WCC's constitutive statutory statement, "The Ecumenical Council of Churches is an association of Churches that confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to realize their common vocation for the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit";
- the celebration at the beginning of the 1960s of the Second Vatican Council (Vat II) with the promulgation of documents on Scripture such as *Unitatis Redintegratio* and *Dei Verbum*.



*Burial rituals  
in African tribal society.*

The priority of attention paid to the Bible, as well as mutual knowledge and the concrete collaboration between the different confessional realities present in the WCC have often led to direct cooperation between the Churches for the common translation and dissemination of the Bible, something hoped for and promoted by the same WCC, and thanks above all to the collaboration among the Biblical Societies which joined together in 1946 into the *Federation of Universal Biblical Alliance/United Bible Societies (UBA/UBS)*. The United Bible Societies have carried out pioneering work in the field of inter-confessional biblical collaboration and have also initiated a very active relationship with the WCC since its establishment in 1948.

Following Vat II, this collaboration would also extend to the Catholic Church the leadership of which is represented by the signing of the *Guiding Principles for Interfaith Cooperation for the Translation of the Bible* agreed upon between the UBS and the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity, which took place on the day of Pentecost 1968, was then updated in 1987, and the publication, once again in 1968, of the second edition of the UBS Greek New Testament (2014<sup>5</sup>) brought to completion by an international scientific and inter-confessional editorial committee of which the future Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini was a member.

In the 1990s, similar official collaboration would be begun with the Russian Orthodox Church and in 2004 with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, thus achieving ever more effective and full cooperation in every aspect of biblical work.

*To date, the binomial Bible/Scripture-Ecumenism is present in all of the joint or individual Churches' documents; at the international, national and local levels; dealing either together or separately with the Bible and Ecumenism.*

### The ITCL Translation: A Bit of History

The 1960s also provided a great opportunity for reflection for the Italian ecclesial reality: the need for meeting and dialogue became more and more evident, despite the difficulties of many centuries of distant positions. In those years there was collaboration between the Catholic Church and the Biblical Societies for the Italian version of the Bible which was then to be accepted as the official text by the Italian Episcopal Conference. Even if history has decided that this collaboration would not come to completion, in that search for meeting and dialogue today we can see an anticipatory "sign" of the contemporary Italian Bible.

In the early 1970s, the secretary general of the Biblical Society, Pastor Renzo Bertalot, requested of the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate, whose general secretary was Father Van der Valk, to provide the name of a Catholic publisher that could join the Biblical Society in an inter-confessional project. Father Van der Valk suggested that he approach the Salesian publishing house *Libreria Elledici* of Turin. On July 18, 1973 a collaborative relationship was established between the Universal Biblical Alliance, the Italian and Swiss Biblical Societies and the *Libreria Elledici*. Also decided at that time were the editions of the original texts to be used for translation. The two parties appointed an editing committee to oversee the translation and to resolve any related technical or organizational problems. Meanwhile, Pastor Bertalot had already started the search for experts willing to participate in the translation project. For this purpose, he consulted with the Catholic co-editor, the Moderator of the *Waldensian Table*, Pastor Neri Giampiccoli, and the Rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Father Carlo Maria Martini.



On June 27, 1973, the Editorial Committee appointed four translators: two Protestants, Professor Bruno Corsani and Pastor Bruno Costabel; and two Catholics, Professors Carlo Ghidelli and Carlo Buzzetti. The Translation Committee was composed of Pastor Bertalot as coordinator, Don Mario Galizzi as a consultant, Professor Paul Ellingworth and Professor Jan De Waard as scientific advisers to the Universal Bible Alliance. The work was carried out with the approval of the *Waldensian Table*, the executive body of the Waldensian Evangelical Church, which, in the person of the Moderator, Pastore Neri Giampiccoli, communicated to Pastor Bertalot the authorization for the evangelical translators to participate in the translation.

On the Catholic side, on the other hand, the presidency of the Italian Episcopal Conference, through Monsignor Bartoletti, informed Pastor Bertalot of its approval with a letter dated July 30, 1973. Within four years the translation and verification work had been completed and, at long last, between November 27 and 29, 1976, the *Inter-confessional New Testament in Contemporary Language* (ITCL) was presented to the President of the Republic, Giovanni Leone, to Pope Paul VI, to the Federation of Italian Evangelical Churches and to the Italian Episcopal Conference. The text was welcomed positively by all and was received, as Pope Paul VI himself said “with an expression of joy and gratitude”.

That first effort had come to an end and the distribution of the translation was begun with great success, but in the meantime the translation of the Old Testament was also begun, with the formation of five groups of translators. That effort ended with the publication of the entire Bible in September 1985, when it was presented once again first to the President of the Republic, Francesco Cossiga, then to Pope John Paul II, to the Federation of Evangelical Churches and to the Italian Episcopal Conference. Everyone expressed their satisfaction with the completion of the work that had begun back in 1972.

*Some numbers will give a good idea of the history of the translation:*

- years of work: 13 (1972-1985);
- hours of common discussion of the texts: 9,000;
- typewritten pages: 15,000;
- translators: 18;
- proof-readers: 16;
- and advisors: 95;

*and finally, comments from about 130 individuals coming from different Christian denominations.*

### **The ITCL Translation Method**

In the years after the Second World War, of the world's 6,500 existing languages, about 1,000 had some kind of translation of biblical texts, although only about 200 had the entire Bible, but in many cases the texts consisted of old translations or simple revisions of old translations. Faced with the rapid growth of the world population, the great commitment to literacy, the increasing speed of communications, the growth of the number of Christian believers in the world, the UBA launched an intense and wide range of actions and initiatives aimed at increasing the number of translations into languages still lacking biblical texts while ensuring a high textual and linguistic quality, and an equal commitment to improving existing revisions. The main protagonist of this commitment was the American linguist Eugene Nida (1914–2011), director of translations for the American Bible Society and for the UBA for 40 years, a prominent scholar and a pioneer in the development of the theory and practice of translating the Bible. Nida is known for having elaborated, in the 1960s, the linguistic theory of biblical translation based on *Dynamic Equivalence*, or *Functional Equivalence*, as it was subsequently defined in the light of twenty years of Bible translation experience around the world. In his research Nida would also make reference to the work of Noam Chomsky, father of the generative-transformational linguistic theory.

We will briefly and in general outline the method of translation. *Dynamic Equivalence* (DE) provided the basis for the Inter-confessional Translation of the Bible in Contemporary Language (ITCL), which was created using the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts in their most recent critical editions (BHS, LXX Rahlfs, UBS GNT).

In that translation the editors tried to produce a version that was as equivalent as possible to the original. However, there are two types of equivalence and that necessitates different working methods. Nida defines them as *Formal Equivalence* (FE) and *Dynamic Equivalence* (DE). The former refers to the original both in form and in substance and tries to reproduce them in the receiving language, following the structures as much as possible. The second type is based on the principle of “equivalent effect” and tries to arouse in the reader a reaction most similar to that experienced by the original reader. No attempt is made to bring the receiving language closer to the original language, but rather to ensure that the relationship between the modern receiver and the message is substantially identical to that between the original receiver and the message. Formal Equivalence (FE) tries to render the original message: it preserves its shape, reproduces every word with a corresponding word, it maintains the same sentence structure and the same formal indicators, such as for example the conjunctive *waw*. Thus, the use of the word is tied to a concordance of terms while the meaning is based on the original context. The translation based on Dynamic Equivalence is defined by Nida as the natural equivalent closest to the message of the original language, first in terms of meaning and then style. *Equivalent* indicates the original text, *natural* the receiving language and *closer* the effort to bring the two realities together. Equivalent, because the cause of misunderstandings can be identical; natural, because adapted to the structures of the receiving languages; closer, out of respect for the original, carefully avoiding reinterpretations in modern terms.

