

# MELITA THEOLOGICA



The Review of the  
Faculty of Theology  
and the  
Theology Students' Association  
Malta

Contemporary Society's Threat to Sacramentality — <i>Sean Edward Kinsella</i>	3
What are the outstanding problems and challenges that confront contemporary Bible interpretation and translation in Africa? — <i>Aloo Osotsi Mojola</i>	7
Inspiration, Authority and Hermeneutics — <i>Kuo-Wei Peng</i>	23
Translating οὐτός in 2 John 7 — <i>Anthony Abela</i>	55
<i>Familiaris consortio</i> – Impasse or Inspiration for a Contemporary Theology of Marriage and the Family? — <i>Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi</i>	63
Book Review — <i>Anthony Abela</i>	79

**MELITA THEOLOGICA**  
**ISSN 1012-9588**

Published biannually since March 1947, treating Dogmatic and Moral Theology, Fundamental Theology, Holy Scripture, Canon Law, Spiritual Theology, Liturgy, Patrology, Ecclesiastical History; Christian Books and Articles are accepted for reviewing.

**EDITORIAL BOARD**

Rev Dr Anthony Abela (Editor)

Rev Dr Hector Scerri

Jonathan Farrugia (Admin.)

Anthony Paul Fitzpatrick (Ass. Admin.)

*Articles for publication should be sent to:*

The Editor  
Melita Theologica  
Faculty of Theology  
University of Malta  
Msida MSD 04  
Malta

*Subscriptions and all other communications are to be addressed to:*

Melita Theologica  
Theology Students' Association  
c/o Foundation for Theological Studies  
Tal-Virtù, Rabat RBT 09 - Malta  
e-mail: [melitatheologica@gmail.com](mailto:melitatheologica@gmail.com)

Annual Subscription:            Local: Lm4.00  
   Foreign: US\$27.00

Typesetting and Printing: Veritas Press, Żabbar  
Logo created by: Br Ivan Scicluna O.F.M. Cap.

© Copyright: The Faculty of Theology and the Theology Students' Association, Malta 2003

# Contemporary Society's Threat to Sacramentality

Sean Edward Kinsella

Nature loves to hide

Herakleitos, *The Fragments*  
[Diels, 123; Bywater, 10]

A significant threat to sacramentality, to the sense of the sacred [*sacrare*, “to make holy”], that contemporary society poses to both religious thought and expression is its denial or mitigation of the numinous quality of human experience. The sense that one moves in a constant encounter – a dance, really – with that which is not entirely known and which cannot fully be expressed is a sense increasingly dulled. The sense of the *numinos*, the holy, the mysterious inenarrability of the divine, has been seriously compromised by a contemporary approach to religious experience that is forensic [in that it cuts open a body to see how it works]; reductionist [in that if it cannot be easily explained in materialistic terms, then it is dismissed]; and mechanistic [in that actions are understood in a manner divorced from their meaning].

The sacramental experience of the human person is forever between two relationships: the relation of the human person to God [religion] and the relation of God to the human person [revelation].<sup>1</sup> Religion means to connect [*religo*, “to tie,” “to fasten”] but revelation means to reveal [in the Greek, *apokalypsis*, “to uncover,” “to unveil”]; which is of interest because it is a definition which suggests its antithesis. To reveal a truth presupposes that such a truth is concealed: to speak of a revelation is to indicate that something once unknown is now made known.

1. After Jean Cardinal Daniélou, “Christianity and non-Christian Religions” in T. Patrick Burke (ed.), *The Word in History*, Sheed and Ward; New York 1966, 91. As Lactantius, for example, noted in this context, “we are created on this condition, that we pay just and due obedience to God who created us, that we should know and follow Him alone. We are bound and tied to God by this chain of piety; from which religion itself received its name” [*Divine institutions*, IV.28; in the translation of William Fletcher in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 7 (reprinted, Hendrickson; Peabody 1994), 131].

The very word *sacrament* carries in our understanding both of these meanings. It is *mysterion*: the visible revelation, the physical sign [*sacramentum*], of an invisible grace, a hidden reality [*mysterium*].<sup>2</sup> The complementary tension, the synergy, between these two meanings is well articulated in the words of the Apostle:

For what can be known about God is perfectly plain to them, since God has made it plain to them: ever since the creation of the world, the invisible existence of God and His everlasting power have been clearly seen by the mind's understanding of created things.<sup>3</sup>

The hiddenness of God ["Truly, You are a God Who conceals Himself," Isaiah 45, 15] is the hiddenness of mystery. It is the unknowability ["Since the light had been so dazzling that I was blind," Acts 22,11] of the divine, whose fullness forever exceeds the capacity of our sight. Yet, God reveals Himself to us, He "has made it plain" to us, He makes Himself known to us through creation; itself both mystery and revelation. The bread and wine both are, and are not, because as *mysteria* they are truths both concealed and revealed.

Sacramentality is such a connectedness. It is the sight and smell, taste and feel, of human experience which seems always to suggest more than what is materially apparent. It is not, perhaps, too much to say that sacramentality is touch. It is the saliva and earth mixed together that restores to us our vision.<sup>4</sup>

Connectedness is touch and touch is what makes community. To the question, "Who is my neighbour?", the answer is always "Whom do you touch?". The impetus, however, for that touch, that source of community, is not religion; it is revelation:

That is the revelation of God's love for us, that God sent His only Son into the world that we might have life through Him. Love consists in this: it is not we who loved God, but God Who loved us and sent His Son to expiate our sins. My dear friends, if God loved

2. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* United States Catholic Conference, Washington,<sup>2</sup> 1997, 204, No. 774.

3. Romans 1,20. One is reminded of the observation of Anaxagoras, that "Appearances are a glimpse of the unseen" [Quoted in Philip Wheelwright (ed.), *The Presocratics*, Macmillan, New York 1996, 160].

4. Cf. John 9,6.

us so much, we too should love each other. No one has seen God, but as long as we love each other God remains in us and His love comes to perfection in us.<sup>5</sup>

That love, that mystery which is God's revelation – that mystery which is Trinity, which is community, which is love – is precisely what enables community and makes manifest connectedness. Contemporary ideas about human relations insist on what is seen, and easily demonstrable, and superficially comprehensible, but in this vain insistence mystery is lost. Paradoxically,<sup>6</sup> mystery makes community and in denying mystery, community becomes impossible.

44144, Lakeview Drive,  
El Macero, CA 95618  
United States

5. John 4,9–12. In his *Joannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine considers this very point: “Love brings about the keeping of His commandments; but does the keeping of His commandments bring about love? Who can doubt that it is love which precedes? For he has no true ground for keeping the commandments who is destitute of love.... It is not, then, for the purpose of awakening His love to us that we first keep His commandments; but this, that unless He loves us, we cannot keep His commandments” [*On the Gospel of John*, LXXXII.3; in the translation of John Gibb and James Innes in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Volume 7 (reprinted, Hendrickson; Peabody 1994), 3411. See here also Titus 3,4–6.
6. As Lao Tzu remarked in the *Tao Te Ching*, “The truth often sounds paradoxical” [Chapter 78; in the translation of Gia-fu Feng and Jane English, Vintage; New York 1989, 80]. Paradox, Maisie Ward suggests in her biography of G.K. Chesterton, “must be of the nature of things because of God's infinity and the limitations of the world and of man's mind” [*Gilbert Keith Chesterton*, Sheed and Ward; New York: 1943, 155]. The juxtaposition of apparent contradictions, Ward continues, often indicates a greater truth which would otherwise be neglected or go unnoticed. One is naturally reminded on this point of the often startling images used by Jesus to describe, for example, the kingdom of heaven: that it is like a mustard seed (Matthew 13,31); that prostitutes and tax collectors shall enter into it before the priests and elders (Matthew 21,31); or, even, that it “suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away” (Matthew 11,12; cf. *The Gospel of Thomas*, logion 98). The teaching of Jesus is replete with paradox (e.g. that the first shall be last; that the least shall be greatest; that to lose is to find).



# **What are the outstanding problems and challenges that confront contemporary Bible interpretation and Translation in Africa?\***

Aloo Osotsi Mojola

## **1 *The challenge of the African Babel of languages:***

Africa's languages and dialects number around two thousand or a little more, which is about one third of the world's six thousand or so languages. The figure of 2000 is only a rough figure. It is not easy to tell what constitutes a language and what constitutes a dialect. This in itself is a real challenge in determining the language of translation and just how far it extends. We will take it up later as a serious challenge that confronts contemporary interpreters and translators of the Bible in Africa. Africa's 2000 or so languages are divided into four major language families – the Niger Congo with about 1436 languages of which around 500 or so are of the Bantu sub-family; the Afro-asiatic with about 371 languages, the Nilo-saharan with about 196, and the Khoisan with about 35. And this is without counting the numerous creoles such as those spoken in Seychelles, Mauritius or Sierra Leone; Indo-European languages such as Afrikaans, English, French or Portuguese; Malay-Polynesian such as Malagasy, among others. This huge Babel of African languages is a veritable challenge, in terms of completing the task of having the Holy Scriptures in every African language or dialect. It seems unlikely that this goal or task can be achieved in our time, notwithstanding the bold and well intentioned dreams or visions such as the recently articulated Vision 2025 launched by the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Wycliffe Bible Translators. Those committed to Vision 2025 are working toward completing the task by the year 2025 – perhaps a pipe dream! We have to contend further with the reality of language death, of languages going extinct on our continent and elsewhere at an alarming rate.

*\*Originally presented as a keynote address at the Bible Interpretation and Translation Conference held at the University of Kwazulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, from the Monday 19<sup>th</sup> to Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2005.*

Notwithstanding the magnitude of the task and the abundance of challenges, we do well to remind ourselves that much has been achieved and yet much more still needs to be achieved. As of December 31, 2005 - 159 of Africa's languages had at least a Bible, 301 had New Testaments and 223 had only a portion or a book of the Bible. This means that only 683 African languages had at least a Bible, a New Testament or a part of the Bible. The others could only access the Holy Scriptures from translations in neighbouring languages, a regional lingua franca, or an international language. World wide the situation is more or less the same, of the more than 6000 languages in the world – 426 had Bibles, 1115 had New Testaments, while 862 had portions or at least a part of the Bible. Thus only 2403 languages worldwide have at least one book of the Bible. This is roughly just over one third of the total. Much more needs to be done.

## ***2 The challenge of helping to understand the raison d'être of Bible translation:***

One occasionally comes across people who see no reason whatsoever for engaging in Bible translation. Some of these people imagine that it is possible and sufficient to access and communicate the Biblical message simply on the basis of existing translations. They perhaps imagine a situation similar to that of the Qur'an where no translation is needed. Indeed in this case, all that is needed is to learn the language of the original text and interpret its meaning every time communicating the same to the intended audience in their own tongues. In the case of the Bible, this means that every preacher, pastor or priest needs to master the Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic of the Bible, so as to access the Biblical text in its original tongues. And individual Christians who need access to the text in the original tongues would have no option but to master the ancient languages in which the Bible was written. Not many have the time or luxury to do this. If the Holy Scriptures were available only in the original language texts, access to the Biblical text would be limited to very few people. Bible translation is however driven by the logic of the Incarnation, and the need for everyone to hear God speak to them in their own tongues, the experience of Pentecost.

Translating the Bible in a given language is not a one off event. Language is dynamic and ever changing. Any given translation has a time span or limit. After that it becomes archaic and even obsolete due to the fact of language change, creating the need for a new translation or translations. Take the case, for example, of the revered King James Version of the Bible, a translation that goes back to 1611, the age of the legendary William Shakespeare – a supreme master of the



English language. There is no doubt that the King James Version made much better sense within the socio-linguistic realities of that period. It is nearly 400 years ago since that time. Much has changed, the English language has changed, the times have changed and the same words no longer carry the same meanings, nuances or emotive force. Yet there are some English speaking Christians today, including some here in Africa, who somehow believe that the King James Version, is still to this day the only inspired Word of God in the English language, and that it is just as good as the original. For them, no English version or translation can ever take the place of that revered version, sometimes called the “Authorized” Bible. They even believe that it was authorized by God himself! Some Christians of a certain church are rumoured to have said in connection with this version – “If it was good enough for St Paul, surely it is good enough for us”. It is interesting to note that even some learned people in America and elsewhere argue for the King James Only position! The influence of this King James Only stance has surprisingly pervaded some African church groups who try to assess local translations in terms of the King James Version. The reality however is that just as every generation needs a translation in the language of their place and time, not one but a variety of translations may be needed to satisfy varying interests and tastes.

Christians and other interested inquirers will continue to be indebted to translators and scholars of the Bible who are competent in the ancient texts and languages of the Bible, for faithful contemporary translations and reliable interpretations of the message of the Biblical text. The need for this is not limited to any one language but extends to all. It is a widespread need among all Christians and interested inquirers.

Moreover translations serve many ends – literary, evangelistic, educational, liturgical, among others. Translations also target various audience groups – children, youth, adults, believers, non-believers, people with certain needs or of certain social groups or of a certain educational level, among others. As long as these needs and these audiences exist – the demand for a diversity of translations even within a single language group will be there. Our concern however extends beyond a single language group to those languages without the Bible, and that is where the need is greatest as is clear from the figures shared.

### ***3 The challenge of the shortage of qualified, well trained and competent mother-tongue translators***

Most of the pioneer and renowned translations currently in use today, throughout

our continent are products of the missionary era. Many are however of recent origin and owe their existence to foreign missionary translators. Much of what has been achieved so far, as noted above, was through the means of foreign missionary translators, linguists, and biblical scholars. We are indeed greatly indebted to these early translators for their indefatigable labours. We cannot however continue to rely on foreign missionaries from other lands. They have played their part, a very crucial role, not only that of bringing the Good News to our shores but also of taking the trouble to learn our languages and to render the Good News in these languages, so that we can hear God speak to us in our own languages.

The era of the traditional foreign Western missionary is almost at an end, or more or less over. Indeed with the shift in Christianity's centre of gravity from the northern continents to southern continents, dependence on northern missionaries for satisfying the urgent needs of Christian mission in the southern continents is certainly unsustainable. The dwindling numbers of believers in the northern continents will be hard pressed to meet their own needs. In fact it may soon be necessary if not already so, for missionaries from the south to consider serving in the northern lands. The upshot of this is that the call to translate the Holy Scriptures into the languages of Africa needs to be done by Africans themselves. Indeed in most places this is the case. At the present time, the national Bible Societies that are part of the worldwide fellowship of Bible Societies (usually referred to as the United Bible Societies) generally work with first language speakers of the language translation. In Africa almost all translation teams sponsored by the national Bible Societies are composed exclusively of native or first language speakers of the translation in question. Non-native speakers may assist but usually as exegetes, advisers, or as technical experts.

Nevertheless, those who translate the Bible are expected to be qualified, well trained, mature, experienced and competent speakers of the languages of translation as well as versed in the local culture. The ideal translator is expected to be at least a university graduate, trained in Biblical studies, with a good knowledge of the ancient languages of the original texts of the Bible, namely Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, a good understanding of the history and cultures of the biblical lands, trained in the use of the biblical tools of exegesis and hermeneutics, among others. An ideal translator is expected to be a native speaker of his or her own language, steeped in its idioms, proverbs, folklore, etc. They are expected to have a good understanding of the history and culture of their own people; to possess fine writing skills, to have knowledge of linguistics, translation studies, cultural studies, literary studies, among others.

These requirements or criteria expected of the Bible translator are, no doubt, demanding. They however reflect the multi-disciplinary nature of the field of Bible translation. In the Bible Society context the ideal translator, is moreover expected to be a mature and devoted Christian, active and respected in their own church community.

Clearly the availability of individuals who correspond to this profile is not great; they are few and far between. How do we find them? In rarer cases such individuals have been found for certain translation projects. In most projects, we have had to do with less qualified candidates. The implications for translation quality are clear – the best quality is not always assured. The justification for working with less than the best is that something is better than nothing. Or alternatively, the idea of - let us get something now, with the resources available and the people available, and hopefully someday under more auspicious circumstances, it will be possible to realize the best.

It should be remembered that even the missionary translator did not in most cases satisfy these ideal criteria. Far from it - the vast majority of missionary translators were not competent in the biblical languages or knowledge of biblical cultures and history. Neither were they fully competent in the languages of translation, the so-called receptor or target languages. Many eventually acquired a good knowledge of the receptor or target languages – but nowhere near native competence. Hence some of the deficiencies and unnaturalness of some of the missionary translations, are now urgently in need of revision. The challenge still remains - where and how to find competent, qualified and well trained mother tongue speakers of the languages of translation.

#### ***4 The challenge of promoting an in-depth study and mastery of Biblical languages, inadequate understanding of source text cultures and languages as well as receptor or target text cultures and languages***

In many places in rural Africa, it is rare to find local church communities with many university graduate members. Pastors or priests with solid training in Biblical studies and with a mastery of the Biblical languages and a deep knowledge of the source language texts and their underlying cultures and history are even a rarer species. With the proliferation of Bible schools, theological colleges and seminaries of various quality and academic levels throughout the continent, the situation is gradually changing somewhat. Pastors trained at such institutions are

now commonplace in urban church communities. Interestingly, among these, those who have chosen to specialize in biblical languages and the ancient texts and the scientific skills needed to gain a deeper understanding of these subjects are few and far between. Quite a few have done the required compulsory Greek course or the additional Hebrew course. But these are soon forgotten after that dreaded college exam and the biblical texts themselves are never approached or thought of as essential for a better grasp of the message of the Bible. Addiction to one version or translation of the Bible, usually in English, French or Portuguese, considered inspired or as good as the original, usually becomes the norm for most Bible school or theological college trained pastors. Reference or comparison with other translations is not common practice.

The above situation which is quite prevalent on the continent is itself a major challenge to the task of realizing reliable and faithful quality translations of the Bible in the languages of our people. For indeed, only native speakers of our languages, schooled in the Biblical languages, texts, history and cultures will be competent to do the job. If native speakers of African languages studying in our biblical and theological schools do not take up this challenge, they ought to be strongly encouraged, otherwise we will be clearly away from realizing our goal.<sup>1</sup>

***5 The challenge of competing canons in the context of diverse confessional church traditions – catholic, orthodox, protestant and African instituted/independent***

For a vast majority of Protestant Christians the Bible has only 66 books, no more no less - with the Old Testament having 39 books and the New Testament having 27. Some of these believe and argue that no other books apart from the 66 can be admitted, and that only these are inspired and thus constitute the only inspired Word

1. See the lively and informative discussion of this in James R. White's book, *The King James Only Controversy – Can You Trust the Modern Translations?* (1995), 1, *The Bulletin for Old Testament Studies* –BOTS- Issue 18, May 2005, edited by Prof Knut Holter, is to be commended for addressing this challenge especially with respect to the teaching of Biblical Hebrew, see especially articles by Phil Nel, Jacqueline S. du Toit and Victor Zinkuratire; see also A.O.Mojola's article "Bible Translation in African Christianity" in the *AICMAR Bulletin – An Evangelical Christian Journal of Contemporary Mission and Research in Africa*, Vol. 1/2002:1-14, where this issue is highlighted.

of God. I recall one Christian press in Tanzania that turned down an order placed by the Bible Society of Tanzania to print some deuterocanonical books for the Bible Society for distribution among Catholics on the grounds that their machines could not handle such literature.

For Catholic Christians, the Bible is more than the 66 books that constitute the Protestant canon. The Catholics admit 7 additional books referred to as the deuterocanonical books. These are part of the Greek Septuagint but are not present in the Hebrew Masoretic text. Thus for Catholics the biblical canon that is recognized includes the 27 books of the New Testament and the 46 books of the Old Testament, i.e. 73 books all together.

For Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, the canon of their Bible includes yet more books than those of the Catholic canon. Some put the number at 81 and includes such books as the book of Enoch, the book of Jubilees among others.<sup>2</sup>

The reasons for the various canons are complex and will not be treated here.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that in the past the Bible Societies generally favoured a “Protestant” Bible canon without the DC/Apocrypha. This is due to the dominant Protestant roots of the Bible Society movement. Regarding the policy of the British and Foreign Bible Society on this matter, Harold Scanlin (2004:183) notes, “Ultimately, after several failed attempts at compromise, BFBS established its **no apocrypha rule** in 1827, perpetuating its policy for English Bibles and establishing the same policy for other versions. The American Bible Society followed suit the following year. They too had never published an English Bible with the Apocrypha – but they also discontinued their publication of a Roman Catholic Spanish Bible...” The BFBS/ABS approach to the question of canon was followed by other Societies who later joined the United Bible Societies in 1946 and afterwards. Thus Scanlin (2004:185) writes “in more recent times the Bible Societies have seen their mandate as service to all the churches. Accordingly, this has brought a change in policy, based on practical considerations, to provide Scriptures that may reflect different canons”.

2. See for example G.A. Mikre Sellassie’s article, “The Bible and its Canon in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church” in *The Bible Translator* 44.1, (1993)111-123, and also Siegfried Meurer (ed.), *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective*, Reading, UK: UBS,1991.
3. See however the discussions in Meurer,(ed.)1991, Muller 1996, McDonald 1988, Scanlin 2004, among others.

The change in policy and the current spirit of partnership and cooperation with all Christian churches was pioneered by Vatican II decisions and its implications for inter-church relations. The 1968 and 1987 agreements between the United Bible Societies and the Catholic Church laid the guidelines for cooperation in the area of inter-confessional translations of the Bible. Initially this cooperation was officially limited to the Catholic Church, but in recent times it has been extended to the Eastern Orthodox churches where similar agreements for cooperation have been established. This situation has opened up other sensitive questions and concerns that will need to be addressed. Some of these are well captured by Scanlin (Ibid.) as follows - "Were the Bible Societies responding to the expressed or felt Scripture needs of the supporting constituencies, or were they proactive in promoting a particular view of the canon? What are the implications of this historical situation in relation to the recent discussion regarding UBS translation policy on the Deuterocanon/Apocrypha and text bases (e.g. MT, LXX, Textus Receptus/Byzantine text)? Beyond this, we need to come to grips with the post-modern concept of canon?" Other key questions posed by Scanlin that constitute a major challenge are the following: Who decides what base text(s) are acceptable for the UBS supported translations? How should the deuterocanonical books be arranged? Who pays for the DC/A?

***6 The challenge of union translations or the question of standardization vs the reality of dialect clusters and the issue of intelligibility***

The phenomenon of clusters of interrelated languages or dialects is fairly common place all over Africa. Many of these dialect clusters form continua or dialect chains that share varying degrees of intelligibility. Like family members, they have a certain family resemblance with varying degrees of difference, mostly at the lexical and the morpho-phonological levels. Those that are intelligible to a high degree often share the same literature. Where levels of mutual intelligibility are low, it is often necessary to part way. This was the case with the Nyakyusa-Ngonde of Tanzania and Malawi. Some years back in the 1970s, the Bible Societies of Tanzania and Malawi established a joint project to render the Bible in the so-called Nyakyusa-Ngonde. After some time it became clear that this was not viable and the result was a parting of ways. The Ngonde translators of Malawi went on their own and the Nyakyusa translators of Tanzania took their separate way, each to realize a Bible in their own particular language variety. The Ngonde Bible was dedicated in 1993 and the Nyakyusa Bible in 1996. Interestingly, earlier translations had recognized these differences.

In the case of my own 'language' community – the Luyia of Western Kenya, 19 or so dialects are recognized – mostly in Kenya but some also in Uganda across the border. The pioneer missionaries made translations in a few chosen dialects or varieties of so-called Luyia, for example the Logooli (first book 1911, NT 1925, Bible 1951), Hanga (first book 1914, NT 1939), the Lunyole (first book 1915, NT 1936, Bible 2002). Later, it was thought that standardizing the Luyia dialects had several advantages. An Australian missionary, Leonora Appleby, was encouraged to undertake this task. She developed both a unifying grammar and lexicon to form the basis of the standard or 'union' Luyia. It is said that she was the best speaker of this form of the language, which understandably did not represent any of the existing spoken varieties. She then set out to render the Bible in this new variety of Luyia. The first book of the Bible in standard Luyia came out in 1954, the NT in 1968 and the complete Bible in 1975. The use of this new translation in a new 'invented' Luyia variety was encouraged and enforced mainly by the Anglican Church in Western Kenya, but it never gained popularity. Later it was decided to develop new translations of the Bible in local spoken varieties. Five key dialects were chosen for this purpose on the grounds that they could serve related groupings in their neighbourhoods – thus the Lubukusu (first book in 1985, first NT 1992), Lukakamega, (first book 2000, NT 2005), and a Lusamia Bible translation project has recently been launched. A first complete Lunyole new common language translation was launched in 2002 while a new complete Logooli common language Bible is in press and eagerly awaited.

The case of the Twi or Akan in Ghana is not quite dissimilar to that of the Luyia. In the Akan case, the pioneer missionaries produced very successful and popular translations that are still in popular use to this day – for example the Akuapem (first book 1859, NT 1863 and Bible 1871), Fante (first book 1877, NT 1896 and Bible 1948), the Asante (first book 1957, Bible 1964). However, in the 1970s linguists at the University of Ghana, Legon, vigorously promoted the idea of standardization and of promoting languages of wider use. A unified Akan orthography, grammar and lexicon was developed and promoted. The Bible Society of Ghana took up this idea and set up a translation project for a union or standard Akan Bible. More than twenty years down the line there was very little to show despite the vast resources poured in. The churches showed very little interest in this project preferring rather to support revisions of existing pioneer translations indicated above. Currently, projects to revise these older and popular translations have been initiated and are ongoing under the supervision of the Bible Society of Ghana.

Similar examples abound and can be given here but the few offered above suffice for our purpose. On the whole union translations have not been successful. There have been however a few successful examples such as the Shona of Zimbabwe and the Swahili of East Africa, even though not problem free.

***7 The Challenge of developing adequate, linguistically sound, and acceptable orthographies or writing systems for the language of translation as well as for the corresponding challenge of implementing viable, sustainable and successful literacy programmes***

Except for a few African cultures such as those that developed in north eastern Africa – in ancient Egypt, in the land of Kush and around Axum - which developed sophisticated literate cultures, most African cultures remained by and large oral. Thus, most of the languages represented by such oral cultures have remained unwritten. However with the advent of colonization, the European conquest of Africa and the accompanying Christianization of African communities, African languages could not escape the alphabet revolution and the era of the written word. Christianity was on the forefront in taking seriously the African vernacular, essential in the task of Christian evangelization. The use of the vernacular and the translation of the Bible in the local languages were inevitable consequences of this process. However before this could be done, it was necessary to study the grammar of these languages, understand their sound systems (phonology), create working orthographies or writing systems for these languages, develop dictionaries of these languages, study the local cultures for a better understanding of the languages, etc. The process of Bible translation thus necessitated the development of adequate, linguistically sound, working orthographies or writing systems of the languages of translation. The first Christians were inevitably associated with reading and writing. In many places being Christian and being ‘a reader’ were identical. Thus in East African Bantu languages Christians were at first called ‘asomi’, ‘wasomi’ ‘basomi’ or variants of these. The fast spread of Christianity in Buganda during the pioneer period which followed the translation and launching of Pilkington and Duta Kitaakule’s Luganda Bible of 1896 are an outstanding example of the power of the written word. This followed the development of a good working orthography and a successful literacy or reading programme which attracted many readers and converts to the new faith.

Needless to say, the majority of our languages are still unwritten. Orthographies



or adequate writing systems still need to be written for these languages not just for purposes of Bible translation, but primarily to facilitate literacy and the keeping of records in the languages concerned. The treasures and wealth of these languages and cultures need to be preserved for posterity, for example the folklore, the proverbs, the ethnic mythology and history, accurate descriptions of the world views, beliefs and traditional religious practices, names of fauna and flora in the local language, etc. To facilitate this, orthographies of these languages are imperative, as well as the promotion of a sustainable literacy programme with its primers, elementary reading materials, follow-up literature in the language, etc. to entrench the practice of reading and writing in the language. The success of such a venture requires the mobilization of the entire community and the support of the government of the day as well as its educational administrative arm.

**8 *The hermeneutical challenge of properly reading and interpreting the Bible in a manner that respects and takes seriously both the contexts of the Source text and language as well as those of the receptor text and language***

African missiologists, church historians, and students of ecclesiology, among them the prolific David Barrett (who was at the time based in Kenya), were quick to note a link between Bible translation and church schism or between Bible translation and the emergence in Africa of the fast growing so-called African independent or African instituted churches. Even though other factors were thought to be responsible for this phenomenon, the presence of a new translation in the local language was a key factor. It has been argued that the Bible in the vernacular empowered and liberated the indigenous Christian. The Bible in the vernacular gave the indigenous Christian a powerful tool with which to contest and challenge the hegemony of missionary Christian interpretation and indeed the authority of the local missionary. Here was the Bible in the indigenous tongue, in one's own language – in the public domain. Did the missionary have any authority for claiming a better understanding of the local language than native speakers? And if the Bible was God's book in one's own language, and if God spoke directly to people individually in their own language – and this Bible was now in the hands of the people – how could the local missionary operating in the vernacular and using the same text as the local people claim his interpretation to be more authoritative and more privileged? Clearly with the Bible in hand, the local native Christians were empowered to challenge both local missionary practice as well as interpretation. The result of this was to open wide the Pandora's box of multiple interpretations of the same Biblical

text, indeed the flood gates of what David Barrett termed ‘schism and renewal in Africa’ to borrow the title of his pioneer book on the subject authored in 1968. Bible translation may be said to have led to an unintended crisis of interpretation. The local Christians claiming to know their own language and culture better than the missionary – could arguably defend the validity of their own interpretation of the vernacular Bible purely on linguistic grounds. The door was open for a cultural reading of the Bible in the context of the African social world!

It is now widely recognized that any given text can be read and interpreted in a multiplicity of ways by different readers – depending on their location, time, language, culture, perspective, driving interests or ideology, among other factors. A responsible interpretation of texts requires an adequate understanding of the underlying social worlds and languages in the context of their histories, cultures, politics, economics, philosophies, religions, literary cultures and traditions, etc. Thus those who come to a reading of the Bible without a proper understanding of its underlying social worlds and languages, histories, cultures, politics, economics, religious traditions, literary traditions, etc are likely to read it in the context of their own worlds or imposed imagined worlds not proper to it. They are likely to read meanings into it which are foreign to it. They are likely to distort the text and to use it to suit their own purposes or interests. That this is a present and real danger, can be witnessed in many places.

How can translators of Bibles in African languages and indeed African readers and students of the Bible in general, escape this pitfall? This is a challenge that has to be confronted in our time through the intervention of biblical scholars, linguists and other experts in related disciplines relevant to an in depth study of the Bible.

### ***9 The challenge of ‘transmediatizing’ the written Bible***

The message of the Bible was originally an oral message. It was shared orally in the original contexts and only later preserved in written form. The clearest immediate example of this is the teaching or words of our Lord Jesus Christ. He did not write anything down himself. He did not deliver written messages. His teaching was delivered orally without notes. It was only later that it was preserved in writing, based on the memory of those who were close to him. The vast majority of Old Testament texts are similarly rooted in orality. Indeed the majority of those who listened to the Old Testament Scriptures heard them orally read. Scrolls or books were too expensive for individuals to own copies for private reading. Public

reading of texts was the norm. There was thus a shift from orality to literacy, and then again from literacy to orality. This is an example of the move from one text medium to another text medium – what is nowadays commonly referred to as ‘transmediatizing’.<sup>4</sup>

The Gutenberg revolution tilted the balance in favour of writing and the printed word. The Bible has since then been increasingly perceived more in terms of the written word than the spoken word. No wonder most people think of the Bible as a book, the big black book with perhaps a red edge. Some people cannot think of the Bible other than in these terms.

Developments in communications and media technology have given us audio cassettes, audio CDs, and the preservation of recorded sounds in various formats. The Christian church has tapped into this technology and is now using it for the transmission of the Biblical message in this medium. Thus audio Bibles in various formats and technological packages are widely available. This means that those people who could not read – the so-called illiterate or preliterate, can now access the Bible by means of audio media. For example the ‘Hosanna’ outfit, an American audio media company through its ‘Faith Comes By Hearing’ ministry have specialized in making the Bible available through hearing – by means of audio media. In partnership with the UBS and national Bible Societies – they have made the Bible available in audio media in many countries here in Africa – in a number of languages. Other groups have joined this bandwagon – for example the ‘Mega Voice’, the ‘Talking Bible’ among others. These recordings are available in single voice or in multi-voice, some are plain while others are dramatized. A number of challenges immediately come to mind - What are the implications for interpretation when the Bible is heard rather than read? How does voice and tone, loudness and pitch, etc. influence interpretation? Doesn’t the act of reading itself impose an interpretation on the text, and perhaps shift the text in other directions, for example by eliminating certain ambiguities and complexities as well as introducing new ones, limiting the possibilities and choices present in the written text but introducing new ones in the oral text?

Developments in video technology have also been brought to bear on the transmission of God’s Word. A number of enterprising groups have come up with

4. See for example Thomas E. Boomershine, “Biblical Megatrends: Towards a Paradigm for the Interpretation of the Bible in Electronic Media”, in Howard Clarke Kee, ed. 1993:211-230.

various forms and versions of the so-called 'Visual Bible'. Some of these merely use various sights and sounds to create certain atmospheres and emotional environments to facilitate an easier access to the Word; others attempt to recreate the original settings of those texts by filming scenes in the Biblical lands, creating imagined Biblical characters with appropriate attire and characteristics befitting Biblical times and cultures. The text is then experienced in the context of these invented Biblical virtual or hyper worlds. What implications do these developments have for Biblical interpretation? It is to be noted that biblical scholars, anthropologists, archaeologists, linguists and other experts are actively involved in these developments. There are major challenges as well as opportunities here – worth pondering and reflecting upon.

### ***10 The Challenge of focusing on audiences and their needs and not simply on languages***

Given the magnitude of the task and expanding needs, a common strategy in the UBS for making choices among the numerous languages and needs in the face of dwindling resources has been to agree on certain guiding selection criteria. In the 1980s the Bible Societies settled on a criterion that was primarily demographic. It came out of the Bible Societies Assembly held in Chiang Mai, Thailand. This selection criterion recommended giving priority to languages with over one million speakers and creating Scriptures that could be understood by most of those speakers. Translations developed for this purpose were referred to as common language translations. They were intended to be accessible to the widest number of speakers of a given language. In 1988 the Bible societies met in another Assembly in Budapest and agreed this time to focus on youth. In addition to developing common language translations for languages with over a million speakers – the Bible Societies were expected to develop Scripture materials that targeted the youth who constituted the majority of the population in the southern continents. In 1996 the Bible Societies met in Mississauga, Canada. This time they concluded that most of the 'Chiang Mai' goals had been fulfilled and so they set new goals again along the demographic route. They committed themselves to produce in partnership with others, complete Bibles for languages of 500,00 or more speakers, New Testaments for languages with over 250,000 speakers, and parts of the Bible for languages with over 100,000 speakers - through first, new or revised translations. The target for completing this assignment was to be 2010. These goals of course left room for national Bible Societies to determine their own goals in the context of their own needs. In 2000 the UBS world assembly met in Midrand, South Africa. There the focus was on serving all the

churches, on literary as well as liturgical translations for the churches, revisions of old translations for the use of new users in liturgical contexts, development of Scripture products that focus on the needs and human concerns of specific groups and audiences. The key word was Scripture engagement or Scripture encounter. At the last UBS world assembly in Newport Wales were highlighted further the importance of research, personnel needs and effective partnerships in achieving the unfinished task – focusing on inter-confessional, Scripture Engagement needs, unreached audiences, use of appropriate media, including story telling.

Ultimately, the dominant challenge in all these is the need to focus on people, communities, and audience groups – and on reaching them with the transforming, living Word of God. The key words are penetration and transformation of people, communities and societies, through the Bible as a tool for change, growth, renewal and mutual learning.

#### References:

- Pierre Alexandre, *An Introduction to Languages and Language in Africa*, Heinemann, London 1967, 1972.
- Thomas E. Boomershine, “Biblical Megatrends: Towards a Paradigm for the Interpretation of the Bible in Electronic Media”, in Howard Clarke Kee (ed.), 1993, 211-230.
- D.A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate – A plea for realism*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1979.
- Simon Crisp & Manuel Jinbachian, eds. *Text, Theology & Translation – Essays in honour of Jan de Waard*, United Bible Societies, Reading, UK, 2004.
- Jean Delisle and Judith Woodsworth, eds. *Translators through History*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, Netherlands 1995.
- Bernd Heine and Derek Nurse, *African Languages – an Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK 2000.
- Jean Claude Loba-Mkole, *Triple Heritage-Gospels in Intercultural Relations*, Sapientia Publications, Pretoria 2005.
- Howard Clarke Kee, ed. *The Bible in the Twenty First Century*, American Bible Society, New York 1993.
- Brian Malley, *How the Bible Works – An Anthropological Study of Evangelical Biblicalism*, Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, CA 2004.
- Lee Martin McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN 1988.
- Siegfried Meurer, ed. *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective*, (tr. Paul

- Ellingworth), United Bible Societies, New York 1991.
- Aloo Osotsi Mojola, *God Speaks in our own languages – Bible Translation in East Africa 1844-1998*, Bible Societies of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, Nairobi 1999.
- Mogens Muller, *The First Bible of the Church – A Plea for the Septuagint*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, UK 1996.
- Harold P. Scanlin, “Authority, Canon and the Bible Societies” in Simon Crisp & Manuel Jinbanchian (eds.), 2004, 177-191.
- R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2002.
- Vic Webb and Kembo Sure, eds. *African Voices – An introduction to the languages and linguistics of Africa*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000.
- James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy – Can You Trust the Modern Translations*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, MN, 1995.
- Philip Wickeri (ed.), *Scripture, Community and Mission*, Council for World Mission, London 2003.

*Dodoma Translation Centre  
Bible Society of Tanzania  
PO Box 175, Dodoma  
Tanzania*

# Inspiration, Authority and Hermeneutics

Kuo-Wei Peng

## 1. *Bible as a Book of Special Significance and Value*

Probably no one will deny that for Christians the Bible is a book, or more correctly, a collection of books, of special significance and value. This special significance and value is very often described in terms of “scriptural authority” which is related to and coming from the authority of God.<sup>1</sup> This special significance and value of the Bible has also been understood by certain special status conferred on the Bible in comparison with other writings and literatures. Therefore, we have terms such as “canon” and “sacred literature;” and these terms also indicate the existence of a borderline that separates those which are of this special significance and value and those which are not.

