The Bible
in its Traditions

A New Project from the Ecole Biblique

Introduction

Many thanks for being here with us today. And special thanks to Fr Jensen and the organizers of the CBA Conference for inviting us to make this presentation of the new Bible project of the Ecole Biblique of Jerusalem: 'The Bible in its Traditions'.

Why did we seek this invitation?
First, we want to inform you about this project, which we find very exciting. Second, we would love to have your comments and reactions. Third, we invite you to join the project.

Our new Bible, like its predecessor The *Jerusalem Bible*, is intended to have an English-language edition (also Spanish and perhaps others). But more than that, we want to tap into the large pool of Biblical expertise in the English-speaking world, and in particular in North America. We want to open up the Ecole Biblique of Jerusalem more widely to English-speaking exegesis and scholarship.

1/ What we are trying to do

The Ecole Biblique has a long tradition – going back to the late 1940s – of publishing editions of the Bible for an educated readership and for the general public. The Jerusalem Bible set a new standard and established a new style, by presenting the text together with notes that amounted to a running commentary. Those notes helped to bring to Catholic readers the fruits of modern Biblical scholarship in the aftermath of Pius XII's encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* of 1943. We situate ourselves firmly and proudly within this tradition at the same time as we envisage a new edition of the Bible that will be more than simply a revision of the existing Jerusalem Bible.

A simple glance at the page layout will suffice to show you the importance and nature of the changes that we have in mind.

✦

The page still presents together the text and the notes, but looks now more like a page of the Talmud or of medieval and early modern commentaries on Aristotle or St Thomas. I hasten to add that any published version will look much more professional than what we have managed to put together with Microsoft Word.

Slide 20 : real page of Mt

Our leading idea is to enable the reader to read the Biblical text along with the history of its reception. Behind this is our awareness of the importance of the role of the reader in determining the meaning of texts – a role that has been much emphasized in recent hermeneutical reflection and literary criticism.

The page itself is meant to show three things that are new to the *Jerusalem Bible*: first,

✦ the irreducibility of several versions of the same book (or of the same passages of a book); second,

✦ a greater awareness of the literary meaning of Biblical texts, besides their plain historical or doctrinal meaning; third,

✦ the new importance given to reception history in literary studies – this matches up with the rediscovery of patristic commentaries in exegesis. As in earlier forms of the Jerusalem Bible, the new edition will also situate the Biblical text in its ancient context or contexts.

Slide 21: first white page, then page progressively displayed

In brief, we aim at producing a study edition of the Catholic Bible targeting a scripturally educated public. It will present

✦ the texts themselves in their diversity, framed by ✦ an enriched annotation divided into three main registers.

1. ✦The first, 'Text', will include all the notes dealing with the linguistic and literary description of the text, from points in textual criticism to more literary remarks.
2. ✦ 'Contexts' will group notes dealing with archaeology, history, geography, *realia* or texts of the ancient world and cultures, relevant to the production of a Biblical text.
3. ✦ 'Reception' will be the largest zone of annotation; it is to comprise the most important readings of the text throughout history, starting from possible intertextual echoes in parallel texts (in the canonical Bible, in Jewish tradition, or in aprocryphal works), and continuing to some of the most important readings, including the Church Fathers, medieval Latin and Orthodox theologians, Syriac and other Oriental writers and Protestant Reformers.
4. The top corner of each page will present the reading proposed by the exegetes in charge of the book as a result of all preceding notes.

Slide 22: actual page re-appearing in transparency

We envisage two forms of publication, one on paper, the other online. Obviously the latter makes available possibilities of presentation and consultation that cannot be envisaged with traditional means of publication.

2/ Why a new Bible today ?

The original *Jerusalem Bible* was a response to *Divino afflante Spiritu* seen as a vindication of the project and methods of Marie-Joseph Lagrange, Founder of the Ecole Biblique.

As such, even through its several revisions, both in French and in English and other languages, the *Jerusalem Bible* is a work of the mid-20th century. Much has happened since then, which could only be partially reflected in successive revisions.