It is clear that in this perspective the form and the meaning come into conflict. Nida gives priority to meaning all the while recognizing the importance of style, the content of which must be understood.

The choice of one of the two methods is based on three factors: the nature of the message, the aims of the translator and the type of recipient.

By radicalizing the terms, we can state that the FE conserves the historicity of the text, but has difficulty explaining it; while the DE saves the historicity of the experience, but can lose its identity with the original form. The FE sacrifices the situation for the text, while the DE sacrifices the text for the situation. Actually every translation is both an FE and a DE, with the only variation being the degree of consideration of one or the other. One brings the reader to the text, the other brings the text to the reader. The two approaches are legitimate as long as they are consistently applied.

Compared to the traditional process by which the message is transferred from the original language to the receiving one on a horizontal level based on rules of correspondence, the Nida method consists of three phases:

1. *analysis* of the superficial structure of the text;
2. *transfer* of the elements analysed, the *kernels*, from one language to another;



*Elements of the spiritist traditional African religion: the rain-caller, drum beating and communion with the dead ancestors*

3. *restructuring* of the whole message analysed in order to be congenial to the receiving language.

In the *analysis*, deriving from Chomsky the notion of superficial structure, we identify in the deep structure the fundamental nuclei (kernels) that the language elaborates with precise rules of transformation into superficial structures. In the analysis, one also acquires the linguistic, referential and emotional meanings and finally the relationships between the nuclei.

In the *transfer*, the results of the analysis are transferred from the original language to the receiving language. At this stage the differences between the two languages are noted. The form of the message and its content come into tension. So, in order to allow the receiver to understand the meaning, it is necessary to make adjustments as the recipient does not belong to the same "situation", i.e., culture and environment. The adaptations are structural, when referring to the structure of the receiving language, semantic, when referring to its vocabulary and its culture.

In the *restructuring*, the nuclei are restructured according to the needs of the receiving language at the level of its superficial structure, keeping in mind the diversity of linguistic varieties present in the language itself. In fact, the language, which is not a homogeneous reality, is divided along the axis of the "levels" of the socio-cultural classes with their relative degree of education and the axis of the "registers" within each level that regulate the communicative relationship between speakers (registers: regular, casual, formal, intimate). Needless to say, the various levels are not in watertight compartments, but there is a large area of overlap, where the language used can be defined as "contemporary language", also determined by the factor of the productive and receptive capacity of a message by the speakers. Understanding is easier than speaking. Other factors also influence restructuring such as age, gender and the group. Having then a vision of the social complexity of the language, the translator must finally choose the type of recipient to whom his translation is directed. A FE translation is usually addressed to a high socio-cultural level, while the DE addresses that overlapping area identifiable by the use of the contemporary language. In restructuring, we must also take into account the structural meaning of the message in the original language, since in all languages there are structural universals of discourse, i.e., elements that indicate, for example, the beginning and the end of the message, the chronological, spatial relationships and the logic of events. The choice of the literary genre also occurs in this phase: in fact, a literary genre of the original language can describe a situation that in the receiving language is described by a different literary genre.

*The method of translation to DE developed by Nida has the merit of having offered a model of organic and practical linguistic translation by systematically and successively addressing the problems presented simultaneously to the translator. In it, we consider the linguistic "situation" as an important moment for translation, placing our attention on the recipient of the message, a Copernican revolution in the science of translation.*

### **The 2014 Revision of the ITCL Translation of the Bible**

In the normal course of events, after a few years in use a biblical translation is "revised". The revision of the ITCL was begun in 1996 and completed in 2014 with its presentation to the Italian Catholic and Evangelical Churches and also to Pope Francis. It was a long and difficult task, conducted by about twenty scholars who sought to improve and update the text to reflect the development of the contemporary language while remaining faithful to the original texts and also while taking into account the suggestions submitted by various readers.

The ITCL does not intend to – nor can it – replace all the other biblical translations. In fact, all this great effort would have value only if it were really possible to bring the Word of God into the hands of those who for different reasons were far away. Dissemination continued the inter-confessional dimension of the work: the Italian ecclesial reality in all its aspects was invited to confront itself in the light of this event, which was not to be considered merely as a further publishing initiative.

If it is true that the figures help to describe reality, it can be recalled that in the span of about 40 years (1976–2017) some 5,000,000 New Testaments were distributed in Italy, about

1,600,000 complete Bibles and more than 6,000,000 portions of the Inter-confessional Translation in Contemporary Language, ITCL, for a total of almost 13,000,000 copies.

So, has it all been a great success? If so, to what was it due? To the skills of the translators? To a general desire for a point of encounter between the Churches?

We believe that all of the above were valid factors: in fact, the Churches in Italy wanted to underline the strong and positive inter-confessional and missionary dimension of the ITCL in their documents on ecumenism and on the biblical apostolate, recommending its use for diffusion and study in the various moments of ecclesial life.

But we also believe that the perception of its *missionary* dimension underlies the great attention paid to ITCL. Like the other translations in contemporary language, the ITCL wants to speak to the men and women of today while remaining faithful to the original texts and pointing to the unity of all Christians around the Word of God. The ITCL intends to be missionary, faithful and inter-confessional. It can be said that from the beginning it has sought to be a translation of an “ecclesial” dimension and not a “cultural” one for the announcement of God’s message of salvation; Christians in fact find themselves gathered around the Word of God in their missionary commitment. The ITCL is certainly born in the context of ecumenical dialogue, but it cannot be described as a “form” of ecumenism. It is rather an act of common witness that definitely generates and accompanies ecumenical dialogue.

*And that’s the way that it was for the group of translators: a community of believers of different traditions was born, a community which prayed, lived and gave testimony. The first fruits, therefore, a reality not yet perfect but already blessed by the Lord, a group which attempted to respond to Jesus’ invitation: “Go into the whole world and bring the message of the Gospel to all people” (Mk 16:15).*

Valdo Bertalot



*Abraham, the ancestor of all believers, leading his people towards the land, which God has promised.*

## Inter-denominational Bibles: the TOB and ZeBible

In the French-speaking world, there are several Bibles whose translation, annotation and editing have been done jointly by biblical scholars of different faiths. The *TOB* (Ecumenical Translation of the Bible) was the pioneer. Since its publication in 1975, it has been a distinguishing mark of the ecumenical movement and is hailed even today for its clarity and singular openness. *ZeBible*, published in 2011, is not a new translation – the text is that of the *Bible in Contemporary French (Bible en français courant)*, 1997 edition – but it is an initiative in which the print edition and the digital format have in turn successfully targeted young people.