In addition to the above terms, which are basically descriptive or normative in nature, there are also terms having been used to provide the theological justification for the Bible’s special significance and value. “(Special) revelation,” “inspiration,” and “word of God” are terms that belong to this category. One common characteristic of these more-or-less theological terms is that the scriptural authority is basically ascribed to its divine origin: the content of the Bible is the outcome of God’s “revelation” in history; it was then recorded by certain people who were chosen and “inspired” by him;<sup>2</sup> In such a way, the Bible can effectively be seen as “God’s own word.” Since the emphasis here is the divine origin, it is quite understandable

1. Though there exist different understandings regarding how the scriptural authority is related to the authority of God (e.g., whether the scriptural authority comes directly from God or through the apostles or the church), regarding the domain that the Scripture exerts its authority (i.e., whether the scriptural authority is restricted to saving truth and rule of conduct or is on truth in general), and regarding who should be subject to the scriptural authority (i.e., only the believing community, or the whole human being, or the whole universe).
2. The process of “inspiration” can be understood by either the concept of “inspired authors,” which places emphasis on the chosen authors, or that of “inspired content,” which stresses the aspect that God so guided the authors that they were incapable of writing anything contrary to his will. A brief discussion of the distinction between the two views can be seen in Achtemeier, *The Inspiration of Scripture*, 29-35.

that the doctrine about Scripture is normally discussed under the doctrine about God in doctrinal or systematic theology.<sup>3</sup>

For some groups within Christianity, mainly within the Protestant branch of Christianity, theological construction of the scriptural authority as such should lead to the logical corollary that the Bible is therefore “infallible” and “inerrant.” To these groups, the issue of inerrancy is closely tied with the issue of truthfulness of the Bible.<sup>4</sup> “For if God has given special revelation of himself and inspired servants of his to record it, we will want assurance that the Bible is indeed a dependable source of that revelation.”<sup>5</sup> “Infallibility” and “inerrancy,” then for these Christians, are terms to explain why the Bible as the word of God is dependable for people holding such convictions.

Although different theologians may have different definitions for terms such as “inspiration,” “infallibility,” as well as “inerrancy,” if they are used,<sup>6</sup> the approach delineated above represents a very popular version of the doctrine about the Bible among the Protestant churches. The basic thesis of this approach may be rephrased as this: the scriptural authority resides in its authorial dimension. It is because God was the ultimate origin, and hence the “ultimate author” of the Bible, and because he used the people especially chosen and inspired by him to record the Bible that the authority of the Bible is then established and warranted.<sup>7</sup>

This authorial approach to the scriptural authority has a profound implication for our understanding of canon and text. The implication is that the Bible should have fixed contents, both in terms of canon as well as in terms of texts. Since God is the ultimate source, or the ultimate author, of the Bible, the meaning of “canon” cannot be anything other than the list of books which have divine origin; and since a book is either of divine origin or not of divine origin, the borderline of canon should be a fixed one.

3. A good example can be seen in Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 175-262. Erickson discusses the topic of revelation, inspiration, and God’s word under the section of “Knowing God.”

4. For example, *Ibid.*, 225.

5. *Ibid.*, 221-2.

6. In his book, Erickson lists five different theories of “inspiration” and seven different conceptions of “inerrancy.” See *Ibid.*, 206-7 and 222-4.

7. Cf. Erickson’s formulation: “By inspiration we mean that supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon Scripture writers which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or which resulted in what they wrote actually being the Word of God.” *Ibid.*, 199.



This authorial approach implies a universal authority of the Scripture over the whole human being because the content was directly originated from God. However, in a post-modern world in which a text can claim its independence of its author in interpretation,<sup>8</sup> the assertion of any kind of universal authority because of authoritative origin will probably be not a valid claim for the people outside the believing community who hold this conviction. However, to the author, the real problem of this authorial approach does not reside in its validity to the people outside the believing community, but resides in the acute tension it generates between the theory and historical reality of the Bible. And this acute tension can be very well demonstrated by the practice of Bible translation.

## ***2. The Tension Between the Authorial Approach to Scriptural Authority and Bible Translation***

If the authorial approach to scriptural authority is followed, the task of Bible translation is then to translate the set of books originated from God. Moreover, since what really counts is what the inspired authors really recorded, the base texts used for Bible translation should be as close as possible to the autographs of the biblical authors. Therefore, it is only possible to have just one version of the original biblical texts upon which Bible translation is based.

As a theological foundation for Bible translation, this authorial approach to scriptural authority can be used to justify very well the translation principle that the translation of the NT should be based not upon the "Received Text" (*Textus Receptus*) but upon the text of UBS Greek New Testament because the latter is an attempt to reconstructing the autographs of the NT documents, while the former represents a type of text developed in later church history. However, there are also tensions between this theological formulation of scriptural authority and some of the present Bible Societies' practices in Bible translation regarding both canon and text.

### ***2.1. The Issue of Canon***

For the Bible Societies movement, the agreement between the Bible Societies and the Catholic Church's Secretariat for Christian Unity, published as "Guiding

8. This view can be exemplified by Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author."

Principles for Interconfessional Cooperation in Bible Translation” in 1968, was a significant move and breakthrough. This agreement and its later revision, published as “Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible” in 1987,<sup>9</sup> have made possible the translation of a Bible which can be used for both the Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church that actually have different views on the scope of biblical canon. Judging from the achievement in the past, the significance and contribution of this agreement cannot be exaggerated too much, while the tension between this agreement and the authorial approach to the scriptural authority mentioned earlier can also be easily seen. If the authority of the Bible resides in its authorial dimension in terms of inspiration, the Apocrypha or Deuterocanon can only be either inspired or not inspired and, therefore, either has the scriptural authority or does not have it. As a result, whether the Apocrypha or Deuterocanon should be perceived as part of the “Bible,” in the sense of the Word of God, is still a serious theological issue that needs to be settled.

The publication of *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective* by UBS in 1991 can be seen as a Bible Societies’ response to the tension by providing a kind of justification for the agreement between the Bible Societies and the Catholic Church. The approach adopted in this monograph is basically historical. The authors provide a very broad historical survey of the uses and the views of the Apocrypha or Deuterocanon in the Orthodox Church,<sup>10</sup> in the Catholic Church,<sup>11</sup> in the Luther Bible,<sup>12</sup> in the Reformed Church,<sup>13</sup> in the Anglican Tradition,<sup>14</sup> in the Baptist tradition,<sup>15</sup> in the Bible Societies movement,<sup>16</sup> and in the context of North America.<sup>17</sup> In his article in this monograph, Lack P. Lewis also provides a historical survey of the formation of the OT canon as well as both the Jewish and Christian scholarly thoughts on the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.<sup>18</sup>

9. A copy of this revised version can be seen as an appendix in Meurer, *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective*, 208-220 and EB, 1041-1093.

10. Oikonomos, “The Significance of the Deuterocanonical Writings in the Orthodox Church,” 16-32.

11. Stendebach, “The Old Testament Canon in the Catholic Church,” 33-45.

12. Fricke, “The Apocrypha in the Luther Bible,” 46-87.

13. Neuser, “The Reformed Churches and the Old Testament Apocrypha,” 88-115.

14. Chadwick, “The Significance of Deuterocanonical Writings in the Anglican Tradition,” 116-128.

15. Mallau, “The Attitude of the Baptists to the Deuterocanonical Writings,” 129-133.

16. Gundert, “The Bible Societies and the Deuterocanonical Writings,” 134-150.

17. Lewis, “Some Aspects of the Problem of Inclusion of the Apocrypha,” 161-207.

18. See *Ibid.*, 166-78.

However, it seems to the present author that the tension will not be eased by merely historical justification because we cannot say something is correct just because it exists historically. The historical fact that different traditions pass on different understandings about canon can still be read theologically from the viewpoint of the authorial approach to scriptural authority as the betrayal or misunderstanding of some of the traditions about the revelation from God in certain moments in the history. The practice of using different biblical canons for different confessional groups, therefore, needs something more than historical justification.

## 2.2. *The Issue of Base Text*

In areas where the Orthodox Christians are the majority, the situations are much more complex than the situation that the “Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible” intended to resolve. Not only does there exist no standard biblical canon for all the Orthodox Churches, but also the base text, or base texts, used in Bible translation varies with the textual traditions of the Bibles used in the Orthodox Churches. As a result, the guiding principle of the Bible Societies that the Masoretic Text should be used as the basis for translating the OT is not always followed in those areas. For the new Greek Translation, the decision of the Symposium in Athens was to use the Septuagint as the base text for the OT.<sup>19</sup> For the Churches in Russia, Bulgaria, Belarus and Ukraine, the Slavonic Bible has been the Bible of the churches and some of these churches wanted a translation based on the Slavonic Bible.<sup>20</sup> The first complete Slavonic Bible, the Gennadian Bible of 1499, is uniquely eclectic, combining the influences of Masoretic text, Septuagint, as well as Latin Vulgate,<sup>21</sup> while later revisions and retranslations were mainly done by referring to the Greek but Latin versions were also consulted.<sup>22</sup> For the Ethiopian Church, the Geez Bible has been the Bible of the church and its translation into modern Ethiopian has been started.<sup>23</sup> The earliest form of the Ethiopic OT was a rather literal translation of the Septuagint, while later revisions in the fourteenth century and in the sixteenth century were based on the Arabic texts and Hebrew

19. The information is kindly provided by Dr. Manuel Jinbachian, through the help of Sarah Lind who established the link for me.

20. The information is also provided by Dr. Manuel Jinbachian. A very detailed survey of the Old Testament of the Slavonic translation can be found in Thomson, “The Slavonic Translation of the Old Testament,” 605-920. I owe this information to Sarah Lind.

21. See the discussion in Thomson, “The Slavonic Translation of the Old Testament,” 655-65.

22. See e.g. *Ibid.*, 677-84, 692-94.

23. This information is provided by Dr. Manuel Jinbachian.

Bible respectively.<sup>24</sup> The Armenian Orthodox Church has been using the Grabar Bible and it has been translated into modern language and was published in 1994.<sup>25</sup> The base text used in the early Armenian version was the Greek Septuagint; the canon includes all books in the Hebrew OT canon plus the Apocrypha (except for 4 *Maccabees*) while other apocryphal and pseudepigraphal books such as 4 Ezra and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* also appear in many manuscripts.<sup>26</sup>

As a response to this complex situation, a position paper, "Translation Principles for IBT-UBS-SIL Partnership Projects in the CIS," was drafted and in it the following statement can be found:<sup>27</sup>

#### I - Base Texts

1. For the Old Testament the translation should in general follow the Masoretic Text (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*). In cases where BHS is not used as base text, semantically significant differences will be footnoted.
2. For the New Testament the translation should in general follow the Greek text of the UBS fourth edition (Nestle-Aland 27th edition). In cases where a traditional text is followed, significant differences will be footnoted.
3. Although the Russian Synodal version of the Bible may not serve as a base text, the textual tradition underlying this version may be taken into account where local circumstances make this appropriate, as stated above.

The spirit of this guideline is apparently to keep a balance between the need of using the fruit of contemporary scholarship of textual criticism in Bible translation on the one hand and the need to respect the tradition of the believing community on the other. Nevertheless, if the authorial approach to scriptural authority is to be adopted, this guideline is nothing more than an unwelcome compromise which will eventually obscure the borderline between the inspired Word of God and

24. See Zuurmond, "Versions, Ancient (Ethiopic)," *ABD*, VI:808.

25. This information is provided by Dr. Manuel Jinbachtian.

26. See Alexanian, "Versions, Ancient (Armenian)," *ABD*, VI:806.

27. This information is kindly provided by Harold Scanlin.

those non-inspired human additions or alterations, and therefore will downgrade the authority of the Bible. Although in general the Orthodox Churches do not make a very sharp distinction between canonical books and non-canonical books and, therefore, do not have the concept of inspiration as some of the Protestant Churches do,<sup>28</sup> being a movement starting from the Protestant context and still serving the Protestant Churches for the Bible cause, it is probably unavoidable for the Bible Societies to engage themselves with the theological justification of the ways that the Bible Societies work in the Orthodox context especially for the sake of the people and churches who believe the scriptural authority coming from its authorial dimension.

### ***3. Historical Factors to Be Considered in Formulating the Doctrine of Scriptural Authority***

Although historical facts such as the traditions of different believing communities may not be able to justify theologically the ways that the Bible Societies' practices for the Catholic contexts as well as for the Orthodox contexts, these historical facts somehow raise the question whether theologians, especially systematic theologians, have allowed themselves to be well informed with the complex historical phenomena when formulating their theology of Scripture. Theological formulations should treat history seriously. Although the tension between the authorial approach to scriptural authority and the history of the traditions of different believing communities can be understood as the failure and the betrayal of certain believing communities in regard to the divine authority of the Bible, it can also be interpreted, perhaps more properly, as the problem of oversimplification of the authorial approach which is just too neat and too simplified to handle the complex histories and traditions of different believing communities. The existence of these historical facts requires a more appropriate theological formulation for the authority of the Bible.

The histories and traditions of different believing communities are not the only historical materials that the theological formulation of the scriptural authority needs to take into account, however. As the histories and traditions of different believing communities find their roots in, and therefore are closely tied up with, the history of the formation of the Bible, any theological formulation about the authority of the Bible should also take into account the history of the formation of the Bible and its

28. A good example can be seen in Thomson's comment on the Slavonic Bibles. See Thomson, "The Slavonic Translation of the Old Testament," 647-48.

transmission before the “canonical process,”<sup>29</sup> or “canonization processes,”<sup>30</sup> was complete. As Barrera rightly points out, many of the problems of the history of the biblical canon have implications of a theological nature.<sup>31</sup>

The history of the formation of the Bible can be viewed from three different perspectives: (1) the literary history of the biblical canon, which focuses on the literary history of individual biblical books and the developments of the biblical canon or canons; (2) the social history of the biblical canon, which deals with the social setting in which the various literary elements that make up the Bible originated and were transmitted and also the study of the relationship that each canonical or apocryphal book could have with the various socio-religious groups in the formation period of the canon or canons;<sup>32</sup> and (3) the textual history of the biblical books, which is concerned with the reconstruction of the “autographs” or “archetypes” of the biblical texts and, hence, belongs to the domain of textual criticism. The first two of the three are more related to the issue of canon, while the last one is more related to the issue of texts. However, they cannot be viewed as three unrelated topics independent of each other. They are actually three facets of the same historical phenomenon. As the scope of this article does not allow us to step into detailed descriptions and discussions of each of the three aspects of the history, only the conclusions relevant to the concern of the present discussion will be listed here.

### 3.1. *The Literary History of the OT Canon*

From the perspective of the literary history of the biblical canon, the formation of the canon was a gradual process for both the OT and NT. According to the theory proposed by Barrera,<sup>33</sup> the history of the formation of the OT canon runs in

29. This term is used by Sanders, *Canon and Community*, passim.

30. This term is used by Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible*, esp. 151-152.

31. *Ibid.*, 148.

32. *Cf. Ibid.*, 208.

33. The traditional view of the formation of the OT canon was a process of three successive stages: the books of the Torah acquired canonical character possibly in the fifth century BC; the collection of the prophetic books entered the canon towards about 200 BC, after the Samaritan schism; the Writings entered the canon in the Maccabean period towards the mid-second century BC, according to some, or in the so-called synod of Yabneh towards the end of the first century AD; and eventually at Yabneh the canon was decisively closed with the exclusion of the apocryphal books. As this traditional theory has its shortfalls, a more refined theory is then proposed. See *Ibid.*, 154-155.

parallel with the history of the Temple and of the priestly institutions of Jerusalem. To Barrera, the history of the Temple can be well divided into four periods: (1) "first Temple," i.e., the period of Solomon throughout the monarchic period; (2) "second Temple," i.e., the Restoration in the Persian period until the Hellenistic crisis; (3) "third Temple," i.e., the Maccabean period; and (4) "fourth Temple," i.e., the Herodian period in the Roman era.<sup>34</sup>

The history of the OT canon perhaps started at the end of the "first Temple" when the priests found the book of Deuteronomy in the Temple of Jerusalem in its original version (622/21 BC).<sup>35</sup> During the "second Temple" period, the Pentateuch became the definitive form of the Torah, with the abandonment of the other possible forms such as Hexateuch and Tetrateuch. The formation of the Pentateuch also led to the separation of Torah and Prophets; and the formation of a prophetic canon meant making a clear distinction between the prophetic period in which God had spoken to his people through the prophets, and the later period that the spirit of prophecy stopped. The collection of Writings also took shape in this period, basically wisdom in character. In the "third Temple" period, the three-part structure of the biblical canon was established and in the second century BC, the Jews acknowledged in general a canon formed of the Torah and the Prophets together with "other books," the Writings. During the "fourth Temple" period, rabbinic circles of Palestine completed a revision of the Greek text of some biblical books and the stimulus was the fact that the Greek text exhibited differences from the Hebrew text used in those rabbinic circles. The data of the revision reveal that only two books, Esther and Qoheleth, probably did not belong to the canon of the rabbinic circles of Palestine, while all the rest books of the Hebrew canon had been included in this canon.

Regarding the date of the closure of the Hebrew canon, there are no data for determining. What we can be sure is that it did not take place in Yabneh towards the end of the first century AD; and, rather, there are more data points to a much earlier date: the mid-second century BC, the date of the closure of the "Writings" in the Maccabean period.<sup>36</sup> However, this solution does not resolve the problems presented by the existence of a Christian canon of the OT, which is longer than the Jewish canon.<sup>37</sup>

34. *Ibid.*, 156.

35. The information of this paragraph is based on the discussion in *Ibid.*, 157-65.

36. See *Ibid.*, 165-7.

37. *Ibid.*, 167.

### *3.2. The Social History of the OT Canon*

The issue of different canons is actually linked with the social history of the social groups in which the biblical books have their origin and are transmitted throughout the centuries. In the Judaism of the Hellenistic period a wide spectrum of socio-religious groups can be found: Samaritans, Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, Hellenists, and later, the Jewish-Christian groups; and the Bible was an issue of both harmony and discord among all of them.<sup>38</sup>

The Samaritans held a narrow concept of the biblical canon as they only acknowledged the Torah (Samaritan Pentateuch). The edition of the Samaritan Pentateuch was probably an outcome of the Samaritan reaction to the attacks by the Jews which culminated in the destruction of the temple of Garizim at the end of second century BC.<sup>39</sup> Since most of the prophets had originated in the kingdom of Judah and had preached against the kingdom of Israel, it seems very reasonable for the Samaritans to reject the prophetic books.<sup>40</sup>

A similar view of canon to the Samaritans' could be found with the Sadducees, who restricted the canon to the five books of the Torah, or saw the Torah as the "canon within the canon."<sup>41</sup> Their reason for not granting binding force to books other than the five of the Torah was different from the Samaritans, though. Since they were a group with special relationships to the priesthood of Jerusalem, the Sadducees considered only things connected with the legislation about the Temple and the cultic institution as essential.<sup>42</sup>

With the Samaritans and the Sadducees at one end of the spectrum, the Essenes and the Hellenistic Jewish diaspora represented the other end of the spectrum regarding the scope of the canon. The Essene movement had its roots deep in the apocalyptic tradition and their apocalyptic concern led to the use of pseudepigraphal books, which might not be all considered as canonical but were of special values for their apocalyptic viewpoint.<sup>43</sup>

38. See *Ibid.*, 208.

39. See *Ibid.*, 214.

40. *Ibid.*, 220.

41. See *Ibid.*, 217, 220.

42. *Ibid.*, 221.

43. *Ibid.*, 227-8.



The Greek biblical canon used in the Hellenistic Jewish diaspora, which was later transmitted by Christianity, includes more books (Tobit, Judith, Maccabees, etc.) and also inserts chapters in some books (the “additions” to Daniel, Jeremiah, Job, etc.). Although the additions and insertions were not caused by the existence of a kind of “Alexandrian canon” in Greek which was paralleled to the “Palestinian canon” in Hebrew, they implied that at least some circles of the Jewish diaspora did not hold the view of a closed canon or they were not concerned with the closure of the biblical canon.<sup>44</sup>

Between these two ends, there stood the Pharisees who represented the mainstream Judaism and a middle road of gradual acceptance of a three-part canon (Torah-Prophets-Writings), with a list of books already defined in the mid-second century BC.<sup>45</sup> As the Judaism represented by the Pharisees finally led to the rabbinism of the period of the Mishnah and the Talmud, their view of the canon became prominent in later history.