On the one hand, positive discoveries relating to the Biblical text and to ancient civilisations have added enormously to **the database** and even changed the paradigm of Biblical studies. To take two examples:

1. first, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which have altered our perspective on the text of the Old Testament;
2. second, the radical and on-going revision of our ideas concerning the history of ancient Israel and the relation of archaeology to the Biblical narratives. We shall return in a moment to Qumran.

But on the latter point – Bible and archaeology – I can add a poignant personal anecdote. The first edition of the *Jerusalem Bible* could confidently present the 'historical books' of the Old Testament in the framework of what is often called the 'Albright' synthesis. Subsequent revisions were already reflecting hesitations. By the time we were preparing a partial revision of the French version in the 1990s, my Old Testament colleagues at the Ecole Biblique could no longer put forward the 'Albright' synthesis but had none to put in its place.

On the other hand, Biblical hermeneutics have undergone a vast and comprehensive change, due to the reflections of several great philosophers of the 20th century and their reception in literary studies. The previously prevailing positivism has vanished.

The historical-critical method has been enriched by the renewal of criticism due to the rise of the "human sciences", as reflected in the 1993 Instruction of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. A present-day Bible should reflect a **more realistic hermeneutic of the act of reading**.

The counterpart of the positivistic view was the idea of the autonomous reader face to face with a text that already had a meaning determined by the intention of the author, a meaning that had only to be discovered. We cannot now doubt the active role of the reader

in establishing the meaning. Further, every reader, and so every act of reading, is necessarily situated within a tradition. Since the traditions that have produced the text and conveyed them to us are plural, and irreducibly so, they cannot be brought back to a single original. Perhaps this is symmetrical with the new approach to textual criticism, which is more aware of a plurality of textual traditions.

Text

WITH REGARD TO THE BIBLICAL TEXT a **number of important discoveries** have to be taken into account. Notably, the Biblical texts found at Qumran demonstrate the plurality of the Hebrew text itself. The discovery of Hebrew textual readings that support the Septuagint rather than the Massoretic Text has changed for ever our outlook on the ancient Greek translation. These facts need to be visible in the Biblical text that people read. Let us look at the problem in greater detail.

✦

First the Old Testament

It would be fair to say that the first *Jerusalem Bible* was characterized by wholesale corrections of the Massoretic Text from the versions, also by a readiness to engage in conjectural emendations. By contrast, the second edition in French (I think the same is true also of the *New Jerusalem Bible* in English) was marked by a massive return to the Massoretic Text. '*The Bible in its Traditions'* will be more aware of the legitimate diversity of the textual traditions. What do I mean by that?

The *Tanakh*, with its Massoretic Text, emerges more clearly as the Bible of Rabbinical Judaism. Further, it is the only complete Hebrew text we now have. On both these counts, it is indispensable to *The Bible in its Traditions*. It is not, however, as such the Old

4

Testament of the Christian Bible. Nor, as we have just said, does it represent exclusively the ancient Hebrew text of the Bible.

The second indispensable Biblical text is that of the *Septuagint*. It has its place in the new Bible not so much as a corrective to the Massoretic Text, but rather as the Bible of Greek-speaking Christianity, from antiquity to the present day, and the basis of many translations in the Orthodox world.

The *Vulgate* is not simply a translation of the Massoretic Text, even allowing for Jerome's advocacy of the *veritas hebraica*. Jerome always has one eye on the traditional Christian readings. For *The Bible in its Traditions*, the *Vulgate* represents above all the Bible of Latin-speaking Christianity, that is, of the West until the Reformation and of the Roman Catholic Church until the mid-20th century.

But that is not all. Oriental, and especially Syriac, Christianity is the third great tradition. We have tended to overlook it and regard it as the realm of a few specialists. The time has come to give the Syriac tradition a fitting place in our Bible – all the more since recent migrations mean that the ancient Churches of the East are now no longer exotic survivals in remote Middle Eastern countries, but are among us, often as thriving communities.

In the computerized version, all these texts and others as well will, of course, be available.