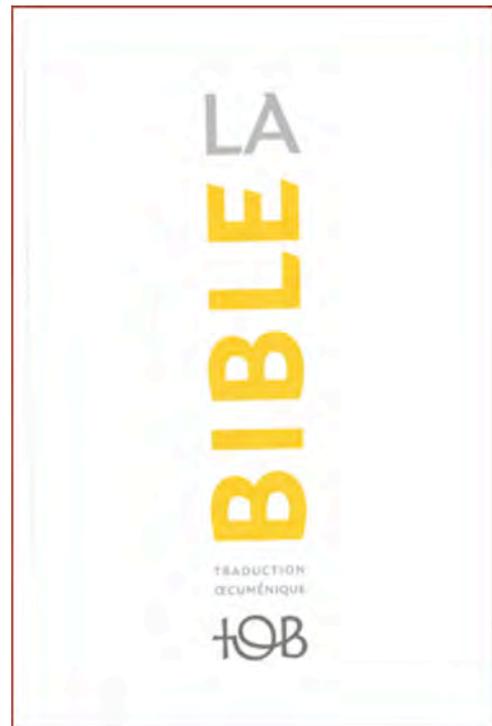
### 1. History and Strengths of the TOB

Initially it sought only to be an interfaith revision of the Catholic Jerusalem Bible. But after a pilot on the Epistle to the Romans – a hotspot since the Reformation! – a totally new translation was conceived in 1965, before the end of the Second Vatican Council. It would take ten years, led by Pastor Georges Casalis (Protestant) and Brother François Refoulé, o.p. (Catholic), supported by Mr. Olivier Béguin, General Secretary of the ABU (Universal Bible Society), funded by the ABU, the French, Belgian, Swiss (Protestant) Bible Societies as well as the publishers of the Cerf (Catholic).

Teams of two or three (seven or eight for the psalms), composed of Catholics and Protestants, divided up the books. Coordinators put together the work. An annual meeting of all allowed for exchanges and debates. The Orthodox, too few, read drafts and gave their feedback. In total, the TOB involved about 150 people. The New Testament appeared in 1972, the Old in 1975. The publication of the entire Bible was launched at Notre-Dame de Paris and at the World Council of Churches in Geneva. Three revisions would follow: 1988, 2004 and 2010.

Among the main characteristics of the TOB, firstly to be noted was the goal of producing of a *fluid translation*. This has “endured” well over fifty years! Secondly a concern for the *Jewish tradition*: fidelity to the Hebrew text called “Masoretic”. Moreover, it was decided – and this remains a unique feature – to follow the order of the books of the Hebrew Bible (and not the usual Greek and Latin order): Pentateuch, Prophets, Writings. To these was added a “Deuterocanonical” section which includes the books in question, excluded from most Protestant Bibles and inserted among the other books in Catholic Bibles. Finally, there are the *annotations* and literary, historical, theological introductions developed, which challenged the reformed use of a near-direct contact of the reader with the text. At the time, Protestants also feared becoming subservient to Catholics while Catholics feared a watering down of the Magisterium of the bishops and the Pope. But, in the end, there were only a few notes with the different confessional positions. In addition, two editions were published, one with “comprehensive” notes and the other with “essential” notes.

The initial project benefited from the biblical and ecumenical movement of the 1960s. The 2004 revision focused on the Pentateuch. Indeed, for twenty years, the scientific world questioned the hypothesis, well established since the end of the nineteenth century, of four earlier documents at the base of the current text. The introductions and notes, more cautiously, stress the criteria for the unification of the text after the Exile. The 2010 edition has made more room for the Ortho-



dox (the additional books in the "Deuterocanonical section"); moreover, in addition to updates, the translation and the notes of the Gospel of John have been modified as a result of the dialogue with Judaism. These latest revisions are in line with the *Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Bible Translation*, signed in Rome in 1987 between the Secretariat for Christian Unity and United Bible Societies and renewed in October 2008.

The TOB has found its place in society and in the Church. Since 1975, it has established itself in the French landscape due to its clarity and the scholarship of its critical approach. It is the point of reference in non-denominational textbooks. Alongside the large Catholic or Protestant initiatives, it maintains the ecumenical commitment.

In 1988, 2004 and 2010, partial revisions were conducted. The AORB (Ecumenical Association for Biblical Research), whose mission is to "give life" to the TOB, is now considering a general revision. Here are some of the guidelines:

- 1) a revised translation that recognizes the evolution of the French language and is not afraid to innovate;
- 2) a presentation (division, titles ...) that avoids, as much as possible, an a priori position on interpretation but which, in the notes, gives the reader elements to reflect theologically on the text;
- 3) the contribution of exegesis in the last fifty years, marked by radical changes in historical research, by the rediscovery of the Septuagint, and by hermeneutics and literary initiatives;
- 4) introductions and notes reflecting advances in ecumenical dialogue and diversity of sensibilities; these would highlight the value that each Christian Church places in the book in the context of its beliefs, prayer and liturgy;
- 5) introductions and notes that give recognition to the Jewish reading of the Scriptures – in different emphases for the Old Testament and the New.



Currently two books are under review. The teams take into account feedback from readers and the fruit of research. Interdenominational and French-speaking (Europe and Africa) collaborators are consulting Jewish colleagues.

## 2. History and strengths of *ZeBible*

Initiated by the French Biblical Association (ABF) in the early 2000s, *ZeBible* was born from a fact: the difficulty young people have in reading the Bible (according to a recent survey, only 29% of 15-25-year olds have one, and only 9% say they read it). How to make it more accessible? How to help young people – believers or not – to appropriate this major cultural and spiritual heritage? The challenge is being met thanks to a thoughtful approach based on the social and cultural practices of our time. A dozen collaborators, Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, have committed themselves to the project. The chosen translation was that of the *Bible in current French* (1997 edition). Its vocabulary is reduced, the syntax simplified and its concern for readability sometimes verges on paraphrasing according to its critics. This translation was based on that of the *Bible explained* published in 2004 at the initiative of Bishop Jean-Charles Thomas, emeritus bishop of Corsica, and led by the French Biblical Alliance. For this translation, 112 biblical and youth leaders from across the Francophone world and from all denominational backgrounds (Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals and Orthodox) worked seven years to develop the result. There are introductions and notes, brief and generally consensual (questions of historicity are sensitive issues in the evangelical world). But there is more.

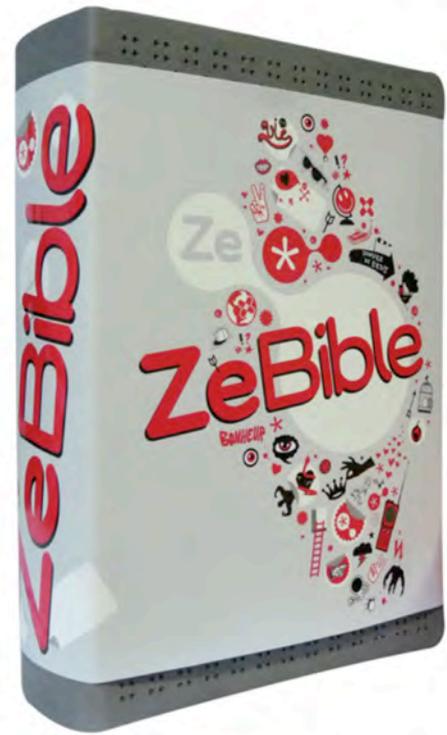
The target audience, to repeat, is 15-25-year-olds, whose life style, since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has been conditioned by the internet and multimedia. For this generation, the image becomes the first mode of communication. Emotions are appealed to, the distinction between the real and the virtual is blurred, the dialogue via the computer screen or smartphone changes the relationship. *ZeBible* nevertheless believes that it is possible to share common points of reference with young people. This conviction characterises the entire editorial approach.

