



I would like to start with these quotations from the Word of God about language—two words in Greek: *διαλεκτος* (*dialectos*) and *γλωσσα* (*glossa*). Although Catalan is not an important language in the international commercial or cultural spheres, and it has been much persecuted for three hundred years and lately banned for forty years by Franco’s regime, we pray that the Lord may continue to protect it for His own glory.

Acts 2.6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language [τη ιδια διαλεκτω].

Revelation 5.9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue [γλωσσης], and people, and nation

As I write, we are waiting for the printing of the Catalan Bible. I give here a brief account of the translating and proofreading of the translation of the Catalan Bible and of our efforts for distributing the Scriptures in the Catalan countries.

A BIT OF NON-SYSTEMATIC HISTORY

My first reading of the New Testament was around the mid-seventies when I was given a popular edition of the Montserrat Catalan New Testament.¹ In 1978 I bought my first Bible, which was an edition of the *Fundació Bíblica Catalana*,² and I started to read it. I was a Christian but not well informed about the issues concerning textual matters and the reliability of the translation. This edition came with a picture of one of the previous Vatican chiefs, Pius XII, in the first pages, which I duly removed. The translation is in general reliable but it is full of misleading notes from the Welhausen school. For instance, it has the several introductions occupying thirty pages—

including, on page xii, ten signatures of bishops from several Vatican dioceses in some Catalan counties in 1968. At the start of Genesis on page 8—after an introduction on the Pentateuch where the several ‘traditions’ (E, D, P) and German ‘quellen’ are explained—after the three titles there are four verses of translation and the rest of the page is annotations, but not following the same theology pattern as the notes in the Geneva Bible or the comments in the commentaries of men such as Matthew Poole or Matthew Henry.

In 1978 I started the Catalan philology studies at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, studied Classical Greek and did two courses of Arabic as an introduction to the Semitic languages (there were not offered Hebrew courses in the UAB). I began comparing the several translations of the Catalan New Testament with the Nestle edition of the Greek New Testament and noticed the differences. In 1982 I knew about the TBS Greek edition of the New Testament and had started a draft translation in Catalan of the Gospel of John. In August 1984 we came to London and were encouraged to continue with the translation. In 1986 my wife, Marina, and I came to Britain with a scholarship from the Consell Interdepartamental de Recerca i Innovació Tecnològica and we worked on the completion of translation of the New Testament in Southwold, Suffolk. TBS introduced us to the European Missionary Fellowship and we went to Welwyn for the course of the School of Evangelism in 1987, and we worked on the first draft of part of the Old Testament.

Along this process I must express my gratitude to those who have helped and encouraged us in this project: in a more personal note to my mother, Mercè, who

was the first to read the first-typed draft and encouraged and prayed for me; to my wife, Marina, who has been patient and helpful; to the read-and-review committee which met on Saturdays once or twice each month in Cerdanyola or Barcelona from 1989 to 1996 to revise the Catalan New Testament, which was then published by the TBS in 1999. For the revision of the Old Testament we have worked with Antoni who lives in Cardedeu, doing the whole of the revision by e-mail. The Lord has provided for us financially without the need of being supported by external help and able to contribute from our resources; we are grateful to the church at the Metropolitan Tabernacle that helped Antoni to dedicate two days of the week to the revision of the Old Testament till completion.

PRESENT WORK

We have arrived now with the complete Bible—after a complete general rereading aloud of the translation during 2007, checking it with the Hebrew, using as standard tools various grammars and dictionaries and computer programmes, comparing our version with the English Authorised Version and with TBS Portuguese edition. At the moment we have completed the proofreading of the Bible. I read the translation aloud and annotated any corrections, which mostly relate to the splitting of the words at the end of the line. We have been able to do the proofreading in earnest, dedicating at least seven hours a day to the intensive work.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE TBS SCRIPTURES IN THE CATALAN COUNTRIES

We have been spreading the 1999 Catalan New Testament free to schools and libraries, to villages and towns especially around Lleida but also to places in Castelló, València and Mallorca through a fund



Barcelona

for distribution. To organise the effort of the distribution we registered an association—basically it is a venture of our own family—called ‘Associació de Cristians dels Països Catalans per difondre la Paraula de Déu’ (Association of Christians from the Catalan-speaking countries for the distribution of the Word of God), and we stamp all the items we distribute with a seal of the ACPC and with a post office box number and e-mail address. We have had a few people interested but not many. God willing, when the whole Catalan Bible is published, we will have more time to concentrate on the distribution and preaching. Our plans are to continue to distribute the New Testament free as we have done until now through the fund for distribution, and include a leaflet explaining about the TBS Catalan Bible for those who want to purchase a copy. We pray, and invite you to pray with us, that the Lord may use these reliable copies of His Word to promote His Truth: that wise and bold preachers may be raised to proclaim His glory.