Both the Jews and the Christians were well aware of the differences between the Hebrew text and the Greek text. As mentioned earlier, the rabbinic circles of Palestine had already completed a revision of the Greek text at the beginning of the first century AD for their own use.<sup>46</sup> In the second century AD the revision continued and the versions done by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion were the fruits of this period.<sup>47</sup> Since these differences often generated different understandings and then deepened the tension between the Jews and the Christians,<sup>48</sup> on the Christian side the most significant attempt was probably Origen’s Hexapla, which was done in the first half of the third century AD and was in the format of six parallel columns containing six different texts: the Hebrew text, transliteration of the Hebrew in Greek, Aquila’s version, Symmachus’ version, LXX, and Theodotion’s version.<sup>49</sup> The other important Christian recension done in the third century AD was Lucian’s version and his revisions seem to have been primarily stylistic in nature.<sup>50</sup> The recensions produced by Origen and Lucian were the texts of the Greek Bible most

44. Ibid., 232-3.

45. Ibid., 222.

46. Ibid., 163.

47. Further discussions of these versions, see Jobes and Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, 37-42.

48. See Ibid., 38.

49. Regarding *Hexapla*, see Parker, “Hexapla of Origen, the,” *ABD*, III:188-89; Jobes and Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, 48-53.

50. Jobes and Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, 53.

commonly in use in the Christian church after the late third century AD<sup>51</sup> and the Christian church probably did not use the Hebrew text as the primary base text until Jerome's translation of the *Latin Vulgate* around the end of the fourth century AD and the beginning of the fifth century AD.<sup>52</sup>

The social history described above shows two important aspects of the OT canon in its formation period. On the one hand, the Pharisee canon could be traced back to a tradition started in the mid-second century BC, but on the other hand, at the start of the Christian period, in both Palestine and Alexandria, the canon as yet had no exact limits.<sup>53</sup> In other words, the OT canon had its basic shape on the one hand while the shape was not entirely fixed on the other hand during the formation period of Christianity. The situation of no fixed canon probably contributed to the difference between the Christian canon and the Jewish one as the Christianity probably had the idea of an open OT canon,<sup>54</sup> and this idea probably provided the room for the addition of the NT to the OT to form the Christian Bible. This social history also shows that the text of the early church was mainly the Greek one. The favour to the Hebrew text coming from the rabbinic tradition was a later phenomenon and Jerome was probably one of the major contributors to this phenomenon.

### 3.3. *The Literary History of the NT Canon*

It should be stressed that Christianity did not begin as a scriptural religion but started with a person, Jesus of Nazareth, as the centre; and the NT as we think of it as the Christian Scripture was utterly remote from the minds of the first generations of Christian believers.<sup>55</sup> The first NT book (either was it Galatians or it was 1 Thessalonians) did not appear until about nearly two decades after the advent of Christian movement around 30-33 AD and it took around fifty years before all the twenty-seven books of today's NT were finished.

The collection of the NT writings was a gradual process. The earliest to be collected were probably the letters of Paul. As early as about 95 AD, a collection

51. *Ibid.*, 55.

52. On Jerome's view on the Hebrew text, see Müller, *The First Bible of the Church*, 83-89. I owe this bibliography to Sarah Lind.

53. Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible*, 233.

54. See *Ibid.*, 234.

55. Rightly, Gamble, *The New Testament Canon*, 57.

of Paul's letters has been hinted to in *1 Clement*, the earliest Christian document outside the NT, and this process of collection continued until finally about the mid-second century AD when the collection of all the fourteen Pauline letters (including Hebrews) was complete.<sup>56</sup> Not all the Pauline letters were preserved in the Pauline Corpus, though. For example, the letters mentioned in 1 Cor 5,9 and 2 Cor 2,4 and the letter to the Laodiceans mentioned in Col 4,16<sup>57</sup> are not part of today's canon. Judging from manuscripts, patristic writers, and canon lists of later time, the earliest Pauline collection contained only letters to seven churches.<sup>58</sup> This seems to be based on the idea that Paul wrote to precisely seven churches and, by the symbol of "seven," the collection could have its relevance to the church at large even though the Pauline letters were dealing with particular issues related to particular local churches.<sup>59</sup>

The gospels were probably circulated independently as each Gospel writer was to offer an adequately comprehensive document which would stand on its own.<sup>60</sup> Not until 180 AD do we hear of the *tetraeuaggôlion*, i.e., a collection of four Gospels regarded as equally authoritative accounts of the gospel story.<sup>61</sup> However, even after the establishment of the "Four Gospels," the popularity of Tatian's *Diatessaron* (c.170 AD) suggests that the fixation of the texts of the Gospels was not an issue until later date, and even, as Gamble thinks, it attests "a still fluid situation in which multiple Gospels were known and used."<sup>62</sup> In comparison with other gospels circulated during the second century AD many of which claim their apostolic authorship explicitly in the text,<sup>63</sup> none of the four Gospels betrays any clue about its authorship in the text. This suggests that apostolic authorship of the Gospels should not be emphasised too strongly for their canonicity.

For other writings, i.e., Acts, Revelation and the Catholic letters, they were firstly circulated as independent writings and it was not until late in the fourth century

56. For the early Church assumed Hebrews to be Pauline. See Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 49.

57. Though Marcion probably knew this letter as the Letter to the Ephesians today. See Gamble, *The New Testament Canon*, 41.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*, 42.

60. *Ibid.*, 31. However, the Gospel of John may presume the existence of other gospels.

61. See Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 48-49.

62. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon*, 31.

63. For example, *Gospel of Thomas*, *Secret Book of James*, *Infant Gospel of Thomas*, and *Infant Gospel of James*.

AD all of their authorities were recognised.<sup>64</sup> The inclusion of some of these books into the NT canon was not straightforward. For example, although the authority of Revelation has been recognised as early as in the second and third century AD in the Western churches, it took much longer for the Eastern churches to recognise its authority.<sup>65</sup> The Acts of the Apostles, although composed as a companion piece to the Gospel of Luke, had a separate history from Luke and did not come to any broad currency until later, about the end of second century AD.<sup>66</sup>

Although most of the books in today's NT canon gained canonical standing before the end of the second century AD, it should be noted that there were also books, such as *I Clement*, *the Epistle of Barnabas*, *the Shepherd of Hermas*, and *the Apocalypse of Peter*, which did not enter into the NT canon in later time but were widely circulated and valued as authoritative by the end of the second century AD.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, around the end of the second century AD both the idea and the shape of a Christian canon remained indeterminate,<sup>68</sup> and, if there were any idea or shape of a NT canon, it is surely different from what Christians would have in later time.

The final official resolution of the NT canon was not reached until the late fourth century AD. The earliest conciliar pronouncements is associated with the Council of Laodicea, held in 363; and in the west the two North African synods of the later fourth century AD (the Council of Hippo, held in 393, and the Council of Carthage, held in 397) both named the twenty-seven books of our NT as canonical.<sup>69</sup> However, this resolution was not recognised universally and even today some of the Eastern Orthodox and the Nestorians still do not fully recognise the canonicity of the book of Revelation.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.4. *The Social History of the NT Canon*

Since the Christian community was started around a particular historical person and a particular historical period, it was essential for the church to recount the teachings of Jesus and the events of his life, death, and resurrection. At first

64. See Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 49-50.

65. *Ibid.*

66. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon*, 47.

67. *Ibid.*, 48-49.

68. *Ibid.*, 50.

69. *Ibid.*, 55-56.

70. See McDonall, "Canon." 134-44.

the recounting was provided through the direct witness of the apostolic preaching and oral tradition. In the very beginning, the meaning of the term “gospel” was basically theological in nature to designate Jesus’ message of the appearance of God’s kingdom and sometimes the whole story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus<sup>71</sup> that were recounted in the oral tradition. Only when oral tradition began to dissipate and grow wild, written gospels came increasingly into use.<sup>72</sup> However, the acquaintance of Christian communities with multiple Gospels, which sometimes differ significantly in their contents, created some difficult problems.<sup>73</sup> The popularity of Tatian’s *Diatessaron* can be then understood as the need for a solution for the multiplicity of Gospels. The final inclusion of four Gospels into the NT canon, according to Gamble, can only be seen as “a compromise striking a precarious balance between an unmanageable multiplicity of gospels on the one hand and a single, self-consistent gospel on the other.”<sup>74</sup>

In addition to the intrinsic factors as exemplified above, there were also extrinsic factors in the formation of the NT canon.<sup>75</sup> The theological controversies over Marcionism, Gnosticism, and Montanism in the second century AD collectively had their impact on the formation of the NT canon. These movements required their opponents to define more exactly the substance of the Christian confession, to specify its proper resources, and to safeguard it against criticism and deviation.<sup>76</sup> This was probably the reason why the Acts of the Apostles did not gain broad currency only until the later part of the second century AD when it was used as a proof of the unity of the apostles and their preaching.<sup>77</sup>

The slow recognition of Revelation in the east also had its socio-historical reason. That the millennialists gave the work a literal interpretation and conjured up expectations about an earthly kingdom generated tensions and troubles in the east.<sup>78</sup> As a result, the Eastern Churches were hesitant in accepting its canonicity. In the west, Hebrews was the point of contention. The Montanists view of no second repentance after baptism was based upon the teaching in Hebrews (6,4-8; 10,26-

71. Broyles, “Gospel (Good News)”, 282.

72. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon*, 58.

73. See *Ibid.*, 24-32.

74. *Ibid.*, 35.

75. See *Ibid.*, 59-67.

76. *Ibid.*, 65.

77. *Ibid.*, 47.

78. *Ibid.*, 52.

31; 12,14-17) had caused the tensions in Christian communities.<sup>79</sup> The canonicity of Hebrews was eventually acknowledged before the end of the fourth century AD but the canonical status of Revelation, though acknowledged by most Christian communities, never achieved unequivocal universal acceptance.

### 3.5. *The Textual History of the OT Books*

The textual history of the OT books should start with the completion of the individual books. However, the oldest extant witnesses can only help us to trace back to the time around the third century BC which was much later than the time that the OT books were written. As a result, we can only have theories and conjectures about the origins of the OT texts.<sup>80</sup>

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (or the Qumran Scrolls) and other early manuscripts in Palestine has enabled us to have a picture about the textual history of the OT books starting from about the third century BC and onwards. From the third century BC to about the end of the first century AD, it was the period of instability and fluidity of Hebrew texts.<sup>81</sup> The study of the Qumran Scrolls shows that some Qumran manuscripts are closely parallel to what later became known as the Masoretic Text; others are similar to the textual tradition of the Septuagint, and still others resemble the textual tradition of the Samaritan Pentateuch. In other words, several text types existed concurrently during this period.

Only after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD, the establishment of the standardised Hebrew text began. From the text types transmitted before 70 AD the rabbis adopted one type of text, which could be called proto-masoretic; and the fixation of the text was probably complete around the mid-second century AD.<sup>82</sup>

For our discussion, what is particularly significant is that this process happened after the Christian movement had started and also happened when the Jews and the Christians started to part their ways. Therefore, the discussion about the base text to be used in translating the OT should take this factor into account.

79. Ibid.

80. A succinct discussion about the origins of the OT texts can be seen in Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible*, 291-300.

81. Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible*, 284-90; Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, 42-46.

82. Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible*, 279-80.

### 3.6. *The Textual History of the NT Books*

The textual history of the NT books started in the second half of the first century AD when the NT books were written. Two significant periods in the textual history of the NT documents were the persecution under Diocletian (ca.303-313 AD), and the age of Constantine (d.337 AD) which followed. One of the major characteristics of the Diocletianic persecutions was the systematic destruction of church buildings and also the MSS found in them. The result was a widespread shortage of NT manuscripts when the persecution ceased.<sup>83</sup> The tremendous growth of Christianity after Diocletianic persecutions caused the problem of lack of manuscripts even more acute. The outcome was then a period of “mass production” of manuscripts by large copying houses.

The exemplar used in such production centres was mainly related to the exegetical school of Antioch, which provided bishops for many dioceses throughout the east; and in such a way this type of text (i.e., the Koine text type) soon widely spread and eventually influenced the type of text (i.e., the Byzantine text type) used in the Imperial capital, Constantinople, later when entering into the age of Constantine.<sup>84</sup> The only region that was not influenced by this text type was probably the region around Alexandria of North Egypt, where the church was governed with a tightly centralised administrative structure. A different text type (i.e., the Alexandrian text type) was then probably produced here due to different church administration.<sup>85</sup>

Between these two text types,<sup>86</sup> the Alexandrian text type, represented by most of the papyrus manuscripts and several uncial manuscripts of the fourth and fifth centuries, is considered by most of the textual critics today as the text type closest to the original, while the Byzantine text type, which can be found in about eighty percent of minuscule manuscripts and almost all the lectionary manuscripts, is considered by most textual critics as the least valuable one in reconstructing the original text because the editorial work done to this text type was mainly for practical, liturgical, or theological purpose and not for textual.

83. Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 65.

84. See *Ibid.*, 65-66.

85. See *Ibid.*, 65.

86. The third major text type is the so-called “Western” text type. However, this text type was not as influential as the other two text types in the later history.

However, in the later history it was the Byzantine text type, as the Imperial text, that circulated the widest. When Erasmus edited his Greek text, he generally followed this text type and his Greek text later became the “*textus receptus*” behind the German Luther Bibel and the English King James Version. Only until the nineteenth century AD, did scholars begin to challenge the authority of the “*textus receptus*” with the Alexandrian text type, as the later is closer to the original.

### 3.7. Some Observations

From the above survey, we may have the following observations:

Firstly, the canonical forms of the biblical texts that we have today are actually the results of collecting and editing in a very long period of time and this process actually happened within the context of a believing community or several believing communities. Therefore, their authority cannot be understood merely in terms of their authorial dimension. Our survey shows that the belief, the situations, and the interests of the believing community or communities all played roles in the formation of the canon. The different beliefs and interests of the faith groups in the Hellenistic period result in the co-existence of different views about the scope of canon. And it is probably because the early Christians held a view of “open canon” of the Hebrew Scripture that they were able to include the “New Testament” books as the second part of the biblical canon, which has equal authority to, if not higher authority than, the authority of the *Tanakh*. The contention about the canonicity of the books of Revelation and Hebrews also demonstrates how the situations and experiences of the believing communities affected the formation of the canon. Therefore, it is probably appropriate to say that the collecting and editing should be understood as the active engagement of the believing community or communities in the formation of the biblical canon. The believing community or communities were the recipients and readers of the biblical books while, at the same time, they were also the locus in which the canon or canons were established.

Secondly, to say that the believing communities actively engaged themselves in the formation of the canon does not mean that the believing community or communities took full control of the formation of the Bible just according to their beliefs, needs, or interests. There were criteria of canonicity that were more-or-less independent of the situations of the believing communities. As our survey shows, despite of their differences of canons in the Judaism of the Hellenistic period, all socio-religious groups agreed on the authority of the Torah, many agreed on the authority of the Prophets, and none viewed contemporary works as authoritative.



Barrera therefore rightly observes that “the process of establishing the *Old Testament canon* was guided by the basic criteria of *authority* and *antiquity*” and “sacred character was accorded to books which could prove a Mosaic or prophetic origin, going back to a period before the time when the continuous succession of prophets was finally broken.”<sup>87</sup> For the NT canon, the formation was not merely determined by contingent historical factors, either. As Gamble observes, “the church also engaged in a reflective evaluation of its literary and theological heritage, and in setting apart certain documents as specially authoritative, it appealed to certain principles.”<sup>88</sup> Among these criteria we can find apostolicity, catholicity, orthodoxy, and traditional use.<sup>89</sup> Although these criteria were not used with great rigor or consistency, the existence of these criteria indicates that the tradition started with Jesus’ teaching and his cross and resurrection was a crucial determining factor in the formation of the NT canon.

Thirdly, the “closure” of the biblical canon probably cannot be understood in a theological fashion as the completion of collection of the inspired books of divine origin. This is not merely because inspiration was not one of the major criteria for canonicity as discussed earlier.<sup>90</sup> This is also because, on the one hand, there never existed a canon that was recognised universally by all believing communities, and on the other hand, after the establishment of the OT and NT canons, especially during the time of Reformation, the canonicity of certain biblical books were still discussed and even some of them were excluded from the canon for certain believing communities as a result.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, the “closure” of the biblical canon is better understood as the stabilisation of the biblical canon, and probably more correctly, the stabilisation of the biblical canon in a particular believing community because the reality is that different believing communities have slightly different canons. It is, therefore, not the inspired nature of the canonical books but the tradition of the believing community that maintains the stability of the biblical canon and prevents it from addition and alteration. Thus, it is probably crucial to clarify “whose canon” that we are dealing with in the first place whenever we deal with the issue of canon.

87. See Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible*, 153.

88. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon*, 67.

89. *Ibid.*, 67-71.

90. See also *Ibid.*, 71-72.

91. Regarding Luther’s view on OT and NT canon, a good survey can be seen in Fricke, “The Apocrypha in the Luther Bible,” 46-55.

Fourthly, due to the limitation of the textual witnesses of the OT documents and the instability and fluidity of Hebrew texts before its fixation at the end of the first century AD, the reconstruction of the autographs of the OT documents are probably something unattainable. What the textual critics could achieve is probably only the archetype or archetypes. Therefore, the nature of the choice of the base text for Bible translation is basically a choice between traditions. One implication of this is that in terms of text the scriptural authority of the OT has more to do with the tradition as well as the believing community passing on the tradition and not so much, if any, to do with the authorial dimension of the text. A doctrine for the scriptural authority resorting to certain inspired authors is then probably not very meaningful as this kind of formulation cannot be proved or falsified. However, to say that it is a choice between traditions is not as simple as the choice between the rabbinic tradition of the Masoretic Text and the Christian tradition of the Septuagint as Müller tries to argue.<sup>92</sup> The facts that Origen tried to compare the differences between the Hebrew and the Greek texts and that Jerome used the Hebrew text as the base text for his *Vulgate* suggest that the early Christians, at least some of them, were well aware of the Jewish root of Christianity and attempts have been made to bridge the gap between the two. Any solution for the base text for Bible translation should take into account both the phenomenon that during the period of textual fluidity Christians and Jews did use different text bases and the fact that in later history some of the Christians, especially in the west, did try to reconcile the two. Since the textual choice for the OT is mainly a choice of traditions and in view that the textual traditions of later believing communities can always be traced back to the textual choices done in an earlier period, in addition to the above two factors, the tradition of the believing community to which the target audience belongs may also be respected and considered in Bible translation.

Fifthly, in comparison with the textual phenomenon of the OT it is more possible to talk about the reconstruction of the “autographs” for the NT documents in view of the vast amount of witnesses and the early dates of some of them. It is therefore possible to judge which text type is closer to the original in comparison with other text types for the NT documents. This is not the sole reason that a text which is close to the original is preferred in Bible translation, though. A probably more important reason for this is that, unlike the situation of the OT documents, the NT documents are records closely related to a particular historical person and a

92. Müller, *The First Bible of the Church*.

particular historical period and, to have reliable information about this person and this period, the reconstruction of these documents as witnesses to this person and this period is therefore essential. The textual tradition or traditions established in later history are not unimportant, but these later traditions should not override the significance of the reconstruction of the original because it is through the latter that a fuller picture of that person and that historical period can be reconstructed.