Initially it was decided to produce a single interfaith edition in the spirit of unity. Thus, as with the TOB, the “deuterocanonicals” are placed between the Old and New Testaments; their presence upset some Protestants and their location baffled some Catholics. In addition to introductions, pictures, prefaces, glossaries, directories and maps, the print edition offers 34 thematic options and 24 reading approaches. The youth, believer or non-believer, chooses a theme, the facilitator uses a programme, the grandparents can find resources to create a link with their grandchildren. The notes avoid becoming “juvenile” and seek to accompany the reader to adulthood. The graphics, the titles of the notes use humour, and pique curiosity. The approach is delightful and witnesses to the text being Good News!

But that is not all! *ZeBible's* approach is *digitally native-friendly* in keeping with the image of the generation it seeks to address. Here lies its creativity, which has not yet been equalled. It is available on the internet, in addition to the print edition. Existential questions are dealt with through a wide variety of interactive tools (social networks, videos, music – from the P.U.S.H. group – web-series, etc.). Objective: to develop a community of Bible readers, active, full of initiatives. The site [www.zebible.com](http://www.zebible.com) (for which there are multiple internet links), the Facebook page, a blog, a smart phone app all offer many resources: access to the complete biblical text and above all the possibility of getting out of oneself, of dialoguing (forum, questions).

The dream of *ZeBible* is to bring to life “another experience” for young people. Multimedia experience certainly, but not only. Helping young people to read the Bible at their own pace, while respecting their own paths, is to allow them to open a door to their inner world, to speak, to share with others. There to be found is truly the “other experience”. It does not replace the programmes of parish communities, it is a complement. The result has been approved by CECEF (Christian Council of Churches in France, comprising the Conference of Catholic Bishops of France, the Protestant Federation of France, the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops of France, the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Anglican Church in France).

15 months after its launch, nearly 50,000 copies have been sold, especially in France, Belgium and Switzerland. As for websites, their visitors are constantly increasing. The project has lived up well to expectations. It keeps getting richer as it grows.



Fr. Gérard BILLON

Director of the Catholic Biblical Service “Évangile et Vie”  
Vice-President of the French Bible Society

## **Romande Biblical Animation, an Ecumenical Adventure**

### **40 Years of Reading the Bible**

Launched in the 70s, the *Romande Ecumenical Biblical Animation* (ABOR) was born in a specific context in Romandy Switzerland, that of a privileged relationship between the Catholic and Protestant Christian confessions and the sensitivity to the processes of animation of groups and activity-based approaches. The context was favourable to the Bible. On the Catholic side, the repercussions of the Second Vatican Council restored the place of the Word of God in all liturgical actions, on the Protestant side, the critical reading of the Bible opened the way to plurality of the senses of Scripture.

Sensitive to group processes and non-verbal communication, the Romande Ecumenical Biblical Animation sought to “put more brain” into Bible study, not only left-brain but also right-brain functions, giving the chance to other people to express themselves and/or to express the richness of other aspects of the person, so as to implement what Scripture says: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself” (Lk 10:27).

In the French-speaking part of Switzerland, ABOR was envisaged as a space for consultation, initiatives, development and information, with a view to promoting and encouraging the reading of the Bible in groups in Christian communities, movements, etc., within an ecumenical context. Indeed, the reading of the Bible is a privileged opportunity for encounter and dialogue between people in search of meaning, but also between Churches and various Christian communities.

With these benchmarks, ABOR issued a charter setting out some basic principles:

Biblical animation is a way of reading the Bible in groups. It is addressed to anyone who agrees to enter into dialogue with the biblical text, to be challenged by it, to work in groups in search of a Word to open a space that allows everyone to grow through what confrontation with the text has germinated in each one. It is not exclusive to other ways of reading the Bible.

For this reason, we seek to be attentive to the following points:

- Interaction with the Bible is central:
  - that the group approaches it based on a theme and a questioning, or that it immerses itself the text, to discover its richness,
  - we recognize the Bible as the book from which the living Word can reverberate when we listen to it.
  
- The Bible speaks:
  - to the whole human person: body, emotions, feelings, intelligence...
  - to people incarnated in concrete social and relational situations.

It has a prophetic function critical of the socio-economic system of our times, as well as of ecclesiastical systems.

The reading the Bible that we seek to promote takes into account all these dimensions.

- Reading the Bible is a search for meaning (or truth) that is built on a dialogue between the text and the people. This commits us to:
  - read it in groups, communities, Churches,
  - listen to everyone, participants or facilitators, with the same respect and attention,

- seek the freedom that allows everyone, participants and facilitators, to be moved, to change their way of reading the bible, to discover new ways,
- recognize the diversity of interpretations and methods of reading,
- exercise our intelligence and judgment,
  - analyse the texts rigorously,
  - to practice a critical reading that reflects on its presuppositions.

In our opinion, an honest reading of the Bible cannot lead to any interpretation. It requires rigour; but this rigour does not prevent openness and listening of various interpretations, even if sometimes it excludes some. This is not a contradiction, but a creative tension, and an invitation to maintain an ever-fragile balance between respect for the text and respect for the readers.

- The practice of biblical animation commits animators to:
  - train and give others opportunities to learn,
  - co-facilitate, collaborate and negotiate for joint development of initiatives,
  - recognize the diversity of approaches and animation initiatives,
  - exploit the complementarities and wealth of each, facilitator, participant,
  - maintain the creative tension between analytical rigour and openness to all insights offered by participants,
  - test the coherence of approaches and initiatives utilizing the criteria set out in this page.

On this basis, the team facilitated sessions, evening encounters, and published many animation projects, outlines, and exegetical notes to help Bible group leaders. This ecumenical adventure ends this year. What remains? Several things. Firstly, many people have been enabled to confront the Word of God, and for some – especially lay people – the capacity to animate groups themselves. But above all what is remarkable and will continue, is the fact that all this material and the animation activities conducted were developed and animated jointly by Protestants and Catholics. This activity was conducted in the spirit proposed by the Dombes Group for the conversion of the Churches: to know how other communities live and embody the Gospel and to be converted by their witness. In this spirit of conversion, of “metanoia”, the Bible appears to be a path of unity that respects the diversity of Christian confessions.

*Fr. Marcel Durrer, ofm cap*

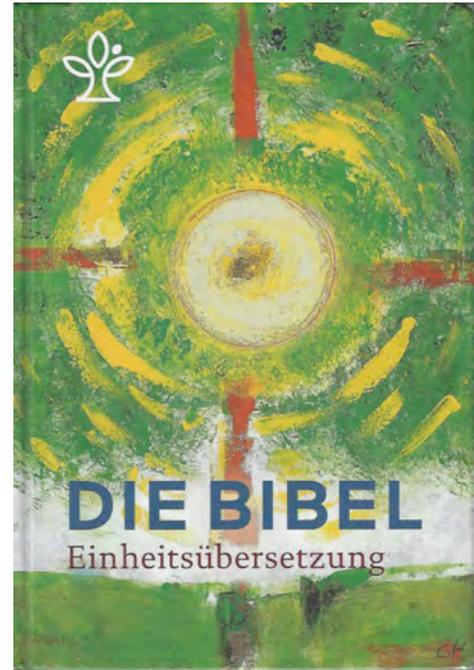
## The Revised *Einheitsübersetzung* <sup>1</sup>

The Revised *Einheitsübersetzung* (literally, the “unified or common translation”) is the official Catholic translation for all areas of ecclesiastical life throughout the German-speaking world (liturgy, catechesis, proclamation, private reading). Because of this, it is called the “*Einheitsübersetzung*”. The *Katholische Bibelwerk e.V.* gave the initial impulse for this project in 1960 with a so-called “Memorandum”, even before the Second Vatican Council opened the way to a biblical and German language renewal in the areas of pastoral care and liturgy (see DV 22).