Mallorca

ANSWERS TO A COUPLE OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

Q I am interested to know whether there are any indications of increasing interest in this translation among the people of Catalonia and other Catalan-speaking areas.

A We have been using the calendars and the TBS edition of the New Testament mainly to promote the knowledge of the Word of God in places where most people have had no access to the Scriptures. The comments to this question can be made quite extensively using our varied experiences in distributing the New Testament in different places. In some places and households the copies have been received with gladness and enthusiasm—for instance, in villages like Vilanova de Bellpuig and Torrent de Cinca the conversations with most of the people were quite encouraging about the need of reading the Word of God—but my general experience has been more of a prejudiced or indifferent reception, and sometimes of open hostility.

In my work place in a secondary school, the predominant attitude has been rather of rejection since 1997 when I started distributing the calendars, the Ten Commandments cards and ‘The Way of Salvation’ booklet, although I got the permit to leave three copies of the New Testament

in the library. There is a lot of ignorance and prejudices: most people are worldly-minded, not interested in seeking the Truth; others consider themselves Christians but with little accurate knowledge of the Scriptures. They take me as a fanatic for putting my trust in the sayings of the Scriptures. The authority of the Scriptures has been combated and few people seem really interested in reading or listening to the Word of God seriously.

One Saturday in November 2007, we went the whole family to distribute calendars to a village called Bellví; we usually leave the calendar on the mailboxes, but sometimes in the villages we are stopped and asked questions about what we are distributing. A man asked for one but after reading 'El Senyor Jesu-Crist diu: Jo sóc el camí i la veritat i la vida (Jn 14:6)', said that he did not like the title page and rejected the calendar. But these rejections must not discourage us—in a way this is sadly the normal mindset under the influence of the darkness promoted by Satan. In the Lord's strength we must fight to promote and spread the Light, and our only resource to fight this battle is the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, praying that the Lord may give the gift of faith to those who are willing to read or listen to it. Now and always our encouragement must be that we are doing God's work in God's way.

Q Why cannot the Catalan speakers manage with a Spanish Bible; surely they all speak it reasonably well?

A Perhaps it is a bit difficult to understand this issue by speakers of a majority language who have never been under the linguistic dictatorship of Madrid's regimes. Some Catalan speakers can manage reading a Bible in Castilian Spanish and they would reject to read anything—even

Països Catalans: Catalan countries

Approximate numbers of those who understand the Catalan language

Catalonia	6,500,000
Valencia, Spain	3,600,000
Balearic Islands	930,000
Northern Catalonia (France)	203,000
Andorra	71,000
Franja de Ponent (Spain)	47,250
Alghero (L'Alguer, Italy)	20,000
el Carxe (Spain)	500

In the Valencian Community, the dialect of Catalan used is called Valencian. While most of these countries have Catalan as a co-official language with Spanish or French, Catalan is the only official language of Andorra. It is also spoken in Algeria, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Germany, Mexico, Switzerland, Uruguay, USA, and Venezuela.

the newspaper—in Catalan. They have the mindset of Franco's dictatorship and see Catalan as a nuisance for their own particular and commercial interests. Certainly they will not appreciate this translation. But for many others the Catalan language is still part of our soul: it is our normal everyday language in which we give thanks and pray and praise the Lord. In our case, what you call the 'Spanish' language is an imposition which has been most oppressive during several dictatorships, and that we see as more of a threat than of a blessing. So let us be free to worship God through big or small languages, even in Catalan. ●

Endnotes

1. *Nou Testament, Versió dels Monjos de Montserrat*. Andorra: Publicacions de l'abadia, Editorial Casal i Vall, 1972.
2. *Fundació Bíblica Catalana*. Barcelona: Editorial Alpha, 1968.