#### ***4. Other Factors to Be Considered: From Recent Critiques of Inspiration and Reformulations of the Theology of the Scripture***

At the end of his article, Lewis laments that, “the view that Scripture text went through a long period of being sacred story before it became sacred text and the view that texts were early accepted because they came from what was believed to be an inspired origin are views not reconcilable with each other.”<sup>93</sup> In view of the above survey, what one needs to do is probably not to reconcile these two views but to reformulate the doctrine of scriptural authority in light of the history of the formation of the Bible. Before we propose our formulation, we shall firstly survey some of the critiques and reformulation of the doctrine of inspiration.

##### *4.1. Paul J. Achtemeier*

Paul Achtemeier’s groundbreaking work, *The Inspiration of Scripture*,<sup>94</sup> is probably the first attempt to challenge the authorial view of inspiration by resorting to contemporary biblical scholarship. In this book, Achtemeier argues that the fundamental problem with both the liberal view and the conservative view is that they rest on the prophetic model of inspiration, which a modern, critical understanding of the way the Bible came into being has rendered obsolete.<sup>95</sup> In line with the observations presented above, Achtemeier thinks “much of [the] material in both Old and New Testaments was assembled to serve functions within the religious community. The material was inspired by the community’s experience, was told for the benefit of the community, and hence owned its origin more to a communal than to an individual.”<sup>96</sup> Therefore, he proposes that the locus of inspiration is not

93. Lewis, “Some Aspects of the Problem of Inclusion of the Apocrypha,” 187-188.

94. The revised and expanded edition is published in 1999 with the title, *Inspiration and Authority: Nature and Function of Christian Scripture*.

95. Achtemeier, *The Inspiration of Scripture*, 99; his critique of the two views, see also chap. 2.

96. *Ibid.*, 102.

the authors but the interrelationship of tradition, situation, and respondent.<sup>97</sup> In other words, the people who were inspired were not the authors but the readers, who understood themselves by way of the traditions passed unto them from the past, and used and modified the traditions in facing and responding new situations.

Achtemeier is well aware that the reading or hearing of the written Scripture does not necessarily lead to understanding it or accepting its witness as true; some further act is necessary before the words of Scripture are able to convince the reader or hearer of their truth.<sup>98</sup> He thinks that this “further act” is the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit (*testamonium internum Spiritus Sancti*) and because of this internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, “inspiration does not cease with the production of the writing, but must also continue with the reading.”<sup>99</sup>

One of the strengths of Achtemeier’s formulation, or reformulation, of the doctrine of inspiration is that, unlike the conservative formulation, it is fully informed by contemporary biblical scholarship and at the same time, unlike the liberal formulation, it does not sacrifice the authority of the Bible for critical scholarship. However, it should be noted that this reformulation has changed entirely the semantics of the term “inspiration” from the process of writing to the process of reading. Considering that traditionally the term “inspiration” has been understood in the former sense, we would ask whether this is still the best term used for describing the scriptural authority.

#### 4.2. John Goldingay

This question is actually one of the starting points of John Goldingay’s work, *Models for Scripture*. Thinking that the nature of the Bible cannot be conceptualised by merely one model, Goldingay proposes to use four models in formulating the doctrine of the Scripture. He defines these four models as “Scripture as Witnessing Tradition,”<sup>100</sup> “Scripture as Authoritative Canon,”<sup>101</sup> “Scripture as Inspired Word,”<sup>102</sup> and “Scripture as Experienced Revelation.”<sup>103</sup> Goldingay associates these models

97. See *Ibid.*, 134, see also the discussion in 124-34.

98. *Ibid.*, 137-8.

99. *Ibid.*, 138

100. Detailed discussions see Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*, 19-82.

101. Detailed discussions see *Ibid.*, 83-198.

102. Detailed discussions see *Ibid.*, 199-284.

103. Detailed discussions see *Ibid.*, 285-371.

mainly with different genres appeared in the Bible. Scripture as a “witnessing tradition” is associated with the narrative books with their concern to pass on testimony to the events of Israel’s history and the history of Jesus; Scripture as “authoritative canon” is associated with the instruction material in the Pentateuch and elsewhere; Scripture as an “inspired word,” both human and divine, is associated with the prophecy; while Scripture as “experienced revelation” is associated with those “experiential-reflective” material appearing in the poetic books and in the epistles as well as the strictly revelatory material in the apocalypses.<sup>104</sup> Goldingay does not suggest that each of the models is only applicable to certain particular genres and, hence, particular parts of the Bible. In the discussion of each model, he also explores the many ways that other models are related to this particular model when the Bible as a whole is understood in terms of this particular model.<sup>105</sup>

Goldingay’s approach deserves close critical engagement and some of his presuppositions may need discussion. For example, whether different genres can be seen as having different natures and, hence, used as different models is still a question to be discussed. Even if different genres can be seen as the realisations of different natures of material, it may be a bit over-simplified to view the Torah just in terms of the genre of authoritative canon or to view the Prophets in terms of the genre of “inspired word.” In the Torah we have both law and narrative and it would be very difficult to separate these two in a way that everyone will agree, while the narrative sections of the prophets are also hardly to be understood in terms of “inspired word.” Therefore, the situation can be more complicated than what he presents. Despite these minor shortcomings, Goldingay successfully draws our attention to the richness, multiplicity and complexity of biblical material which cannot be reduced merely by a single over-simplified formulation or model; and this richness, multiplicity and complexity should be fully appreciated in any formulation of the doctrine of the nature of the Bible.

#### 4.3. *G.W. Bromiley*

In his article “History of the Doctrine of Inspiration,” Bromiley briefly surveys the conception and development of the doctrine of inspiration in early Church, patristic period, medieval Church, Reformation, Post-reformation period, and eighteenth century Rationalism from the viewpoint of historical theology.<sup>106</sup> In his

104. *Ibid.*, 18.

105. See *Ibid.*, chaps 6, 13, 18, 24 and 25.

106. Bromiley, “History of the Doctrine of Inspiration,” 849-54.

view, the early Church's view of inspiration was affected by the Jewish or Judaistic understanding, which is a very high doctrine of inspiration. However, this high doctrine of inspiration carried with it a threefold danger: (1) it tended to abstract the divine nature and authority of the Bible from the human authors and situation; (2) it clearly abstracted the Bible from the object of its witness when it failed or refused to see in Jesus Christ the object of its witness, thus being left with a mere textbook of doctrine, ethics, and ceremonies; and (3) in rejecting Jesus Christ it refused the witness of the Holy Spirit, so that in its reading, the OT was deprived of its living power.<sup>107</sup> To him, the reason that orthodoxy since the Post-Reformation period has been "so feeble and ineffective in claiming the Bible and its inspiration for itself in face of [the] upsurge of the human spirit" is that orthodoxy itself has adopted "an abstract, schematised, and basically Judaistic understanding of inspiration."<sup>108</sup> Since orthodoxy no longer had full confidence in the witness of the Spirit but had to find for the Bible rationalistic support, the Bible became a mere textbook of dogmatic truth rather than a concrete and living attestation of Jesus Christ.<sup>109</sup>

In Bromiley's view, the role of Holy Spirit in inspiration is not limited to the notion of the giving of messages through human speakers or writers with the activity of the Holy Spirit. "What is given by the Spirit must be read in the Spirit," and "To the objective inspiration of Scripture there corresponds the subjective illumination of the understanding."<sup>110</sup> "Without the Holy Spirit [the Bible] can be read only at the level of the human letter."<sup>111</sup> The doctrine of the Scripture, therefore, cannot be formulated independent of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

### ***5. Alternative Approach: from the Perspective of the Believing Communities***

In view of what we have surveyed, the proper place for the discussion of the doctrine of the Scripture is probably not under the doctrine of God, as normally done in doctrinal or systematic theology, but under the doctrine of church (ecclesiology) as well as the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology). The need to shift the discussion from under the doctrine of God to under the doctrine of church and the Holy Spirit is that, according to our survey, the authority of the Bible probably

107. *Ibid.*, 849.

108. *Ibid.*, 853.

109. *Ibid.*

110. *Ibid.*, 849.

111. *Ibid.*

does not come from its authorial dimension but is an outcome of the conscious engagement of the believing community or communities as the recipients of various writings available to them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The weakness in using the term “inspiration,” understood as the Holy Spirit’s influence upon the writers to render their writings, as the theological foundation of scriptural authority is then apparent. This authorial approach does not help us to appreciate the dimension how the Holy Spirit guided the believing community in their recognition and appreciation of the scriptural authority and, eventually, to form the biblical canon for themselves. “Inspiration” in this sense is nothing more than one of the channels that God revealed and communicate himself to his people but by no means the ultimate reason of the authority of the Bible.

However, if “inspiration” is still to be used as a theological term for scriptural authority, a semantic shift is necessary. “Inspiration” should be understood not just as the influence of the Holy Spirit in the writing process but, probably more important, his guidance in the process of recognising the authority of the Scripture and properly understanding its contents. In other words, for the discussion of the authority of the Bible the “inspired people” is probably more important than the “inspired authors” or “inspired texts;” and the theological formulation of scriptural authority should include the description how the believing community, also being the community of the Holy Spirit, were “inspired” in the formation of the Bible in the history.

Even the composition and editing of the books that later became part of the Bible should be viewed and understood from within the context of the believing community. For both the OT and the NT, the authors and editors were not “outsiders.” They composed and edited for the benefit of the community and only writings coming from within the believing community or from the traditions with which the community identify themselves were accorded with authority. Should the authors and editors be viewed as “inspired,” it is because their works were eventually recognised as part of the authoritative Scripture by the people who were, and still are, “inspired” by the Holy Spirit.

The notion of “inspired people” allows the co-existence of slightly different canons and texts for different believing communities. The differences were probably mainly caused by the different traditions that the communities inherited and the different situations that the communities were facing and responding to.

However, the phenomenon of the co-existence of several canons has never been too diversified to have a unity among them. This diversity in unity suggests that, from the viewpoint of the believing communities, there is still a centre and focus for the biblical books.

This centre or focus of the biblical books is the historical person, Jesus the Nazarene, and the historical period of his birth, teaching, crucifixion, and resurrection. All NT documents were later developments because of this historical person and this historical moment; and even the inclusion of the Jewish Bible as part of the Christian Bible was because the Christians believed, and still believe, that Jesus is the Messiah promised and prophesied in the Jewish Bible. Therefore, the primary significance of the Christian Bible should reside in its witness to Jesus Christ. Since the Bible is out of the work of the Holy Spirit, it should also be viewed as part of the witness of the Holy Spirit for Jesus Christ. Having Jesus Christ as the hermeneutical centre of the Bible also implies a kind of philosophy of history, that not all historical moments have equal significances. The climax of the history should be the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord.

According to this understanding, the domain that the Scripture exerts its authority also needs discussion. To associate the authority of the Scripture with an “inspired people” implies that this authority is by no means a kind of universal authority which is recognised by all people, though those who subject themselves to this authority believe that all people should be subjected to this authority. Therefore, the subjection to the scriptural authority is actually the social boundary marker of the believing community, who believe that the Bible has the final say about truth, salvation, and morality. As a matter of fact, this is probably the real point of the injunction of 2 Tim 3:16: the Scripture is “inspired” because it is useful “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (NRSV). Without the proper functioning of teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, the Scripture is hardly said to have any authority at all over anyone.

## **6. *Implications of This Alternative Approach in Bible Translation***

*If the above formulation is followed, for Bible translation both the issue of canon and the issue of text should be discussed in light of the relationship between the Bible and the historical period of Jesus’ birth, teaching, crucifixion, and resurrection as well as in light of the tradition and history of the believing community or communities.*



For the OT, the instability and fluidity of Hebrew canons and texts during the time of Jesus should allow a more flexible approach to the decision regarding canon and base text. The first Christians were in a situation that both Hebrew and Greek texts were used and several text types for both were current when they recognised and confessed Jesus Christ as the Lord. In other words, the Holy Spirit bore witness to the first Christians through various texts and text types, and the instability and fluidity of canons and texts did not prevent the first Christians from being guided by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, however, the situation that early Christians' self-awareness of having Jewish root encouraged them to reconcile the differences between the Greek text that the Christians used and the Hebrew text that the Jews used after the standardisation of the Jewish canon and text in the early second century AD. When we take into account these complex historical factors together and understand them theologically according to our formulation discussed above, we may say that the issue of canon and base text for the OT in Bible translation should allow variations. We need to trace carefully the history of the tradition of the believing community in question on the one hand, while on the other hand we need to maintain the Jewish roots of Christianity as a whole. The effort to find a balance between the two is by no means a compromise of the integrity of the Bible; it is actually the expression of our respect for the fact that the Holy Spirit who has guided this particular believing community with a particular canon and text until now is also the one who has guided the whole body of Christ until now.

For the NT, the slow recognition of the canonical status for Hebrews in the west and for Revelation in the east showed the struggling of the early Christians with the different situations confronted by them, while the fact that, despite different challenges faced by different churches, eventually most of the churches could agree on the extent of the NT canon can probably be interpreted and concluded as the result of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As to the phenomenon that some of the Eastern Churches still do not recognise fully the canonicity of Revelation, it is because in the early period of these traditions the special situations confronted by them prevented them from drawing benefit from this book subsequently. This should also be interpreted as the Holy Spirit's guidance for these particular groups and it is similar to the situations for the OT canon and text as discussed above.

For the established canonical NT books, the conviction that the climax of the history is the cross of Jesus Christ should be the controlling factor for the decision for the base text in Bible translation, especially if Bible translation is to be

understood as an activity within the believing communities. As discussed earlier, *since all NT documents are records closely related to a particular person and a particular historical period*, the base text used for translating them should be as close as possible to the original. The textual traditions developed in later history, though bear significance of their own, should not override the significance of the reconstruction of the original.

## ***7. Hermeneutical Implications of This Alternative Approach***

The approach to the scriptural authority proposed here has several implications regarding biblical hermeneutics:

### *7.1. Jesus Christ as the Hermeneutic Centre*

Firstly, since for the believing community the centre and focus of the biblical books is the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, and the historical period of his birth, teaching, crucifixion, and resurrection, the hermeneutics of the scripture of the believing community should be characterised by its proclamation that Jesus Christ is the Saviour for all and the Lord for all. This is not to say that the Bible cannot be read literarily, psychologically, ideologically, politically, or in any other possible ways. The Bible is a collection of texts and, therefore, it is entirely legitimate to read the Bible in exactly the same ways as we read other texts, both sacred and secular. The readings generated by the people outside the believing community are not necessarily inferior to the readings generated inside the believing community. As a matter of fact, in Church history there have been occasions that Christians learnt from outsiders regarding the reading of the Bible. Reformers' adoption of the humanistic hermeneutics during the time of Reformation is just one of many examples of this kind. However, what marks the biblical hermeneutics of the Christians as unique should be their conviction that the Bible as a whole, both the OT and the NT, is to witness Jesus Christ as the Lord. This conviction should be the characteristic that distinguishes Christian "emic" reading strategy from other non-Christian "etic" reading strategies.

To say that Jesus Christ is the hermeneutic centre of Christian biblical reading does not mean that any kind of allegorical or anachronistic reading is legitimate as long as we can "read out" Christ from the text, however. In terms of hermeneutic principles and methods, the way that Christians interpret biblical passages should be exactly the same as the way that people interpret any other text. The difference

between the two is basically to do with viewpoints and concerns but by no means to do with principles and methods. In fact, only when Christians share the same hermeneutical principles and methods with people outside the believing community, can true dialogue and meaningful proclamation be possible.

For Christian community life, to say that Jesus Christ is the hermeneutic centre of Christian biblical reading also means that any reading deviates from or contradicts this focus probably cannot be seen as genuine Christian reading of the Bible. By using this focus as the touchstone of Christian biblical reading, the believing community can safeguard themselves from all kinds of novel, strange and eccentric readings of the Bible.

### *7.2. Authority Requires Submission in Action*

Secondly, if the subjection to the scriptural authority is the hallmark of the believing community, the discussion of scriptural authority cannot be limited only to the theoretical and intellectual level without stepping into the level of praxis. The ultimate goal of Christian biblical hermeneutics, then, will not only be the apposite understanding of the meaning of the biblical text, but it will also be the appropriate responses and actions in light of the situations and challenges faced by the believing community. Authority requires submission in action, not just agreement in words.

### *7.3. The Significance of Tradition in Biblical Hermeneutics*

Thirdly, the approach proposed here implies the significance of tradition in Christian biblical hermeneutics. Since the Bible was formed in the context of a believing community or several believing communities, and it was passed onto us through believing communities, in our reading of the Bible the traditions of believing communities cannot be overlooked. This is not to say that a Christian coming from the Presbyterian Church should read the Bible in a strictly Calvinistic way or a Lutheran should read the Bible in a strictly Lutheran way. The point here is that the meaning of a text is not merely determined by itself but also enriched and clarified by its context and its intertextuality. Textuality is not something self-sufficient. If the content of the Bible is centred at a historical person and a historical period which is outside the textual world of the Bible, we need somehow to listen to the tradition or traditions that passed on the Bible to us, even if in a critical way, when we listen to the messages in the Bible.

#### 7.4. *Different Canons, Different Experiences*

Lastly, the phenomenon that since the very beginning of Christianity there has never existed a canon which was accepted by all believing communities reminds us that we need to respect the differences and diversity of other believing communities on the one hand and to learn from one's own tradition that passes on the unique form of canon and texts on the other hand. If we believe that the Holy Spirit who allots to each one individually according to his choice also allots to each believing community individually according to his choice (cf. 1Co 12:11), it should be more than acceptable that the Holy Spirit guided different believing community in a slightly different way with a slight different canon and text due to the different challenges experienced by them. Therefore, the reality that different believing community has a slightly different canon and text should not be the point for contention. On the contrary, this should be seen as an opportunity for all believing communities to appreciate the richness of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in which we can experience both the unity and the diversity, and in all kinds of diversity there is still a unity, which is the proclamation of Jesus Christ as the Lord. The more dialogue exists among different believing communities, the more the abundance of God we could experience and also the more the way that the Holy Spirit has guided the believing community to which we belong we could appreciate and treasure. Diversity implies opportunities: opportunities to have a broader mind and opportunities to understand oneself afresh.

Rev. Dr. Kuo-Wei Pent  
13949, 28 Avenue  
Surrey, British Columbia,  
Canada Y4P 1T5

#### ***Bibliography***

- Achtemeier, Paul J. *Inspiration and Authority: Nature and Function of Christian Scripture*, Hendrickson, Peabody 1999.
- , *The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1980.
- Aland, Kurt and Aland, Barbara. *The Text of the New Testament*, (Translated by Erroll F. Rhodes), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI 21989.