After more than 30 years, there was need for a correction of those translations whose textual basis or theological interpretation had changed. A new approach to contemporary language was also necessary. The panel charged with the revision started out in 2006 with a clear mandate not to create a new translation but rather a moderate revision of the one then in use.

At the behest of the whole editorial community, Bishop Joachim Wanke of Erfurt, Archbishop Alois Kothgasser of Salzburg, Bishop Martin Gächter, Auxiliary Bishop of Basel, and Bishop Wilhelm Egger of Bolzano-Bressanone assumed the leadership in the process of revision. Until his death in 2008, Bishop Egger headed the committee and was then succeeded by Bishop Wanke. This team met together for a total of thirty sessions. They were also assisted by exegetical consultants and a team of around 50 expert translators.

The revision of the text was rounded out with a new graphic design, fewer annotations, a renewed appendix with up-to-date maps as well as new introductions to the individual books.



### As Literal as Possible

In many places the *Revised Einheitsübersetzung* is closer to the exact wording and usage of the Greek or Hebrew texts. The salutations of Paul’s letters now read “brothers and sisters”. In Rom 16:7, the insights of textual criticism were taken into consideration and Paul now greets the respected “Apostle Junia”. Terms considered discriminatory from today’s perspective were usually deleted. Thus, the word “negro” disappeared in Jer 13:23. Mary chose the “good”, not the “better” part (Lk 10:42) – but the controversial term “cripple” (e.g., Lk 14:13, 21) was left unchanged. Even linguistic accretions have been removed. 1 Cor 15:36 now begins simply with: “You fool!” and is no longer in the text as an entire (but added) sentence: “What a foolish question! ...” A peculiar “Hebraization” of the title “Christ” to “Messiah” that was used in the 1980 *Einheitsübersetzung* has now been removed in favour of the Greek term.

### The Proper Name of God

Analogous to other German-language translations, the new *Einheitsübersetzung* now writes the proper name of God as “LORD” (HERR, printed in small caps) and so makes it unique and instantly recognizable. This was done mainly out of respect for the Jewish practice of never pro-

<sup>1</sup> Shortened and slightly modified extract from Katrin Brockmüller’s contribution in *Katechetische Blätter* 142 (2017) 294-299.

nouncing the divine name when “YHWH” is written in the Hebrew text. In such cases, Jews pronounce instead a substitute word such as “*adonaj/my lord*” or “*ha-shem/the name*”, among others. The original *Einheitsübersetzung* used the variant “Yahweh” or simply the salutation “Lord” in about 150 passages but this rendered the name itself almost invisible. The new recognition gained by the use of the word “LORD” in small capitals as God’s proper name is certainly a gain. At the same time, although “HERR” was common and was introduced by Luther in the Zurich Bible, among other German-language translations, it is a well-known paraphrase that is easily identifiable with the New Testament “*kyrios/Lord*”. Nevertheless, it does set in stone a patriarchal way of speaking about God, especially in those places where the proper name of God could be a description of a relationship and not a “statement of authority”.

### Christian-Jewish Dialogue

The fruits of the Christian-Jewish dialogue of recent decades have now begun to appear in the translation. This can be seen in the revision of headlines (see, for example, John 12:37) and the deletion of additions (e.g., in Rom 11:28, which called the Jews “enemies of God”). It deserves special attention that the figure of Judas takes on new dimensions when the sense of the proverbial word “betrayal” is now referred to as a “handing over”. The important chapters of Rom 9-11 have now been re-translated in an impressive way (for more on this, see: *Bibel und Kirche 2/2017: Die Einheitsübersetzung*, pp. 132-141).

### Liturgical Texts

Many of the Scripture texts frequently recited in the *Liturgy of the Hours* or in the *Liturgy of the Eucharist* remain unchanged, e.g., in the *Magnificat*, the *Benedictus* and *Nunc dimittis*, or in texts such as Jn 1:29. In the *Gloria* in Luke 2:14, however, the liturgical version now reads “den Menschen seines Wohlgefallens” instead of “seiner Gnade” as before.<sup>2</sup>

A comparison of the psalms in the two versions will irritate many. The *Einheitsübersetzung* of 1980 had massively smoothed out the text in order to favour ease of reading and singing, and in many places where there was a seeming “corruption” of the Hebrew text, the Greek version of the Septuagint was introduced. In the familiar hymnal *Gotteslob*, the 1980 version of the Psalms is still printed and so the familiar texts will be preserved for some time. From the First Sunday of Advent 2018, however, it will be obligatory for Catholics to use the texts of the 2016 *Einheitsübersetzung* in all worship services. This will also include the Responsorial Psalms. It will certainly be an exciting process to see how it all works out, i.e., to find out which text versions will prevail in which areas of Church life.

### Ecumenical Questions

From the very beginning, Evangelical specialists were involved in the 1980 *Einheitsübersetzung* and the gospels and psalms met with ecumenical agreement. The *Evangelical Church in Germany* (EKD) was also officially invited to participate in the revision. Unfortunately, following the publication by the Catholics of the document *Liturgiam authenticam* in 2001, what was originally a joint project came to an end in 2005. However, on the occasion of an ecumenical Bible Conference in Stuttgart on February 9, 2017, Bishop Bedford-Strohm and Cardinal Reinhard Marx emphatically recommended that the texts of both versions should always be given a place in ecumenical services. They both continue this practice themselves. Admittedly, this has long been the practice in many communities. In ecumenical Bible groups, the reading by participants from different versions has been accepted as a matter of course for years.

Since both the teams revising the Luther Bible as well as those working on the *Einheitsübersetzung* had the other side’s versions before them and are still connected by a collegial spirit, there are of course alternate influences of one text upon the other, so that sometimes the

<sup>2</sup> See *Gotteslob* [Catholic prayer and song book] 583.

1980 *Einheitsübersetzung* migrates into the Lutheran text (see, e.g., Gen 2:18 in the 1980/2016 *Einheitsübersetzung* and Luther 1984/2017!) or Lutheran texts find their way into the *Einheitsübersetzung* (see e.g., Mt 11:28-30).