✦

In the printed edition, for the proto-canonical books, we will still translate the Massoretic Text, but we will systematically show *in the text* significant variants of the *Septuagint*, the *Vulgate*, the *Peshitta* and also, where appropriate, the Samaritan Pentateuch. For the deutero-canonical books or parts of books, the text of reference will be the *Septuagint* – while being conscious that this umbrella term may need to be further refined. Certain books may need special solutions

Slide 33: PLAN

For the New Testament
✦

we have a similar approach. For *The Bible in its Traditions* it is appropriate to translate not simply a modern critical text, but also traditional texts. This would mean that the texts in front of the reader will be coherent with those in commentaries from the great Christian traditions. You will notice that I am using the plural. Both the texts and interpretative traditions are multiple and this diversity is to be reflected in our Bible.

We envisage presenting five major types of texts
Slide 34: Texts of NT to translate from the Vade mecum
three in Greek, one in Latin and one in Syriac.

Our concern for traditional texts might have led us logically to prefer diplomatic editions of major representative manuscripts. In fact, we have opted to translate critical editions, conscious that, for example, the Stuttgart *Vulgate* is no more and no less than a reliable representative of the textual tradition of the Latin Bible.

1. The first Greek text to be translated needs to be traditional. This hermeneutical option leads us to the Byzantine or Majority Text – precisely because it has become the New Testament of Greek-speaking Christianity, both before and after the schism. I want to emphasize that if we choose this text, it is not because we believe that it is the best from a critical point of view, nor because we believe that it is the inspired text of the New Testament, but solely because of its traditional value[1].

2. Obviously we also want to make our readers aware of the results of modern critical scholarship. Therefore, the text preferred by Nestlé-Aland 27th edition, where it differs significantly from the Byzantine Text, finds its rightful place. In fact, those differences between Nestlé-Aland and the Majority Text that are significant enough to translate are relatively few and frequently consist of an omission by Nestlé-Aland.

3. Our third Greek text is the *Textus receptus*, in those few cases where it differs from the Byzantine/Majority Text as established since von Soden. With its occasional imperfections, this was the New Testament of the 16th century Humanists and Reformers. It was translated by Luther and by Tyndale. When one thinks of the enormous religious and cultural importance of Luther's Bible and of the *Authorized Version* or *King James Bible*, the *Textus receptus* has a claim to be considered traditional.

4. Finally, the *Vulgate*

5. and the *Peshitta* find their place representing Latin- and Syriac-speaking Christianity.

✦

Ideally all these five texts would be set out and indeed in the computerized version they will be available. For the printed edition, only the meaningful variants need appear, either in boxes in the text or in parallel columns, or in notes.

---

[1] The wish for a "return" to the Byzantine text nowadays is promoted in two different ways based on different reasons: a) J.W. Burgon supported the idea of considering the Byzantine text as the inspired text because of its wide use in the Ancient Church. He was followed by Z.C. Hodges in support of the Textus Receptus. But these proposals have faced criticism, as that of M.A. King. b) H.A. Sturz proposed that the Byzantine Text has many ancient readings and does not come out as a recension of the Alexandrian and the Western text, but it belongs to an early independent text of the second century. It has also been argued that the very fact of being the *majority* text means that it is the most reliable.

Notes

✦

The annotation of *The Bible in its Traditions* will not only be presented differently, as we have said. It will be based on principles and approaches that are at least partly new. In the last half-century, our **sense of history has been considerably refined**.   The human sciences have developed and broken away from a scientific model that has itself proved outmoded. Our new Bible will also give an important place to literary annotation, which often provides a bridge between the literal sense and theological traditions by unveiling potentialities of meaning in the text, which might be actualized through centuries of interpretation.

The plurality of traditions envisaged in the presentation of the texts leads to a resolute ecumenism, which will be reflected in the notes. Our project is Catholic indeed. This is seen already in our choice of the canon approved by the Council of Trent. But precisely because it is Catholic, our project wants to embrace and give due place to the Orthodox and Reformed traditions. For the same reason, it also wants to accord a special place to Jewish traditions of reading the Bible, in accordance with the recent instruction of the Pontifical Biblical Commission on 'The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible' (2001).

The annotation will be fuller than before, but it will be clearer, simply because the notes are distributed with greater precision among the various registers and headings. This will meet the questions that sometimes arose concerning the notes in the earlier *Jerusalem Bible*, where factual information was often placed side by side with theological and confessional observations.

Finally, the important place given systematically to the reception of the text is meant to show how that text has been read and its meaning depthed in the course of the centuries.