- Alexanian, Joseph M. "Versions, Ancient (Armenian)," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. VI Doubleday, New York 1992, 805-810
- Barrera, Julio Trebollo. *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible*, (Translated by Wilfred G.E. Watson), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI 1998.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author," in David Lodge(ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. Longman, London 1988, 167-172
- Bromiley, G.W. "Inspiration, History of the Doctrine of," in G.W. Bromiley.(ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Vol. II, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI 1982, 849-854.
- Brotzman, Ellis R. *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI 1994.
- Broyles, C.C. "Gospel (Good News)" in J.B.Green; & S. McKnight; & I.H. Marshall(eds.), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Downers Grove: IVP, 1992, 282-285
- Chadwick, Owen. "The Significance of Deuterocanonical Writings in the Anglican Tradition." in Siegfried Meurer(ed.), *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective*, (Translated by Paul Ellingworth), UBS Monograph Series 6, Reading, UK: UBS, 1991, 116-128
- Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI 1983, 1984, 1985.
- Enchiridion Biblicum*, Centro Editoriale Dehoniano, Bologna 1993
- Fricke, Klaus Dietrich. "The Apocrypha in the Luther Bible" in Siegfried Meurer (ed.), *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective*, (Translated by Paul Ellingworth), UBS Monograph Series 6, Reading, UK 1991, 46-87
- Gamble, Harry Y. *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1985.
- Gundert, Wihelm. "The Bible Societies and the Deuterocanonical Writings," in Siegfried Meurer (ed.), *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective*, (Translated by Paul Ellingworth), UBS Monograph Series 6, Reading, UK 1991, 134-150..
- Jobes, Karen H. & Silva, Moisés. *Invitation to the Septuagint*. Baker, Grand Rapids, MI 2000.
- Lewis, Jack P. "Some Aspects of the Problem of Inclusion of the Apocrypha" in Siegfried Meurer (ed.), *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective*, (Translated by Paul Ellingworth), UBS Monograph Series 6. Reading, UK, 1991, 161-207.
- Mallau, Hans-Harald. "The Attitude of the Baptists to the Deuterocanonical

- Writings," in Siegfried Meurer (ed.), *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective*, (Translated by Paul Ellingworth), UBS Monograph Series 6, Reading, UK 1991, 129-133.
- McDonall, L.M. "Canon," in R.P. Martin and P.H. Davids (eds.), *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, Downers Grove, IVP, 1997, 134-144.
- Meurer, Siegfried, (ed.), *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective*, (Translated by Paul Ellingworth), UBS Monograph Series 6, Reading, UK 1991.
- Müller, Mogens. *The First Bible of the Church: A Plea for the Septuagint*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 206, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield 1996.
- Neuser, Wilhelm H. "The Reformed Churches and the Old Testament Apocrypha," in Siegfried Meurer (ed.), *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective*, (Translated by Paul Ellingworth), UBS Monograph Series 6, Reading, UK 1991, 88-115.
- Oikonomos, Elias. "The Significance of the Deuterocanonical Writings in the Orthodox Church," in Siegfried Meurer (ed.), *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective*, (Translated by Paul Ellingworth), UBS Monograph Series 6. Reading, UK 1991, 16-32..
- Parker, D.C. "Hexapla of Origen, The," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* Vol. III, Doubleday, New York 1992, 188-189.
- Sanders, James A. *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1984.
- Stendebach, Franz Josef. "The Old Testament Canon in the Catholic Church," in Siegfried Meurer (ed.), *The Apocrypha in Ecumenical Perspective*, (Translated by Paul Ellingworth), UBS Monograph Series 6, Reading, UK 1991, 33-45.
- Thomson, Francis J. "The Slavonic Translation of the Old Testament," in Jože Krašovec (ed.) *The Interpretation of the Bible*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 289, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield 1998, 605-920
- Zuurmond, Rochus. "Versions, Ancient (Ethiopic)" *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. VI, Doubleday, New York 1992, 808-810.

## *Issues in Bible Translation, 7*

### *Translating οὗτός in 2 John 7*

Anthony Abela

#### *A short story*

The need to reconsider the translation of the second half of this verse in our Bible arose when Rev Prof Donatus Spiteri OFM Cap raised within the Permanent Biblical Commission of the Malta Bible Society, meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2006, the issue of some grammatical discrepancy between the singular demonstrative pronoun οὗτός, and the plural πολλοὶ πλάνοι to which the pronoun is normally supposed to be referring. On that occasion, the Commission agreed that this demonstrative pronoun is anaphoric in the sense that it is referring back to this subject in the previous clause, but also cataphoric, in the sense that it is the subject of a clause which is still beginning and hence looks forward to what the predicate and the complement are going to say on the subject. The Commission suggested hence a new translation: “This is what it means to be the Seducer and the Antichrist” (minute 7).

This half verse features once more in the minutes of the following meeting of the Permanent Biblical Commission, that of the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2006, again minute 7, when Rev Martin Micallef OFM Cap, lecturer at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Malta, expressed doubts with regards the cataphoric character of the demonstrative pronoun οὗτός; he described it rather as simply anaphoric, and is referring, as the text of *Il-Bibbja* (2004) shows, to πολλοὶ πλάνοι of the first clause in the verse. He questioned also the wisdom of translating the copula by verb ‘tfisser’, ‘it means’ when we have several instances of general statements made of Christians by the author of 1John as in 5, 3.14. It was at this stage that the present writer was asked to give this clause a closer look.

#### *Traditional syntactical analysis*

a) We shall start with the four Maltese translations currently present on the Maltese market. “Dehru fid-dinja hafna nies qarrieqa, li ma jistqarrux lil Ġesù Kristu li ġie fil-ġisem; dan hu l-qarrieq u l-antikrist” (There appeared in the world many deceiving people, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ who came in the flesh;

this is the deceiver and the antichrist) (Saydon).<sup>1</sup> “Għax dehru fid-dinja hafna nies qarrieqa, li ma jistqarrux li Ġesù Kristu ġie fil-ġisem. Dan hu qarrieq u antikrist” (For there appeared in the world many deceiving people, who do not acknowledge that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. Such a person is a deceiver and antichrist) (Zammit)<sup>2</sup>. “Għax harġu fid-dinja hafna qarrieqa, nies li ma jridux jistqarru li Ġesù Kristu ġie fid-dinja fil-ġisem; dawn huma l-qarrieqa u l-antikrist! (For there came out into the world many deceivers, people who refuse to acknowledge that Jesus came into the world in the flesh; these are the deceivers and the antichrist!) (MBS)<sup>3</sup>. “Għax hafna nies qarrieqa harġu fid-dinja li ma jistqarrux li Ġesù Kristu ġie fil-ġisem. Min jghid hekk hu qarrieq u l-antikrist” (For many deceiving people came out into the world, who do not acknowledge that Jesus came in the flesh. Whoever says this is a deceiver and an antichrist) (Schembri)<sup>4</sup>.

Some comments: 1) Saydon’s translation may be termed literal, and formal equivalent. But the translation of οὐτός by the demonstrative pronoun ‘dan’<sup>5</sup> reproduces the same ambiguity as the original Greek source. 2) Zammit reproduces his source text which is the Authorized Version, both regarding exegesis as well as sentence structure, while for vocabulary he borrows from Saydon. Hence he reproduces the clause initial ὅτι which many translations (not the Maltese, with the exception of Saydon’s) today ignore, and he parses the second clause in the verse as a completely new sentence. The standard text of the Authorised Version reads as follows: “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”<sup>6</sup> Both the AV and Zammit neglect the arthrous form of the substantives πλάνοϛ and ἀντίχριστος in verse 7, which Saydon does not; for M. de Jonge this article qualifying these two substantives has some semantic relevance.<sup>7</sup> c) The MBS version is the only one which translates the clause under study completely in the plural: “these are the deceivers and the antichrist!” This version entails that οὐτός is deictic of the noun

1. Peter Paul Saydon, *Bibbja Saydon. It-Testment il-Ġdid*, Societas Doctrinae Christianae, Malta 1977.
2. Karm Zammit, *Il-Bibbja Mqaddsa. It-Testment Il-Qadim u T-Testment Il-Ġdid Skond Il-Verżjoni Awtorizzata Maqluba Għall-Malti mill-Ingliż*, Trinitarian Bible Society, London 1980(?).
3. *Il-Bibbja. Il-Kotba Mqaddsa*, Malta Bible Society, Malta 1984.1996.2004. For this study we are using the 2004 edition.
4. Guido Schembri, *It-Testment il-Ġdid*, ‘Pro Manuscripto’, Edizzjoni TAU, Malta 2004.
5. Cf. Anton Cremona, *Tagħlim fuq il-Kitba Maltija*, Lux Press, Malta 1962, 218-219.
6. *Holy Bible*. King James Version, Standard Text Edition, Cambridge University Press.
7. Cf. C. Haas & M. de Jonge & J.L. Swellengrebel, *A Handbook on the Letters of John*, United Bible Societies, New York 1972, 168.



phrase πολλοὶ πλάνοὶ in the first clause of verse 7; but it also means that ὁ πλάνοσ and ὁ ἀντίχριστος are treated unevenly by this version, for while the former refers to a class, the latter to an individual<sup>8</sup>. Are we sure they do not refer to the same reality? Besides, this version identifies the πολλοὶ πλάνοὶ with ὁ πλάνοσ and ὁ ἀντίχριστος. d) There is strong similarity between the vocabulary and morphology of Schembri and MBS; in the same way we find a number of similarities between Saydon's and Zammit's; the former varies from the latter in syntax, the two translations though rest upon the same exegetical options.

b) Some international versions of the verse. No special order is followed: **NRSV**<sup>9</sup>: "Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist!" **NBS**: "Effet, beaucoup d'imposteurs sont sortis dans le monde, qui ne reconnaissent pas Jésus-Christ venant in chair. Voilà l'imposteur et l'antichrist." **CCB**: "Many deceivers have gone out into the world, people who do not acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ who came as a man. They are impostors and antichrists." **BE**: "Beaucoup d'imposteurs se sont répandus dans le monde: ils refusent de reconnoitre que Jesus-Christ est reellement devenu home. C'est en cela que se révèle l'imposteur, l'Adversaire du Christ." **BLC**: "Ci sono sparsi nel mondo molti falsi maestri, i quali non vogliono riconoscere che Gesù è venuto come vero uomo. Questi falsi maestri, sono proprio loro il seduttore e l'anticristo." **NV**: "Quoniam multi seductores prodierunt in mundum, qui non confitentur Jesum Christum venientem in carne; hic est seductor et antichristus." **BJ**: "C'est que beaucoup de séducteurs se sont répandus dans le monde, qui ne confessent pas Jésus Christ venu dans la chair. Voilà bien le Séducteur, l'Antichrist"; **NIV**: "Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out in the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist"; **REB**: "Many deceivers have gone out into the world, people who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. Any such

8. One may note for completeness sake that according to Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart <sup>26</sup>1979 a small number of manuscripts has omitted the nominal ὁ ἀντίχριστος. Roger L. Omanson in his recent *A Textual Guide to the New Testament*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 2006, 516-517 has considered this omission too exiguous to be worth mentioning.
9. The siglas used in this study: **BE**: La Bible Expliquée(2004); **BJ**: La Bible de Jerusalem(1978); **BLC**: La Bibbia in Lingua Corrente; **CCB**: Christian Community Bible(1988); **NBS**: La Nouvelle Bible Segond (2002); **NIV**: The New International Version(1984); **NRSV**: The New Revised Standard Version(1989); **NV**: Nova Vulgata(1998); **PdV**: Parole de Vie(2001); **REB**: Revised English Bible(1989); **TOB**: Traduction Oecumenique de la Bible(1995).

person is the deceiver and antichrist”; **TOB**: “Car de nombreux séducteurs se sont répandus dans le monde: ils ne professent pas la foi à la venue de Jésus Christ dans la chair. Le voilà, le séducteur et l’antichrist.”

### *Alternative Parsing and Exegesis*

1) The translations sampled above have all taken οὗτός as the subject of what actually is the main clause within the clauses cluster in verse 7. This exegesis reflects some standard parsing options: that this demonstrative pronoun is mainly anaphorically deictic; that it is “very common in the main clause with reference to the preceding subordinate clause”<sup>10</sup>; and that demonstrative pronouns in the nominative tend to be fronted in clauses<sup>11</sup>. 2) But there are arguments to demonstrate that the writer could have intended ὁ πλάγος and ὁ ἀντίχριστος to be the compound subject of the main clause. The first two rules of L.C. McGaughey<sup>12</sup> for identifying the subject in syntactical structures that use ‘linking verbs’<sup>13</sup> make this very clear: if one of the substantives in the nominative is a demonstrative pronoun, it is the subject; if one of the two substantives has the article, it is the subject.<sup>14</sup> These two rules already make possible the hypothesis that the nominal phrase ‘the deceiver and the antichrist’ is meant to read as the subject of the clause and the demonstrative pronoun as its complement.

Besides, there is the argument from the standard order of elements within the clause. Traditionally, it was said that the basic word order within NT Greek clause is verb-subject-object; recent studies have indicated that this description “is probably inaccurate.”<sup>15</sup> Professor Stanley E. Porter has undertaken a research on the issue of word order in NT Greek clause basing his research upon an analysis of major passages throughout the NT that included continuous passages such as Philippians, 1-2 Timothy, Matthew 5-7, Acts 21-23; Romans 5-6; 1Corinthians 12-14; and 2 Corinthians. From his research there emerged that the most frequent patterns in NT

10. F. Blass & A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1961, §290.

11. Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield 1995, 289.

12. *A Descriptive Analysis of EINAI as a Linking Verb in NT Greek*, Scholars Press, Missoula, MT, 1972.

13. Cf. Porter, *Idioms*, 84..

14. *Ibid.*, 109.

15. *Ibid.*, 295.

Greek Clauses “are simply predicate and predicate-complement structures. These are followed ... by complement-predicate and subject-predicate structures. In other words, the most common patterns are when a verb or a verb and its object (with their accompanying modifiers) are used.... Depending upon the passages, the predicate-complement and complement-predicate structures are quite often close in ratio of usage.”<sup>16</sup> On p. 294 of his book, Porter provides examples of the various structures he discovered: the predicate structure, the predicate-complement structure, the predicate-complement structure, and finally the subject-predicate structure. These appear in the order of frequency in the textual data studied.

His remarks about the subject element are pertinent to our discussion: a) The explicit subject within the clause is an important element of the Greek clause structure; b) “The expressed subject is often used as a form of topic marker or shifter (in a ‘topic and comment sequence’), and is appropriately placed first to signal this semantic function”<sup>17</sup>; c) this means that “when the subject is expressed it is often used either to draw attention to the subject of discussion or to mark a shift in the topic, perhaps signalling that a new person or event is the centre of focus. Then comment is made upon this topic by means of the predicate.” d) When the subject is “placed in the second or third position in the clause (i.e. after the predicate and/or complement), its markedness or emphasis apparently decreases. The reason for this is related to the linear structure of NT Greek, in which the first position is reserved for the most important element.”<sup>18</sup> e) “Moving the subject to a subsidiary position, however, does not necessarily elevate another element in the clause to a position of prominence. Placing, for example, the predicate (the basic structural element) first or the complement first does not necessarily draw attention to either element, since the resulting pattern is very similar to the two basic clause structure pattern”<sup>19</sup>.

Applying this wisdom to 2Jn7 we may state: a) that if we take οὗτός as the complement of the clause and ὁ πλάγιος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος as the (compound) subject, we will have an ‘unmarked structure’, that is, a structure that one would expect to meet within NT Greek; this is a complement-predicate structure; b) that while the demonstrative pronoun is the grammatical complement of the main clause, semantically the information about the subject in this clause of the cluster is borne by the relative clause just preceding the main clause: οἱ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί to which the pronoun points. The deceiver/antichrist is this: not acknowledging either that ‘Jesus is the Christ coming in the flesh’ (CCB), or that ‘Jesus Christ is really human’. c) The relative clause consists of the plural

pronoun οἱ which functions as the subject of the clause, of the predicate in participial form modified by the negative adverb μὴ, and of the complement; the deictic οὗτός in the main clause refers not to the plural subject of the relative clause but to its complement: the act of not acknowledging the humanity of Jesus Christ is the information given about the ‘the deceiver and the antichrist’. d) The plural relative pronoun οἱ, on the other hand, refers back to the subject of the causal clause introduced by ὅτι, the undetermined πολλοὶ πλάνοι ‘many deceivers’. If οὗτός is referring to the complement of the relative clause and not to its subject οἱ, it cannot be taken to say something on the subject of the plural subject of the causal clause (*contra* MBS and BLC). It is actually informing us on ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος which, given the singular predicate ἐστίν, must be considered as referring to one subject, presumably the ‘deceiving antichrist’. Whether one should interpret ὁ ἀντίχριστος as a reference to the eschatological persona (BJ and BE), or to the historical contemporaries of the writer, who denied the humanity of Jesus the Messiah, that goes beyond the scope of this short essay. The writer is simply defining what being the deceiver/antichrist means. e) In view of what Professor Porter has written on word order and the sentence structure in NT Greek, one may ask whether the concentric construction that actually exists within the final two clauses in verse 7, was a fortuitous one, or was manoeuvred for rhetorical purposes. The construction is concentric in the arrangement of the grammatical elements: οἱ: subject + μὴ ὁμολογούντες: predicate + Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί: complement // complement: οὗτός + predicate: ἐστίν + subject: ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος. This arrangement could have been meant to underline the subject matter of the writer’s concern in verse 7: to define what the deceiving antichrist meant for him. Of course, he could formulate the clause differently, by fronting the compound subject of the main clause and postponing the complement of the relative clause to locate it in the place of the subject of the main clause. But besides grammar the writer knew also rhetoric, and that the centre of a concentric construction functions in the same way as fronting the subject.<sup>20</sup> And this option he made.

16. *Ibid.*, 293-294.

17. *Ibid.*, 295.

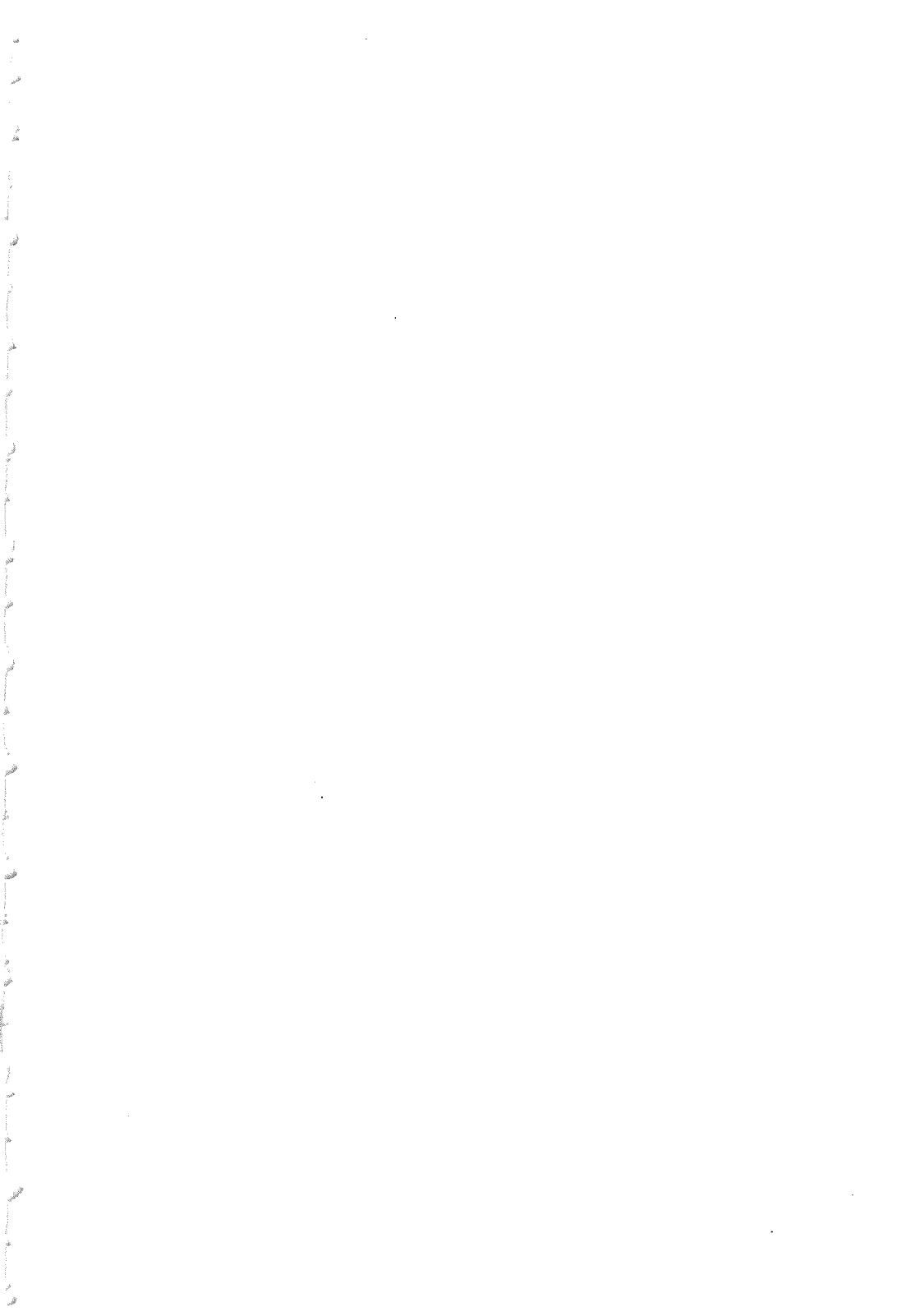
18. *Ibid.*, 296.