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*For further reading:*

[www.bibelwerk.de/einheitsuebersetzung2016](http://www.bibelwerk.de/einheitsuebersetzung2016)

Dr. Katrin Brockmüller, *Die Einheitsübersetzung entdecken*, ISBN 978-3-944766-91-1

*Bibel und Kirche 2/2017: Die neue Einheitsübersetzung.*

*Bibel und Kirche 1/2017: Martin Luther und seine Bibel.*

Dr. Katrin Brockmüller (Hrsg.), *Was ist neu an der neuen Einheitsübersetzung?*

## Bible and Art Forms

A first approach to the religious art in the Saint Mary's Seat of Wisdom Chapel on the Gaba Campus of the AMECEA Pastoral Institute in Eldoret, Kenya presented the tabernacle (see BDVdigital n° 104). The artistic creativity of the inculturation of Biblical scenes was already striking in this sculpture in wood. The chapel is also home to other wood carvings and to a mural painting that continue the dialog between the Bible and the life of the people in Africa. A series of wood panels depicts on one side of the chapel scenes from the biblical narratives and on the other side scenes from traditional African life. The latter scenes illustrate fundamental values in the African tribal culture: hospitality, fertility and the perpetuation of life, the solidarity of the tribal community, death and life after death, communion with the ancestors ... The vast mural painting in the Blessed Sacrament chapel depicts the new earth and the new heaven under the Risen Lord and is reminiscent of many texts in the book of Isaiah, where people and animals come from all nations to feast on God's holy mountain. The description of the mural painting and of the wood carvings is taken from: A description of the Chapel and its art collections is available in Fr. J.C. Lemay's booklet, *Gaba, the Chapel: Religious Art: An African Expression* (Eldoret: AMECEA Pastoral Institute, 1986[?]). The photos were made during a visit in early 2015.

Thomas P. Osborne

## Federation News

### ***Plenary Assembly of SECAM*** **2016.07.18**

The 17<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the *Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar* (SECAM) took place in Luanda, the capital of Angola, from July 18 to 25. Secretary General, Rev. Jan J. Stefanów, SVD, participated in the event, representing the Catholic Biblical Federation, which was one of the institutions invited to the Assembly. He delivered a brief greeting to the delegates of all of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar.



### ***Continental Gathering of Pastoral Biblical Animation in Quito, Ecuador*** **2016.08.12**

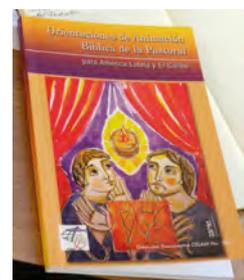
The *Continental Gathering of Pastoral Biblical Animation* (ABP) took place from August 12 through 14 in Quito, Ecuador, with the launching of the *Guidelines for the Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Ministry of the Church for Latin America and Caribbean* and the approval of the “Road Map” for the implementation of ABP throughout the continent for the years 2016–2019.



The biblical theme of the Gathering was “The Missionary Disciples Return Filled with Joy” (Lk 10:17). The 84 participants in the Gathering included 15 bishops, 30 priests and religious and 40 lay representatives of institutions throughout the continent, committed to the spreading of love for the Word of God through the bible. In their final message their reflections focused on the gospel message that “In many ways in the

past God has spoken to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days He has spoken to us through His Son” (Heb 1:1-2).

“The Word of God enlightens every human being to understand the mystery of redemption and salvation: Jesus Christ, who through his words and actions, reveals that God is a merciful Father who brings us from death to life and who makes us his children, brothers and sisters with each other. Biblical animators are witnesses of this merciful God of the bible and of the prophets who played a role in the history of their people, to orient and transform themselves and others in accordance with the Word of God.”



**VII ABIB Congress  
2016.08.29**

The VII Congress of the Brazilian Biblical Association was held at the Methodist University of São Paulo, Brazil, August 29 to September 1. The presence of the Secretary General of the Catholic Biblical Federation as an invited observer made it possible for the Brazilian Biblicists to get to know the Catholic Biblical Federation and its activities. In addition he presented the “Guiding Principles of Pastoral Biblical Animation for Latin America and the Caribbean” recently published by CELAM and CBF.



**Meeting of the Administration  
of the CBF with  
Cardinal Reinhard Marx (Munich)  
2016.10.03**

On October 3, 2016 the President of CBF, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, the President of the Administrative Board of CBF, Bishop Bernhard Haßlberger, the Treasurer of CBF, Mr. Holger Sichler and the Secretary General of CBF, Rev. Jan Stefanów, SVD, were received by Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Archbishop of Munich and President of the German Episcopal Conference in his office in Munich. A

number of topics—such as Biblical Animation in Germany and in Europe, the relationship between CBF and the Bishops’ Conferences, the finances of CBF, the *CBF Biblical Congress 2019* and the *Biblical Year 2021*—were discussed during the meeting. The consensus and the agreements reached during this meeting will be formalized over the next months.

**Annual meeting of the FEBIC  
Subregion on Southwestern Europe  
in Tarragona (Spain)  
2016.10.14**

The delegates of the member institutions of the Catholic Biblical Federation of the European Western and Central subregion came together in Tarragona (Catalunya, Spain), from October 13-16 in the annual meeting of the subregion. In an atmosphere both fraternal and welcoming created by the hosts of the meeting, the Catalan Biblical Association, accompanied by the secretary



general of CBF, evaluated the course taken in the Federation and in the Subregion since the CBF Plenary Assembly from June of the past year up to the present day. The term of the Subregional coordinator, Sr. Marie-Thérèse Perrot, was renewed, the Regional Committee was chosen, and the short and long-term Action Plan for the Subregion was laid out.

It was agreed to accept the invitation of Great Britain to host the annual gathering in October of next year.

***Meeting of the Conference of Coordinators and the Executive Committee of the Catholic Biblical Federation in (Rome) Italy 2016.11.07***

Cardinal Luis Tagle of Manila, President of the Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF), encouraged the Executive Committee and regional coordinators from five continents, who belong to the only world-wide institution of the Roman Catholic Church dedicated to biblical pastoral ministry, to stay alert and “to respond to the hunger which people throughout the world have for the Word of God, sharing generously the gifts received from the Lord”.

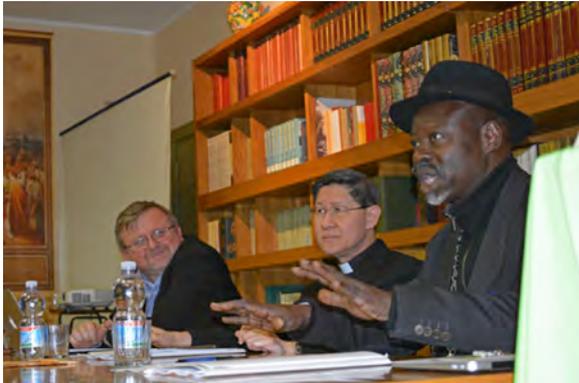


This charge was given to the 14 members of the Executive Committee and to the 11 regional and subregional coordinators in Rome on Wednesday, November 10, on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Executive Committee and the first gathering of the coordinators of CBF.

Cardinal Tagle, who is also the President of Caritas International—the principal humanitarian agency of the Catholic Church, told the delegates that a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of Caritas International developed in a similar way, that is, the same “family spirit.” He recounted the moving history of the missionary in China who, while agonizing about his incapacity to communicate the word of God in Chinese, was consoled by the image of the woman with a hemorrhage, the woman in the gospel who was cured of her illness thanks to the power of faith: “If I



can only touch the hem of the garment of Jesus I will be healed" (Mt 9:21). He encouraged the delegates to be witnesses and examples of the Word of God incarnate in Jesus, even when they are silent.