Transition

In sum, we would like to take you with us on a new effort to present a synthesis of Biblical research to a wider public. This effort is entirely within the tradition of the *Jerusalem Bible*. However, from all that we have been seeing,

✦

it is clear that we can no longer get away with a simple make-over or editorial updating.

3/ Well, you might say, this is all very nice and fine in theory, but how can it be carried out in practice?

The approach outlined above might well seem complicated. In fact, once you get into it, it is not at all like that, but really quite straight forward. Let's see.

Every collaborator to *The Bible in its Traditions* is provided with this analytical framework: the idea is to set out the text and notes in it.

Besides the biblical text itself in one to three columns (according to the needs),

with possibly important variants in boxes,

✦

You may notice the three main registers I mentioned: "text-context-reception",

✦✦✦

that are subdivided in several rubrics:

Text (= textual criticism) Vocabulary Grammar Literary Devices Literary Forms

History and Geography Ancient Cultures Ancient Texts (=non-biblical authors)

Synoptic Reading / Comparison of Versions (O.T.) Biblical Intertextuality (that is fulfilment of the Scriptures, allusions...) Peritestamental Literature, Jewish Traditions, Christian Traditions Liturgies Arts Theologies

Last but not least,

✦

"Elements of interpretation" perhaps the most important one, as we shall see.

Now, let's try this out! Simply as an illustrative example, we'll take the *First Epistle of Peter* (1 Peter 1,3-5), on which I happen to be working.

First, the text to be translated.

Here is a pericope of the first chapter in the Greek text. It is set out in the traditional way *per cola et commata.*

Setting it out in this way reduces the need for punctuation; at the same time the structure of the text leaps off the page and makes translation a lot easier.

Here is the same text now translated– with the same arrangement *per cola et commata.* For this pericope Nestlé-Aland follows the Majority Text. We insert significant variants from the Vulgate and the Peshitta

✦ **(variants appear)**

– in this case, they can be printed within boxes in the text.

[READ ALOUD]

In other cases, the variants are so frequent that the text needs to be set out in parallel columns.

[SILENCE]

The first heading in the annotations frame is **Elements of Interpretation**.

✦

The great temptation is to begin here and to put just about all the annotation under this heading – after all, it is in one way or another all a matter of interpretation. But the rest of the framework invites us rather to analyse the annotation very carefully and to distribute it under headings that are much more precise.

FIRST, UNDER 'TEXT',

we look closely at the **Text** itself,

✦

and in particular at the variants, including some that were not shown already – here we place a word or two of comment and some references to notes in other places. In this epistle, the variants of the *Peshitta* are particularly interesting. Sometimes they reflect variants in the manuscript tradition and other versions,

✦

like **hope of life** in v. 3, instead of the standard **living hope** –
In a note under **Literary Devices**

✦

we point out that the expression 'living hope' is a figure of speech for 'hope of life'.

✦

[SILENCE]

Next,

Slide 49

some notes on **Vocabulary**, **Grammar**.

[SILENCE]

Let's look more closely at one note.

Slide 50

The text in question is v. 3 **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to his great mercy has begotten us anew...**

[SILENCE]

The asteriscs followed by cryptic abbreviations in italics

✦

send us off to other notes: "intr" means; "see the introduction"; "interp" refers to a note on the same passage in "Elements of interpretation"; "jew" and "chr" to notes in "Jewish" and "Christian Traditions". With this system any note may find one echo in a number of other notes.

The arrow followed by a word in italics

✦

refer to a synthetical note to be found at the end of the book (Here a note on ancient epistolary art)

UNDER 'CONTEXTS',

Slide 51

we have a note under **History and Geography**, which illustrates a term used in v. 5.

✦

Nothing so far under **Ancient Cultures** or **Ancient Texts**

✦

but we do have something under **Peritestamental Literature**, which for the New Testament forms part of the Context rather than the Reception.

✦

The main thing here is a passage from the **Qumran Hodayoth**. This provides a certain parallel and point of comparison for our pericope – though perhaps a less close one than is suggested by Goppelt in his commentary on 1 Peter.