19. *Ibid.*

20. On concentric constructions in rhetoric cf. Roland Meynet, “The Question at the Center: A Specific Devise of Rhetorical Argumentation in Scripture” in Anders Eriksson & Thomas H. Olbricht, & Walter Übelacker(eds.), *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts*, Trinity Press International, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 2002, 202-214.

In view of this argumentation, the rendering of BE is to be preferred: ‘it is in this that one sees the work of the Impostor, the Antichrist’. In Maltese we may have to formulate the οὐτός clause in this manner: “Dan ifisser tkun il-qarrieq u l-antikrist.”

Department of Holy Scripture  
Faculty of Theology  
University of Malta



# ***Familiaris consortio* – Impasse or Inspiration for a Contemporary Theology of Marriage and the Family?**

Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi

Since its publication in 1981, Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Familiaris consortio* has remained a unique teaching document issued by the Roman Catholic Church. Never before in its history has the Magisterium undertaken to treat marriage and the family so extensively and comprehensively. It appears to be the longest single document emanating from the official church on this topic, surpassing by far Leo XIII's encyclical *Arcanum divinae* of 1880 and Pius XI's 1930 encyclical *Casti connubii*. Equally unparalleled is probably that the personal philosophical and theological position of a single pope has so deeply marked the subsequent official teaching of the church on this subject. While intended as a response to the *Propositiones* that the bishops at the 1980 Synod on "The Role of the Family" presented to the pope, the document clearly bears the handwriting of Karol Wojtyła who already as a scholarly theologian had been fascinated by the mystery of the human person and had regarded sexual and marital ethics as the test case for its adequate understanding.<sup>1</sup> Much has been said and written, both affirmative and critical, in praise or rejection, about the specific type of personalism at the basis of his ethical thinking, about the essentialist approach to gender relations, about the so-called "theology of the body" and its implications for sexual ethics, and other items that have left their mark on *Familiaris consortio*.

As I am not a moral theologian, my purpose in re-reading the apostolic exhortation a quarter of a century after its appearance is a different one. My interest is rather in how we have to situate this teaching document in the broader context of a theology of marriage and the family that has begun to take shape after the Second Vatican Council's fundamental reorientation and that is presently still searching for its contours in a continuously changing socio-cultural context

1. See e.g. K. Wojtyła: *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H.T. Willetts, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1994; see for an introduction R. M. Hogan/J. M. LeYoir, "The Family and Sexuality", in: C. E. Curran/R. A. McCormick (eds.): *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, (Readings in Moral Theology; 10), Paulist Press, Mahwah NJ 1998 157-183.

which puts marriage and the family to the test. The main thesis which I will try to develop in the following is that Pope John Paul II has attributed to marriage and the family a position in the mystery of salvation that is unprecedented in Church teaching and leads to a number of insights contemporary theology is challenged to come to terms with.

To fully grasp the novelty of John Paul II's theology of marriage and the family, I propose first considering Pius XI's encyclical *Casti connubii* which appeared half a century before *Familiaris consortio* and which in many regards provides an excellent introduction to and summary of how generations of theologians before had dealt with marriage and the family. As is well known, it took the Church more than a millennium before it defined marriage as one of the seven sacraments. The theological issue, however, was at that moment far from being settled and put a heavy burden on subsequent theology which we still, or should I say again, have to grapple with today. The difficult question was how a human reality bound up with the most ordinary and the most perilous components of human life could be a sign of God's grace. For all other sacraments one could refer to some specific divine intervention that regulated, re-established, or raised the human condition to a higher level, but in the case of marriage it was an essential, though suspicious part of that human condition itself that was considered to be bearer of sacred significance. Catholic theology solved the problem by referring to a two-layered model. It regarded marriage as a "state" or form of life that in a second instance was "elevated" by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament. The "marital state" into which one enters by a formal act, the marital contract, was supposed to be a divinely instituted order, fixed once and for all to regulate the relationship between husband and wife. As is the case with every state of life, it had its own characteristics and properties and imposed a set of rights and duties on those who entered into it. In some way, however, this marital state, although instituted by God in creation, was perceived as still being deficient and in need of purification. To redeem its inferiority and to raise it to a higher purpose was thus seen as the result of Christ's work of redemption. A promising path in this regard had been given already by Augustine who for the first time in the Latin tradition had called marriage a *sacramentum* in the sense of an indelible sign or a seal of irreversible commitment. Just as the soldier who irrevocably pledges himself to the military service of the Emperor, the spouses who have already received the baptismal seal (the *sacramentum* of baptism), through their marriage enter into a particular state of life which requires a new commitment before God. This pledge imposes on them an irrevocable seal which in turn binds them together in an indissoluble way.



### ***Marriage in the View of Casti connubii***

It is this two-layered model of Christian marriage which serves Pius XI as a structuring principle for his theological exposition of marriage in *Casti connubii*.<sup>2</sup> Calling upon the Scriptures and what he calls the constant tradition of the Church, the pope first repeats the firm and unchangeable doctrine according to which matrimony is a divine institution rather than a social or cultural invention by humanity. This implies that not only its very existence but also its main characteristic features emanate from God and therefore cannot be subject to human disposition or to any contrary arrangement of the spouses themselves. The human will enters into that divine institution only insofar as the spouses have to manifest free consent, which includes the free choice of the conjugal partner. Human freedom “regards only the question whether the contracting parties really wish to enter into matrimony or to marry this particular person; but the nature of matrimony is entirely independent of the free will of humans, so that if one has once contracted matrimony they are thereby subject to its divinely made laws and its essential properties” (6). In other words, marriage is an objective and pre-ordained institution into which the spouses enter in an irrevocable way:

From God comes the very institution of marriage, the ends for which it was instituted, the laws that govern it, the blessings that flow from it; while man, through generous surrender of his own person made to another for the whole span of life, becomes, with the help and cooperation of God, the author of each particular marriage, with the duties and blessings annexed thereto from divine institution (9).

The pope then goes on to explain the blessings that God has attached to the matrimonial institution and the spousal duties that follow from it. In accordance with the mainstream theological tradition, he does so by referring to Augustine’s doctrine of the three goods of marriage: offspring, conjugal faith, and sacrament.<sup>3</sup> He quotes from Augustine’s *Commentary on Genesis*:

2. The encyclical consists of three main parts; after the theological ground is laid in the first part, the pope analyses the factors that contribute to the degradation of marriage, and undertakes in the third and final part to show suitable remedies for a due restoration of marriage. References to the encyclical (abbreviated in the following as CC) are made to the consecutive numbering of the text.
3. See Augustine: *De bono coniugali*, cap. 24, n. 32.

By conjugal faith it is provided that there should be no carnal intercourse outside the marriage bond with another man or woman; with regard to offspring, that children should be begotten of love, tenderly cared for and educated in a religious atmosphere; finally, in its sacramental aspect that the marriage bond should not be broken and that a husband or wife, if separated, should not be joined to another even for the sake of offspring.<sup>4</sup>

What Augustine presents here as duties to be fulfilled by the spouses, Pius unpacks as a multifaceted reward for them, their offspring, and broader society. Thus, the marital bond provides a threefold guarantee – and “a calm sense of security”, as the pope says: that the union will endure and benefit the partners in terms of mutual aid and their Christian calling, that neither of the spouses may be preoccupied with the other’s infidelity in old age or in case of adversity, and that the children once begotten may grow up in a setting that best ensures their survival and development.<sup>5</sup> In fact, can there be a better proof of how harmoniously and conveniently God has cared for humanity when instituting the marital state of life?

Again in full harmony with the tradition, all these “blessings” are intrinsically connected with the natural institution and state of life as marriage is described here. Even the “sacramental” good is not to be understood in a specifically religious or spiritual sense but simply refers to the indissolubility of the marital bond. In Augustine’s view the *sacramentum* still had a clearly religious and spiritual connotation as it denoted the *couple’s enduring and irrevocable commitment towards God*, not primarily toward each other. Medieval theologians and canonists, however, adhering to an increasingly legalistic approach, interpreted it as the *vinculum* which binds the *partners* indissolubly together once they had exchanged spousal consent and thereby contracted marriage. Consequently, marital sacramentality in the strict theological sense had to be located elsewhere. The theological focus shifted from the marital union as a lifelong spiritual commitment and concentrated instead on the single moment in which that union was ratified canonically and liturgically – in other words, the marital contract itself became the sacrament creating an indissoluble bond, one that was hardly connected to its sacramental origin. It was only due to the intense discussion among scholastic theologians about the types of grace effected by the sacraments – a discussion that was not focussed on marriage

4. Augustine: *De genesi ad litteram*, lib. 9, cap. 7, n. 12.

5. Cf. CC 37.

in particular – that the theology of the marital sacrament did not end at the wedding ceremony, but ultimately had to offer a little bit more. Precisely this bit of reflection on the specific grace conferred by the sacrament of marriage serves later theology in its argument that the marital institution, so perfectly ordered by God from the beginning of creation, needed to be elevated to a higher dignity. Let us listen again to Pius XI in *Casti connubii*:

But considering the benefits of the Sacrament, besides the firmness and indissolubility, there are also much higher emoluments [advantages, TK] as the word “sacrament” itself very aptly indicates; for to Christians this is not a meaningless and empty name. Christ the Lord, the Institutor and “Perfecter” of the holy sacraments,[...] by raising the matrimony of His faithful to the dignity of a true sacrament of the New Law, made it a sign and source of that peculiar internal grace by which “it perfects natural love, it confirms an indissoluble union, and sanctifies both man and wife.”[...] (CC 38).<sup>6</sup>

The marital sacrament thus “perfects natural love, it confirms the indissoluble union, and sanctifies the spouses”. Quoting the famous formulation from the Council of Trent, Pius describes the effects that sacramental marriage has in addition to its blessings already contained in the order of creation, and gives the reason why Christ has raised the natural reality of marriage to its sacramental dignity. Sacramental marriage

adds particular gifts, dispositions, seeds of grace, by elevating and perfecting the natural powers. By these gifts the parties are assisted not only in understanding, but in knowing intimately, in adhering to firmly, in willing effectively, and in successfully putting into practice, those things which pertain to the marriage state, its aims and duties, giving them *in fine* right to the actual assistance of grace, whensoever they need it for fulfilling the duties of their state (40).

To sum up we could characterize the picture that Pope Pius XI, in agreement with a long-standing theological tradition, draws of marriage in the following

6. The last quote repeats the words of the Council of Trent, cf. *Conc. Trid. Sess. XXIV* (cf. DH 1799).

way: Through marriage a man and a woman enter into a given order and divine institution for life. As Christians they receive specific sacramental graces which help them to conform to the rules governing this state of life. We must add, however, that at one point *Casti connubii* opens, albeit only by a crack, this heavily institutional conception of marriage and the tradition that developed and promoted it. Commenting on the Augustinian good and duty of conjugal fidelity, the pope observes that there is something in the life of the couple itself that makes it much easier to conform to the requirement of chaste faithfulness – love between husband and wife and their mutual sharing of life.<sup>7</sup> It is well-known that Pius here took up the ideas of some contemporaries, mainly German personalist thinkers like Dietrich von Hildebrand and Heribert Doms who had written on marriage in particular. And it is equally commonplace to point out that *Casti connubii* for the first time questioned the traditional teaching on the primary and secondary ends of marriage and called the conjugal community of life and love “the chief reason and purpose of marriage”<sup>8</sup> – a project that Vatican II will pursue with more directness. Whatever the historical background and the repercussions on later teaching may have been, what is of interest for our purpose is that this minimal doctrinal opening does not substantially alter a view of marriage that subordinates the entire conjugal community to an objective institutional framework. This vision is corrected in *Familiaris consortio* to which we will turn now in greater detail.

### **“Vocation to Love” as Starting Point in Familiaris consortio**

The complaint about the degradation of marriage and family life, which is said to be exceptionally alarming at the present time, seems to be a constant and indestructible *topos* of Church teaching in every age. *Casti connubii* in its second part is entirely dedicated to summing up the widespread fallacies that menace “due order in marriage matters”. Half a century earlier, Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical

7. Cf. CC 23: “This conjugal faith, however, which is most aptly called by St. Augustine the “faith of chastity” blooms more freely, more beautifully and more nobly, when it is rooted in that more excellent soil, the love of husband and wife which pervades all the duties of married life and holds pride of place in Christian marriage.”
8. The relevant passage in CC runs as follows: “This mutual molding of husband and wife, this determined effort to perfect each other, can in a very real sense, as the Roman Catechism teaches, be said to be the chief reason and purpose of matrimony, provided matrimony be looked at not in the restricted sense as instituted for the proper conception and education of the child, but more widely as the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange and sharing thereof” (24).

*Arcanum divinae* had cautioned against those “who deny that marriage is holy, and who relegate it, striped [*sic!*] of all holiness, among the class of common secular things, uproot thereby the foundations of nature, not only resisting the designs of Providence, but...destroying the order that God has ordained”<sup>9</sup> At the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Familiaris consortio*<sup>10</sup> also warns that now “the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it” (FC 3). But rather than complaining about the corruption of a divinely ordered institution, John Paul II, differing from his predecessors, perceives trends that “obscure in varying degrees the truth and the dignity of the human person” (FC 4). The *human person* and her “vocation to love” is indeed the starting point of and key to John Paul’s understanding of marriage and family. The pope thereby does not abstain from referring to God’s plan for marriage and the family.<sup>11</sup> A Leuven colleague has recently observed that *Familiaris consortio* “uses the phrase ‘divine plan’ or ‘God’s design’ no less than 30 times, and on other occasions refers to the ‘will of God’ as if this is something as obvious as an architect’s plan”.<sup>12</sup> However problematic the idea of “God’s design” may indeed be from an ethical perspective, for our purposes it is important to note that such a “divine architectural plan” in any case does not provide for a pre-ordained institutional framework of marriage and the family to which the spouses and family members merely have to conform. *Familiaris consortio* shifts the perspective of former theology by placing the “divine order” no longer in the visible world of nature and of human institutions but rather in the human person herself. Having created humankind in his own image and likeness, God called the human being to existence “through love” and called it at the same time “for love”. He thereby “inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion (...). Love is therefore the

9. Cf. Leo XIII: Encyclical *Arcanum divinae*, 1880, 25.

10. References to *Familiaris consortio* (abbreviated here as “FC”) are made to the consecutive numbering of the text.

11. The entire second part of FC (11-16) is entitled: “The Plan of God for Marriage and the Family”.

12. J. A. Selling: “Twenty Five Years After *Familiaris consortio*”, in: *INTAMS review* 12/2 (2006), 157-166.

fundamental and innate vocation of every human being” (FC 11). This is the basis of a theological anthropology in which all ways of life, be it the conjugal, celibate, or single state, have their common root. Admittedly, such a vocation to love is not void of all rules but includes a clearly discernable responsibility which, in view of the conjugal union, Pope John Paul has elaborated in an almost idiosyncratic way in *Familiaris consortio* and other writings.<sup>13</sup> Yet, compared to earlier theology the basic insight is that interpersonal love is not the incidental, though ideally hoped for, effect of a divinely ordained matrimonial institution, but its primary cause and foundation. *Familiaris consortio* unconditionally endorses the celebrated re-definition of marriage as “intimate community of life and love” contained in Vatican II’s *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*.<sup>14</sup> In accordance with the conciliar language it regards that interpersonal communion as “willed and established by the Creator” and only subsequently “qualified by His laws”.<sup>15</sup> It is this logical precedence that one has to bear in mind when one reads in *Familiaris consortio*:

The institution of marriage is not an undue interference by society or authority, nor the extrinsic imposition of a form. Rather it is an interior requirement of the covenant of conjugal love which is publicly affirmed as unique and exclusive, in order to live in complete fidelity to the plan of God, the Creator(11).

In that same perspective according to which the loving union precedes and passes into the visible forms of its organizational realization, the pope also situates what he calls the family’s “identity” and its “mission” within the plan of God and coins the often quoted adage: “family, *become* what you *are*” (17). I quote from that same passage: “The role that God calls the family to perform in history derives from what the family is; its role represents the dynamic and existential development of what it is” (ibid.). And a bit further one reads:

And since in God’s plan it has been established as an ‘intimate community of live and love’ (GS 48) the family has the mission to

13. Cf. in particular his cycle of catecheses on the body and love, given from 1979-1984 (John Paul II: *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*, Daughters of St. Paul, Boston 1997).
14. Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 48.
15. The Latin version of GS 48 uses the terms “condita” and “instructa” (“Intima communitas vitae et amoris coniugalís, a Creatore condita suisque legibus instructa”) and thus makes clear that the legal qualifications of the conjugal communion logically follow its establishment.

become more and more what it is, that is to say, a community of life and love, in an effort that will find fulfilment, as will everything created and redeemed, in the kingdom of God (FC 17).

The family's mission, what it can and should do, thus follows its identity; its identity in turn unfolds and develops in a number of particular tasks which *Familiaris consortio* then describes in four extensive and extremely rich chapters as "forming a community of persons", "serving life", "participating in the development of society", and "sharing in the life and mission of the Church".

Where the previous theology had located these tasks in the "order of nature" and designed a consistent institutional framework bearing witness to the expediency of God's providence, the new theological approach carefully traces them back to the human person's vocation to love. God's plan for marriage and the family is therefore revealed primarily in the human person herself. Rather than being reflected in a timelessly fixed order, it "touches men and women in the concreteness of their daily existence in specific social and cultural situations" (FC 4). It may even seem as if the pope is dismissing the Church's traditional deductive argumentation when he writes, alluding to *Gaudium et spes*, that

the Church can...be guided to a more profound understanding of the inexhaustible mystery of marriage and the family by the circumstances, the questions and the anxieties and hopes of the young people, married couples and parents of today (FC 4).

We may assume that the "inexhaustible mystery of marriage and the family" lies in the mystery of interpersonal love to which God has called humanity and which is to be lived in daily life despite its sometimes unpredictable, yet inescapable limitations and shortcomings. God's plan for marriage and the family has a human face; more precisely, it has the face of all those marriages and families that are struggling to realize mutually loving relationships. I am inclined to take John Paul at his word and to follow him in this "inductive" approach to the point at which it may become obvious that in all these human faces it is Christ's face that emerges. The pope does not go that far, at least not explicitly, and there may be a good reason for this: the way of induction in theology finds its due limits where it encounters the freely acting God. It is therefore plausible and acceptable that, when introducing the order of redemption and Christ's role in God's design for marriage, *Familiaris consortio* refers to revelation:

This revelation reaches its definitive fullness in the gift of love which the Word of God makes to humanity in assuming a human nature, and in the sacrifice which Jesus Christ makes of himself on the cross for his bride, the Church. In this sacrifice there is entirely revealed that plan which God has imprinted on the humanity of man and woman since their creation (FC 13).