He noted that the great majority of Catholic episcopal conferences are members of CBF (101 of the 112 conferences, together 233 associate members). He also mentioned his preoccupation with those episcopal conferences which do not yet focus their activities on biblical pastoral ministry. He invited these conferences to begin the process. In response, Archbishop Jacinto Bergman of Pelotas (Brazil), representing the Episcopal conferences of Latin American and the Caribbean on the executive committee of CBF, noted that, for the national episcopal conference of Brazil, the

*Biblical Animation of all Pastoral life (ABP)* is a priority in its official declarations. In Brazil, as in other parts of the world, there is a need to encourage some bishops and dioceses to place the encounter with Christ, the Word of God, at the center of their life and pastoral activity through the APB.

The delegate of the Mideastern region, Rev. Ayoub Chadwan, underlined the ongoing activity in the area of biblical pastoral ministry which is taking place in the region in spite of the tremendous challenges, conflicts and persecutions in those countries devastated by the war, such as Syria and Iraq. He noted the support and solidarity of CBF and offered the support of the members from Lebanon to help defray the cost of the dues in countries of conflict.

The Secretary General of CBF, Rev. Jan Stefanów, SVD, presented some proposals for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of CBF in 2019, including a Biblical Congress in Rome, and for the International Year of the Bible (2019 – 2020). He also proposed that the entire church consider the possibility of establishing "the Day of the Bible".



He also commented on the discussion which took place in the meeting of the regional coordinators which had just concluded (7–8 November). In that meeting it was stated that local and external economic help for the initiatives of CBF in the regions is growing. On the other hand, finding financing for the central administration of CBF continues to be a challenge. In all the regions there will be an increase in the efforts to improve the annual payment of dues to CBF. The coordinators of the South who actually use the dues in order to cover regional activities will consult with their organizations about the proposal to dedicate 10% of the regional dues to the Secretariat of CBF in order to help finance its programs.

The regions will also propose representatives for a joint commission of CBF–Biblical Societies United (SBU), in order to determine general areas of work in light of the promotion of the Word of God in an ecumenical key.

The regional coordinators were also in agreement in extending the offer of opportunities to strengthen biblical formation. Among them are the courses "Dei Verbum", free courses of formation which are interactive and online in the French language offered by the subregion of Canada, and a course on APB offered for the first time in English in the Caribbean.

All were in agreement that this gathering was a very valuable expression of and commitment to sharing the Word of God as the engine which has to drive an outward and uninterrupted interchange of information and initiatives of CBF using the electronic media available. An example of this communication has been the quick response of the Secretary General. All present expressed their thanks to the team of the Secretariat for their great dedication and efficient organization of the meeting. The meeting of the Executive Committee continued through November 10-11.



### ***Plenary Assembly of FABC in Colombo, Sri Lanka*** **2016.11.28**

The Secretary General of FEBIC, Rev. Jan J. Stefanów, SVD, represented the Catholic Biblical Federation at the Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Episcopal Conferences of Asia (FABC) to which he was invited as an observer. The official greeting to all the bishops who were participating delivered by the Secretary General of FEBIC during the plenary assembly and multiple personal meetings with various bishops allowed the bishops of Asia to come to know the activities and projects of the Catholic Biblical Federation.



## Biblical Pastoral Publications

**Christoph Böttigheimer, *One Bible and the Many Churches. Holy Scripture in Ecumenical Understanding*, Freiburg: Herder, 2016, 389 pages, ISBN 9783451341663. – € 30,-**



The author is Professor of Fundamental Theology at the Catholic University in Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (Germany). This book deals with fundamental questions of the Churches in their understanding of revelation and scripture, a

theme that is quite topical, and not just in the run-up to the Reformation Year 2017.

Four chapters deal with the Word of God and the Word of Man, the Biblical Canon and the Church, scripture and tradition, and scripture and interpretation.

The principal dilemma, therefore, is that the various Christian Churches refer to the same Bible hoping to be able to find therein greater unity. However, due to their ecclesiological pre-conceived self-understanding, they approach the common Bible from different directions and can never therefore really come to unity. Therefore, one should be careful to expect too much from listening to the Word of God, even though listening to the Word is an indispensable necessity for all Christians.

The author elaborates the topics by his theological presentation of the different questions in each chapter. It is pleasant that he takes as his starting point language and its possibilities to say something about God and God himself. In this way humans are always situated within the context of dialogue.

As for the *Canon*, the author demonstrates that the history of the development of the canon is extremely complex. The basis for this is that the Churches assume a canon of scripture that they take to be inspired with-

out “objective” arguments forcing them to arrive at certain conclusions.

The confrontation concerning the roles allocated to Scripture and Tradition is historically of the utmost importance and brought the Catholic understanding into conflict with reformed perspectives. On the one hand, today there is broad agreement on the prevalence of Scripture, which, however, does not always prevail in practice (for example, with some Catholic dogmas about Mary).

This superiority of Scripture becomes important once again when it comes to *interpretation*. Interpretation is always community-related, but for Catholics the Magisterium has a special right to the interpretation of Scripture.

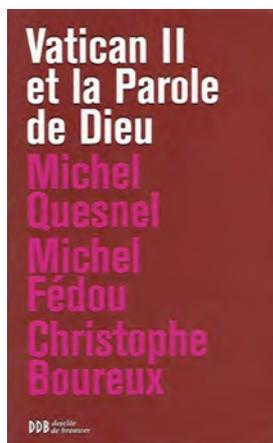
The author tries to explain and communicate the often complicated arguments in understandable language. In doing so, he relates both the Catholic and Reformed perspectives. Generally, he finds broad agreement by which the traditional contradictions between the Churches can be shown to have been overcome. Perhaps this is also easier because the author is referring above all to the strictly Reform Churches in Germany, so little consideration is given to the interpretation of other groups such as those proclaiming the ‘theology of prosperity’, to name just one example. The author is a fundamental theologian (and not an exegete, etc.). Therefore, his book is to be recommended, since it lays foundations on which a wide range of commonalities can be built by the different reading communities.

*Christian Tauchner SVD  
St. Augustin, Germany*

**Michel Quesnel, Christophe Boureux, Michel Fédou: *Vatican II et la Parole de Dieu***; preface by Régine Maire; postface by Luc Forestier, Paris : Desclée de Brouwer, 2012. – 116 p. – ISBN 978-2-220-06462-8. – € 11,90.

**Chantal Reynier, *Écritures Saintes et Parole de Dieu***, Paris : Médiaspaul, 2012 (Vatican II pour tous ; 3). – 167 p. – ISBN 978-2-7122-1237-7. – € 17.

Fifty years after the opening of the Second Vatican Council, two books on the Council and the Word of God for a wide public were published in France.