UNDER 'RECEPTION',

we have a couple of empty headings **Synoptic Reading** and **Biblical Intertextuality**

✦

 – but we leave them there for the time being in case something turns up later.

Under **Jewish Traditions**

✦

we have the opening paragraph of the **Amidah Prayer** (Eighteen benedictions), which provides a parallel to the blessing in v. 3 but is closer to the Biblical formula exemplified in Gen 14,20.

For **Christian Traditions**

✦

I begin with a **Patristic Survey**

 [READ ALOUD]

Several passages *in extenso* follow.

[SILENCE]

I have also included a concise note by John **Calvin**.

 [READ ALOUD]

Incidentally, one of the great discoveries for me in working on 1 Peter for *The Bible in its Traditions* has been Calvin's Commentary.

For the moment we have nothing under **Liturgies**. Of course, we shall have to take due note of the influential school of interpretation of *1 Peter* that sees the epistle as consisting largely of baptismal homilies.

✦

The final categories are **Arts** and **Theologies**

NOW AT LAST WE CAN RETURN
TO ELEMENTS OF INTERPRETATION

 and put there what really belongs:

✦

a brief synthesis [READ ALOUD]

✦

 explanations of certain expressions that go beyond simple notes of vocabulary. [SILENCE]

 And finally, there are the marginal references to other Biblical texts having some bearing on the one before us.

These have always been an important feature of the Jerusalem Bible and enable the reader to navigate around the Bible. Also in the margin are references to major notes of synthesis.

✦

again an existing feature of the *Jerusalem Bible*, which avoids having to repeat everything each time…

IF WE NOW RETURN TO THE SIDE OF THE READER,

let us say that the whole tendency of what we are trying to do is to favour a rich, polyphonic reading of the Biblical text. Working through a page of our Bible should not be like looking up information in a dictionary or encyclopaedia. Rather than hearing a set of disconnected melodies, it should be like listening to a symphony.

✦ APPEARANCE of blue arrows showing up all the interconnexions between the notes
As often as possible, internal references link up the various notes. [SILENCE]
Take this note under "Literary devices", verse 3.
Then, to continue, the references send us off

✦APPEARANCE of arrows and the note referred to
to the "Introduction" (still to be made); [SILENCE]
then

✦
to "Jewish Traditions"; [SILENCE]
✦
then to Christian Traditions", [SILENCE]
and finally
✦
 to "Elements of interpretation"

Conclusion: The Bible in its Traditions *is not just a dream but a project that is on the way to realisation*
✦

Let me just run through the various steps that we have already taken to make this project a reality.

- First the concept was worked out in its main features. As part of this process we held a colloquium in Jerusalem, on the authority of Scripture, which was reviewed in the *CBQ*.
- Since then we have been further defining and refining the project, enlisting a first batch of collaborators and setting up the technical support. Notably, we are engaging a computer specialist who has already created a database of Biblical texts and translations and Patristic and other commentaries. He will transform our Format into an interactive model enabling on-line collaboration.

The first phase in the realisation of the project is the publication of a test-book bringing together sample chapters of a number of Biblical books. The production of this book and reactions to it will give us an idea of where to go from there. So the question is, here and now, how can you join the project of *The Bible in its Traditions* at least to experiment this first, modest, phase of producing one pericope according to its pattern? In fact, various possibilities lie open.

Slide 61

1. You could take charge of the production of a book, with full liberty, in consultation with the Steering Committee, to set up a team of fellow-workers if that seemed the best way of going about things. In fact, our policy, born of experience, would be to encourage teamwork.

2. Alternatively, you could let the Steering Committee know that you would be available to join a team working on a particular book.

As of this moment no one has taken charge of the following books:

Slide 62

Old Testament [READ ALOUD]

Slide 63

New Testament [READ ALOUD].

In addition, all books could be open to team collaboration.

Slide 64

3. Finally, you could offer your expertise in one of the fields treated in the annotation – from archaeology to dogmatics to art history. We are especially anxious to recruit specialists in Patristics and reception history, including Oriental Christianity, also Judaica and Rabbinics. But all are welcome.

Many thanks for your attention. We will be happy to answer some questions or hear some comments now and informally during the rest of the Conference. And, of course, we are ready to accept volunteers...