Those familiar with the pope's thinking will know that he goes on from here to posit Christ's love of total self-giving as the model of and norm for conjugal love. Not only should couples continually strive to conform to Christ's unselfish way of loving but according to his view the pattern of total self-surrender of one person to another has so deeply been imprinted on the human person and more particularly on his or her body that every violation or infringement of it corrupts the dignity of the persons involved. It is well-known how this idea of the so-called "nuptial meaning of the body" has shaped the ethical stance of John Paul with regard to issues like pre-marital intercourse, contraception, and homosexuality. The main criticism addressed to his conception of marriage has been that it abstracts a metaphysical and ultimately a-historical picture of human relationships outside of concrete social, economic, and cultural conditions and that it provides too idealistic an image of the conjugal union.<sup>16</sup> Whoever knows the reality of present-day partner relationships may indeed wonder whether the ideal of total self-giving resonates with what couples experience or aspire to in their unions – even in what today may be regarded as happy marriages. But instead of dismissing the entire approach prematurely, I recommend taking stock of and retaining what is innovative and original about the pope's view before we possibly come to disagree with the turning it takes at this point.

### *God's Plan for Marriage Revealed in Christ*

What Pope John Paul II unmistakably posits in *Familiaris consortio* is that God's plan for marriage and the family is revealed in Christ's humanity. Therefore the marriage of baptized persons

16. Cf. J. Grootaers/J. Selling, *The 1980 Synod of Bishops "On the Role of the Family": An Exposition of the Event and an Analysis of its Text*, University Press-Peeters, Leuven 1983, 303-331; H.-G. Gruber: *Christliche Ehe in moderner Gesellschaft: Entwicklungen – Chancen – Perspektiven*, Herder, Freiburg: 1995, 177-212.



becomes a real symbol of that new and eternal covenant sanctioned in the blood of Christ. The Spirit which the Lord pours forth gives a new heart, and renders man and woman capable of loving one another as Christ has loved us (FC 13).

New Testament scholars have pointed out that Jesus' uncompromising prohibition of divorce (Mk 10,2-9; par Mt 19,3-9) cannot properly be understood if one reads it as a legal prescription to counter the casuistic argumentation of the Pharisees who refer to the possibility of divorce provided in Mosaic law. By retrieving God's will for the marital union "at the beginning", Jesus rather points out that with the coming of God's Kingdom in his person, husband and wife have again been newly enabled to live together and love each other in an irrevocable union.<sup>17</sup> Such empowerment that "renders man and woman capable of loving one another as Christ has loved us" is also the key principle on which the theology of marriage is grounded in *Familiaris consortio*. And as is the case in Jesus' stance, *Familiaris consortio* pays equal attention to the double movement described in it: on the one hand of sustaining and supporting that which is already present in human loving but needs assistance and encouragement ("render man and woman capable of loving one another..."), and, on the other, of suggesting the pattern from which to receive orientation and direction that is at the same time a demand on such loving ("...as Christ has loved us"). In both trajectories John Paul's exhortation differs from previous theology. Let us consider first how he describes marriage as a natural phenomenon.

*Familiaris consortio* derives from conjugal love itself what the tradition used to refer to as properties, goods, and ends of marriage and what later theology up to *Casti connubii* projected onto and enshrined in an unalterable matrimonial institution. Conjugal love contains in itself, as we have seen, the germs for its further unfolding. This permits us on the one hand to conceive of marriage as a relationship with its own inner dynamic that has to be lived out by individual couples in varying and changing cultural and social contexts. There is no reference here to a timeless essence of marriage that floats as a normative concept above concrete, lived styles of conjugal relationships. On the other hand, however, that same conjugal love is not totally unstructured or volatile either. What John Paul sums up as the "normal

17. Cf. W. Kirchschräger: *Ehe und Ehescheidung im Neuen Testament*, Herold, Wien 1987, 74ff. *et passim*.

characteristics of all natural conjugal love” (FC 13) are not externally imposed ends which conjugal love has to comply with, but its own intrinsic values. The pope’s listing includes the traditional marital goods of indissolubility, fidelity, and procreation,<sup>18</sup> but also mentions previously unheard of benefits of marital love which are said to involve

a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter – appeal of the body and instinct, power of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of the spirit and of will. It aims at a deeply personal unity, the unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul (FC 13).<sup>19</sup>

Up to this point, God’s architectural plan for marriage seems to consist in having planted into the human being the desire and capacity, in short, the vocation, to form a deeply personal unity. Exclusiveness, faithfulness, indissolubility, and the openness to fertility are the ingredients of that union and inherent characteristics of conjugal love, rather than its authoritatively imposed form. Seen from the event of Christ, in which God’s plan is fully revealed, that conjugal communion is – to use the terms of *Familiaris consortio* – “taken up”, “confirmed”, “purified”, “elevated”, and “lead to perfection” through and in the sacrament of matrimony (FC 19). Consequently, the marital sacrament does not confer specific graces that help the couple to conform to the requirements of a natural institution and to live up to the norms and expectations of an abstractly defined marital state. Rather, sacramental grace aims at and takes up the spouses’ inner capacity for interpersonal loving and renders them capable of establishing and perfecting an “intimate community of life and love”. But what then about the second aspect, about Christ’s way of loving as orientation and “commandment” for conjugal love on which John Paul lays so much emphasis?<sup>20</sup>

“Elevating and perfecting the natural powers” were also the two main functions by which *Casti connubii* had characterized the marital sacrament. Marriage had been “elevated by Christ to sacramental dignity”, but the meaning of this formula

18. In later chapters the pope deals at greater length with unity (FC 19), indissolubility (FC 20), and procreation (cf. FC 28-41).

19 The pope quotes here from an address to Delegates of the *Centre de Liaison des Equipes de Recherche* which he gave in 1979.

20 John Paul II speaks of the sacrament of marriage as “at the same time a vocation and commandment for the Christian spouses” (FC 20).

remained for the most part unclear. For the effect of the sacrament consisted merely in assisting the baptized couple to better fulfil the duties dictated to them by a natural institution that was so efficiently ordered that such assistance appeared to be in fact dispensable. Earlier theology did not really find a way to overcome the extrinsicism that regarded marriage as an institution fulfilled in itself, to which the grace of the sacrament was added only in a second instance and as a pure *superadditum*.<sup>21</sup>

*Familiaris consortio* opens up a totally different perspective when it asserts that “the marriage of baptized persons... becomes a real symbol of that new and eternal covenant sanctioned in the blood of Christ” (FC 13). While previous theology had placed the matrimonial institution in the order of creation and assumed that Christ’s work of restoration must have had some effect on it, too, John Paul sees the primary place of the conjugal communion in the order of salvation itself. Conjugal love is “a living reflection of and a real sharing in God’s love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church his bride” (FC 17). This is true for sacramental marriage in a particular way, but it has its significance for all marriages. In being called to become “intimate communities of life and love” all marriages are intrinsically related to the mystery of Christ and his salvific action in which they find their master plan. The indisputable merit of this approach lies in that it gives conjugal love a central place in the mystery of salvation – a place which in turn grants such a loving community a particular sacramental dignity representing “the mystery of Christ’s incarnation and the mystery of his covenant” (FC 13).

We have reached here the keynote for the whole theology of marriage of *Familiaris consortio*. But at the same time it lays bare also the most contentious item in this theology. What is disputed is not so much the fact that it places marriage in the centre of the mystery of salvation and depicts conjugal love as a representation of Christ’s covenant with humanity. What is controversial is the straightforward manner in which Christ’s particular love of total self-giving on the Cross is superimposed here onto human love. There is undoubtedly more than a metaphorical relation between divine and spousal covenantal love which makes marriage a real symbol of Christ’s love in the double meaning of the term: as sign of and participation in the mystery of salvation. But is it theologically legitimate and pastorally wise to place God’s unfailingly faithful love and Christ’s total surrender as absolute norms

21 Cf. A. Scola: *The Nuptial Mystery*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI-Cambridge, UK, 2005, 203ff.

for the conjugal relationship? Not only does such an approach risk disregarding the basic rule of analogical speaking according to which similarity between God and humanity always implies greater dissimilarity. It also reverses the direction in which the biblical metaphors of covenantal love were originally to be read: as images taken from the experience of human love they ought to foreshadow the mystery of God's irrevocable covenant with humanity.<sup>22</sup> Whoever turns the image around, should be well aware that unending love can only be suggested as an ideal model which contingent human love has to strive after in a continual, gradual effort. As we have pointed out already, the pope is not totally insensitive to this method as he assumes himself that the human person has to undergo a growth process, "which advances gradually with the progressive integration of the gifts of God and the demands of his definitive and absolute love..." (FC 9). At crucial moments in the line of argumentation, however, there is a return to a deductive approach which starts with divine love and demands that human reality live up to its characteristics.<sup>23</sup> I quote two specific examples, the first one related to Christ's self-surrender: "Conjugal love reaches that fullness to which it is interiorly ordained, conjugal charity, which is the proper and specific way in which the spouses participate in and are called to live the very charity of Christ who gave himself on the cross" (FC 13). The second quote is related to the "ultimate truth of the indissolubility of marriage" allegedly contained in the plan of God who "wills and [...] communicates the indissolubility of marriage as a fruit, a sign and a requirement of the absolutely faithful love that God has for man and that the Lord Jesus has for the Church" (FC 20).

Do we really have to draw the contours of God's plan for marriage in such sharp and definitive lines, lines ultimately copied from God's own way of loving? The problem here is not only from an ethical and pastoral point of view that married couples will be confronted with an idealized image of marriage and given unrealistic expectations. What seems to me even more problematic if we were to follow this line of thinking is that it ultimately falls back into proposing an objective order of marriage and the family which it originally started out to overcome – the order of a natural matrimonial institution is now projected into God's plan of salvation itself. One may, however, legitimately ask whether it is a good idea "to make marriage itself function as the vehicle for the mystery of salvation in such a unique and absolute

22. Cf. J.-M. Aubert: "Pratique canonique et sens de l'humain", in: *RDC* (1978), 98-101.

23. Cf. M. D. Place: "Familiaris consortio: A Review of its Theology", in C. E. Curran/R. A. McCormick (eds.): *John Paul II and Moral Theology*, 184-210.

way”.<sup>24</sup> It would mean in turn that “marriage and the spouses’ relationship have to carry the burden of representing the entire mystery”.<sup>25</sup> It seems to me that instead of making marriage *the* image of the economy of salvation (the so-called “nuptial mystery”)<sup>26</sup>, it would be more useful these days to offer to couples *images* that may help them to live and love in their relationships “as Christ has loved us”.

### ***Conclusion***

It may seem as if our re-reading of *Familiaris consortio* has yielded an ambivalent picture at the end. My intention, however, is not to end on a critical note. I have pursued the exhortation’s line of argumentation up to a point where it takes a direction which may jeopardize the significant and innovative perspectives it has to be credited for. By way of conclusion, I will point out and sum up what I regard as two major perspectives in particular and briefly sketch how they could inspire a contemporary theology of marriage and the family.

First, the unquestionable starting point of the theology of marriage and the family in *Familiaris consortio* is the human person’s vocation to love. Pope John Paul has thus confirmed and given further shape to Vatican II’s innovative definition of marriage as “intimate community of life and love”. By doing so, he has revised the traditional view which looked at marriage primarily in terms of a social institution and only in a second instance at its interpersonal value. In contrast, *Familiaris consortio* gives due recognition to a relationship that has its own inner dynamic and has to be lived out in varying social contexts. Because of its importance, society “institutionalizes” marriage. The important message included here is that just as the human person has priority over social institutions, conjugal love takes priority over the marital institution. With regard to our current public debates about the significance and decline of marriage and the family, *Familiaris consortio* reminds us that we should be prudent not to instrumentalize marriage too quickly for societal purposes. It is true that the demographic development in our Western societies is alarming, just as is the situation of an increasing number of children that grow up without a stable network of primary relationships or the erosion of solidarity between the generations. However, without its inner principle of love marriage loses

24. J. Grootaers/J. Selling: *The 1980 Synod of Bishops*, 309.

25. Ibid.

26. Cf. for instance A. Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery*.

its foundation and soul; likewise, “without love the family cannot live, grow and perfect itself as a community of persons” (FC 18). To have reminded us of these priorities is one of the major contributions of *Familiaris consortio* to a contemporary Christian understanding of marriage and family life.

Secondly, marriage and the family are rooted in God’s plan for humanity, more fundamentally in his salvific work which starts out at creation, finds its achievement in Christ’s incarnation and resurrection and extends into an eschatological future.<sup>27</sup> The insight that marital and familial relationships represent and participate in Christ’s work of salvation marks a significant shift in the narrower field of marriage theology but has implications for the whole of theology and also for the way the Church is to understand and to realize her salvific mission. *Familiaris consortio* has indubitably advanced – even sometimes over stated, as we have seen – this line of thinking. It contains an extensive and rich chapter on the family’s sharing in the life, mission, and ministry of the Church<sup>28</sup> which is not only totally unprecedented in previous magisterial teaching but also far from being explored by contemporary theology in its ecclesiological implications.

*Familiaris consortio* has set the agenda for a contemporary and future theology of marriage and the family, and it is up to us to go on from here.

Katholieke Universitat  
Leuven,  
Belgium.

27. FC 16 reminds us of the role of virginity or celibacy which is to await “the eschatological marriage of Christ with the Church”.

28. Cf. FC 49-64. One of the key passages in this chapter runs as follows: “...the Christian family is grafted into the mystery of the Church to such a degree as to become a sharer, in its own way, in the saving mission proper to the Church...For this reason they (= Christian married couples and parents, TK) not only *receive* the love Christ and become a *saved* community, but they are also called upon to communicate Christ’s love to their brethren, thus becoming a *saving* community” (49).

## BOOK REVIEW

Giovanni Ibba, *Le Ideologie del Rotolo della Guerra (IQM)*. Studio sulla genesi e la datazione dell'opera, Associazione Italiana per lo Studio del Giudaismo, Testi e Studi, 17; Editrice Giuntina, Firenze 2005, ISBN 88-8057-237-7.

Readers who have never approached at some length and in some depth the world of the Qumran texts, will find this monograph on the ideologies of the War Scroll (IQM) the right place to start with, even if this work does not offer a general introduction on this subject matter or on the issue of what the Qumran texts actually are. Giovanni Ibba teaches at the *Facoltà Teologica dell'Italia Centrale* situated in Florence, Italy, is not new in this area of research. He has already three other books accredited to his name, all in Italian: *Il Rotolo della Guerra*, Edizione Critica, Zamorani, Torino 1998; *La Sapienza di Qumran*, Città Nuova, Rome 2000; and *La Teologia di Qumran*, EDB, Bologna 2002. The present monograph deals with the War Scroll and its ideologies, with the last word in the plural since Ibba maintains that this principal Qumran document went through four redactions, each with its own interpretation of the material. For several aspects of his study, Ibba employs and develops his previous contributions (cf. p.15 note 2).

In this presentation of such interesting volume, the reviewer will describe briefly its contents and offer one or two comments on the subject-matter it discusses.

*Le Ideologie del Rotolo della Guerra* has eleven chapters. After a short introduction where Ibba enumerates the reasons for his new contribution (pp.15-17), he offers a general description of this Scroll (pp.19-28): the manuscript as a whole, its contents, datation, hypotheses concerning its origins, and a brief and introductory descriptions of the four redactions of the Scroll. In chapter two (pp.29-62), the author reproduces the Hebrew text in its entirety, column by column, section by section. For readers meaning to read this text Ibba has prepared on pp. 29-30 a number of diacritical helps which should be read.

In the next four chapters, the author presents the Scroll by redaction. It is useful at this stage to keep in mind what Ibba writes on p.63 on the military language of the document: this language as well as the descriptions of the personnel and armoury do not reproduce that of particular armies like those of the Romans, "ma dovranno essere intese come rappresentazioni metaforiche del primato sacerdotale. Il motivo

per cui è stato scelto l'argomento della guerra per esprimere tale supremazia deve essere forse ricercato nella volontà di sviluppare il tema del combattimento a partire da Dt 20, dove il sacerdote incoraggia i guerrieri alla battaglia rassicurandoli che Dio è alla loro testa per condurli alla vittoria, nonostante una palese inferiorità militare in rapporto al nemico. Il sacerdote, essendo il vero mediatore tra Dio e il popolo, è colui che ha il potere d'infondere questa certezza". The Scroll therefore is meant to be metaphorical. But was it taken in that manner by its first generations of readers?

In chapter 3 (pp.63-87) Ibba discusses various particular aspects of the first redaction: the priests and their role in the army, purity norms, military tactics, armoury, the war years, the temple, the calendar and its liturgy, citations and references of biblical texts, shields 'on towers', and the place within the camp for women and children. The second redaction is dealt with in the next chapter 4 (pp.89-96); according to Ibba, this second redaction is represented by a number of words and phrases that tie the document to the Maccabean period and there are parallels in vocabulary and phraseology with the Books of Daniel and I Maccabees. Chapter 5 (pp.97-102) instead deals with the 'third redaction' which allowed influence from the Book of Jubilees, that divided the world into the threefold division of Genesis 10 in that the war against the entire world was to be waged with Semitic, Hamitic, and the peoples who had Japhet as their ancestor. The following chapter 6(pp. 103-126) is much longer and therein Ibba discusses words, expressions, and doctrines that were added or have replaced other elements in the text, and testify to the fourth redaction of the Scroll; this new edition saw the light of day during the early period of the settlement in Qumran and was undertaken to make this important document fit the more recent doctrinal orientations of the community as expressed in other Qumran documents.

In chapter 7 (pp.127-138) Ibba compares the War Scroll (1QM) with a number of other similar Qumran manuscripts while in the subsequent chapter 8 (pp. 139-172) he offers a slightly functional equivalent translation of the text and its textual mapping according to the four redactions. In the following chapter 9 (pp.173-201) we are offered the same translation, but the redactions are given as whole so that the reader would be able to appreciate how the various editors understood the text from their point of view. This is a useful service indeed. A major contribution is furnished by Ibba in chapter 10(pp.203-261) where he gives the widest list of explicit and implicit citations of biblical texts in this Qumran document according to the redactional levels. He builds his work on that of J. Carmignac in his 1956



article “Le citations dell’Ancien Testament dans ‘La Guerre des Fils de la lumière contro les Fils des Ténèbres’” published in *Revue Biblique*, 3(1956)375-390, and on that of the other French scholar M.Dupont-Sommer, *Aperçus préliminaires sur les manuscrits de la Mer Morte*, Maisonneuve, Paris 1950. This contribution together with those of its predecessors testify not merely to how deeply biblical are the roots of this theological construct, but also how necessary was the hermeneutics carried out by Jesus of OT texts that were meant to promote the Holy War ideology. In this very useful exercise I found one possible methodological mistake: the inclusion of 1Maccabees (pp.223.239.254). By the time 1QM was written, the issue of the ‘scriptural canon’ was probably ‘still not an issue’ as this entered the debate forum late in the first century AD. Did the author and later editors make any difference between what later became qualified as ‘Holy Scriptures’, and any contemporary writings? But the inclusion of this book in the above mentioned list of books could simply mean to complete the list of books known and used at Qumran. The later *Letter of Jude* would suggest that such a difference between what started to be held as canonical and what was never revered as Holy Scripture was not always sharply kept. And this would explain the references to 1Maccabees in the War Scroll.

The last chapter, chapter 11, is dedicated to the motivation for dating the various editions of the scroll mostly in the second half of the second century BC. The book comes to an end with an alphabetical index of texts cited mixing together Biblical and Qumran texts.

Anthony Abela  
Department of Holy Scriptures  
Faculty of Theology  
University of Malta.