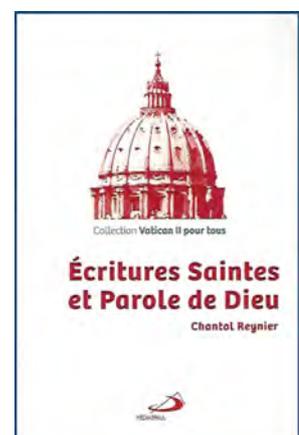


The first, *Vatican II and the Word of God (Vatican II et la Parole de Dieu)*, is comprised of three contributions to a colloquium organized in Lyon by the Oratorians of the Saint Bonaventure Sanctuary, the Jesuits of the Espace Saint-Ignace and the

Dominicans of the Agora Tête d'Or. Three speakers examined particular aspects of the Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation, *Dei Verbum*. The Dominican Christophe Boureux proposes a view on revelation as the preparation of a “dialogue between the inspired text and its reader, a dialogue between those readers belonging to a common culture and a dialogue between the person who truly possesses the text in view of its interpretation and the person to whom he communicates it” (p. 38). The Jesuit father Michel Fédou identifies five contributions of *Dei Verbum* to the understanding of the relation between Scripture and Tradition. (1) *Dei Verbum* does not speak of the two sources of revelation (Scripture and Tradition) but of one fundamental source: “the Gospel”. (2) Scripture is primary, nonetheless, even though we receive it in an act of transmission or of tradition in the preaching of the Apostles. (3) Tradition is living and is not limited to doctrine; it concerns also liturgy and the very existence of the Church. (4)

The magisterium, in the exercise of its responsibility of interpreting the Word of God in an authentic manner, “must itself take on the attitude of listening to and of being at the service of the Word ...” (p. 53). (5) The question concerning the authority of Tradition with regard to affirmations which go beyond the explicit contents of the Scriptures while “coherent with Revelation” remains open (p. 55). Father Fédou underlines three new challenges in the present context, 50 years after the Council: (1) the temptation in a pluri-cultural and multi-religious Europe to see in the Bible merely a cultural object while the Council underlined the intimate relation between the Scriptures recognized as the Word of God and the Christian communities; (2) the challenge of the transmission of Revelation within the Christian communities and the necessity of going beyond the sole framework of the Eucharist in order to permit Christians to appropriate the Word of God; (3) the challenge of ecumenical dialogue with regard to ministry and dogma and their foundation in the Scriptures. Michel Quesnel, Oratorian father, retraces the effects of the Second Vatican Council on the reading of the Bible by Catholic Christians, whether that be in the liturgy (with the revision of the lectionary), in catechesis, in prayer or in *Lectio divina* as well as in theology and religious studies. The Oratorian Father Luc Forestier concludes this short volume with a sort of post-face concerning the doctrinal convictions and pastoral tentatives in the context of the reception of *Dei Verbum*.

The second volume, *The Sacred Scriptures and the Word of God*, was published in the collection *Vatican II pour tous* (Vatican II for Everyone) by Chantal Reynier, fcm, professor of biblical exegesis at the Centre Sèvres in Paris. Reynier presents a synthesis, retracing first of all the progressive movement of the Word of God towards the centre of the life of



the Church, “after centuries of exile”. The Council, both in its elaboration and in its profound dynamics, defined itself as “reader of the Bible”. The constitution *Dei Verbum* re-specified the role of the Scriptures in Revelation and realigned the relation between Scripture and Tradition, which both spring from the same divine source. Three chapters treat successively the issues of inspiration and the canon, the translation of the Scriptures and the interpretation of the biblical text. Chantal Reynier concludes her presentation with a view – perhaps a little too optimistic, even enthusiastic – on the effective presence of the Word of God in the life of the Church. The international reader may be disappointed by the rather exclusively French-speaking focus of this publication, especially concerning the liturgical and biblical movements in advance of the Council and the Biblical pastoral efforts following the Council (see nonetheless the mention of the foundation of the Catholic Biblical Federation and the notice on the “internationalization” of the institutions of biblical study throughout the world [p. 146-147]). A new edition of this book, very helpful for an overview of the presence of the Scriptures as Word of God in the Council and in the Church afterwards, might correct the mention on p. 25 of “the sending of Peter and James to Samaria” (according to Acts 8) to read “the sending of Peter and John ...”.

T. Osborne

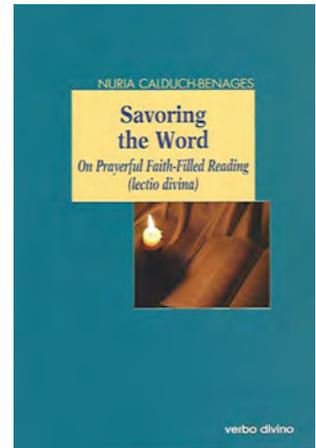
**Nuria Calduch-Benages, *Savoring the Word: On Prayerful Faith-Filled Reading*** (lectio divina), Estella (Navarra), Verbo divino, [2016]. – (El mundo de la Biblia. Horizontes). – ISBN 978-84-9073-326-4.

*Savoring the Word* is a brief introduction to lectio divina also known as prayerful or faith-filled reading. The first part deals with lectio divina as discussed at the Synod of the Word and in the exhortation *Verbum Domini*: its history, definition, description and practice in various ecclesial contexts. The second part proposes three examples of

practicing lectio divina: one is taken from the Old Testament (Ez 37:1-14) and the other two are from the New Testament (Mt 25:31-46 and Phil 3:2-14). In the third part, the text of the Letter of Guigo the Carthusian to his brother Gervase about the Contemplative Life is presented in its entirety.

The book is the result of the author’s participation as an expert in the 12<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church (2008), of her reading of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini* and finally of her experience in the field of biblical pastoral ministry.

This English translation of the original Spanish edition (*Saboreando la Palabra*, 2012, cf. BDVdigital, 2012, n. 2-3, p. 40) was translated by Francis Macatangay, together with Cecilia Morillo and Teresa Stevenson, and includes an updated bibliography, including English titles.



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Catholic Biblical Federation  
 Fédération Biblique Catholique  
 Federación Bíblica Católica  
 Katholische Bibelföderation

### *The Bible and ecumenism*

Conscious that the Church has her foundation in Christ, the incarnate Word of God, the Synod wished to emphasize the centrality of biblical studies within ecumenical dialogue aimed at the full expression of the unity of all believers in Christ. The Scriptures themselves contain Jesus' moving prayer to the Father that his disciples might be one, so that the world may believe (cf. Jn 17:21). All this can only strengthen our conviction that by listening and meditating together on the Scriptures, we experience a real, albeit not yet full communion; "shared listening to the Scriptures thus spurs us on towards the dialogue of charity and enables growth in the dialogue of truth". Listening together to the word of God, engaging in biblical *lectio divina*, letting ourselves be struck by the inexhaustible freshness of God's word which never grows old, overcoming our deafness to those words that do not fit our own opinions or prejudices, listening and studying within the communion of the believers of every age: all these things represent a way of coming to unity in faith as a response to hearing the word of God. The words of the Second Vatican Council were clear in this regard: "in [ecumenical] dialogue itself, sacred Scripture is a precious instrument in the mighty hand of God for attaining to that unity which the Savior holds out to all" [UR 21]. Consequently, there should be an increase in ecumenical study, discussion and celebrations of the word of God, with due respect for existing norms and the variety of traditions. These celebrations advance the cause of ecumenism and, when suitably carried out, they represent intense moments of authentic prayer asking God to hasten the day when we will all be able at last to sit at the one table and drink from the one cup. [...]

Finally, I wish to emphasize the statements of the Synod Fathers about the ecumenical importance of *translations of the Bible in the various languages*. We know that translating a text is no mere mechanical task, but belongs in some sense to the work of interpretation. In this regard, the Venerable John Paul II observed that "anyone who recalls how heavily debates about Scripture influenced divisions, especially in the West, can appreciate the significant step forward which these common translations represent". Promoting common translations of the Bible is part of the ecumenical enterprise. I would like to thank all those engaged in this important work, and I encourage them to persevere in their efforts.

(*Verbum Domini* 46)