

YOUR WORD IS TRUTH

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The Bible in Ten Christian Traditions

Edited by J. Michael West and Gunnar Mägi



**United Bible
Societies**



**World Council
of Churches**
Publications

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The Bible in Ten Christian Traditions

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Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Foreword</i> | vii |
| <i>Michael Perreau</i> | |
| <i>Contributors</i> | ix |
| 1. The Bible in the Catholic Tradition | 1 |
| <i>Alexander M. Schweitzer</i> | |
| 2. The Bible in the Orthodox Church and Theology | 13 |
| <i>Eleni Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi</i> | |
| 3. The Bible in the Lutheran Tradition: A Palestinian Perspective | 25 |
| <i>Munib Younan</i> | |
| 4. Role of the Bible in Reformed Traditions | 33 |
| <i>Ottó Pecsuk</i> | |
| 5. Anabaptists and the Bible | 47 |
| <i>Stuart Murray</i> | |
| 6. The Bible in Anglican Traditions | 65 |
| <i>Clare Amos</i> | |
| 7. Baptist Identity and Hermeneutics: A Historical Perspective | 83 |
| <i>Mikeal C. Parsons</i> | |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 8. The Bible in Wesleyan / Methodist Traditions <i>David F. Watson</i> | 107 |
| 9. The Bible in Evangelical Traditions <i>C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell</i> | 125 |
| 10. The Bible in Pentecostal Traditions <i>Kenneth J. Archer and Aaron Gabriel Ross</i> | 139 |
| <i>Afterword</i> <i>Olav Fykse Tveit</i> | 159 |
| <i>Notes</i> | 163 |

Foreword

Michael Perreau
Director General, United Bible Societies

Inter-confessional collaboration is of utmost importance to the global Church today.

In the last 70 years, Bible Societies have witnessed and welcomed trends toward collaboration and consultation among diverse Christian faith communities. Theological dialogue has taken place between almost all major church traditions, and worldwide Christian bodies have become forums of reciprocal learning and respect. Such environments of empathetic theological understanding have prepared fertile soil for countless ecumenical scripture translation projects and distribution initiatives.

All of us, as faithful Christians, find ourselves rooted in and shaped by certain church traditions. This book recognizes the profound reality that across these traditions, the Bible unites us all. Within its pages, you will be blessed by the reflections of respected scholars from a variety of church traditions. Through these valuable offerings, we can all gain a greater understanding not just of our differences, but of our rich shared inheritance.

As I write these lines, I have three hopes for this book. First, I hope it will serve as a primer for all those who engage in the work of building relationships, understanding and collaboration between church traditions and bodies. Theological understanding, and an appreciation of the richness of diverse languages and liturgies, is a valuable investment in walking the journey of institutional cooperation. When Paul arrived in Athens, he took the time to learn about the perspectives of those around him. He approached the people of that city by sharing common understanding with them, and demonstrating, as he did so, that he cared for them and spoke their language (Acts 18:16-26).

Second, I hope that this volume will develop in us a fresh hunger for the original book that is being discussed within its pages. A respected Bible Society leader, Eric M. North, wrote around a century ago, "The greatest barrier to the world-wide distribution of Scriptures is the inadequate use that vast of numbers of Christians make of them." That barrier remains to this day. In fact, reading the Bible alone and together is a powerful step toward the fulfillment of the prayer of Jesus - "May they be one." May the centrality of scriptures be not only in our theology but also within our daily practical lives.

Finally, I hope this book will contribute to the understanding of the invisible Church which is united across ecclesiastical boundaries and across time and space. This body is universal, and is based on the teachings of Christ and of the apostles. This Christian church has an unapologetic focus on the other, on the neighbour, and on the fellow believer, as an expression of one's own faith. Christian faith in the New Testament is never an individualistic journey. The pages of this book are an incredible testimony to how much our traditions share in common, and each chapter continues to awaken the reader to that marvel.

May this rich and valuable work bless you, and bless us all as the global body of Christ.

Contributors

Clare Amos is a director and trustee for the Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association. In early 2018 she retired from her role as programme executive for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation with the World Council of Churches. She is also a former coordinator of the Network for Inter Faith Concerns in the Anglican Communion (NIFCON) and has worked for the Middle East Council of Churches and the Near East School of Theology. In 2012, then-Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams awarded her a Lambeth Doctorate in Divinity. She is author of *Peace-ing Together Jerusalem* (WCC Publications).

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Eleni Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi serves as a research and studies officer for the Greek National Center for Public Administration and Local Government and as a lecturer on the faculty of Hellenic Open University. Her research and publications centre on New Testament, feminist theology, and ecumenical theology. She edited, among other publications, with Fulata Mbano Moyo and Katerina Pekridou, *Many Women Were Also There: The Participation of Orthodox Women in the Ecumenical Movement* (WCC, 2011).

Stuart Murray works as a freelance trainer/consultant with the Anabaptist Network and is the director of the Centre for Anabaptist Studies in Bristol. Among his many books are *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition* (Pandora Press, 2000) and *Post-Christendom* (2d ed., 2017). He lives in Canterbury, England.

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Alexander M. Schweitzer is a German-born theologian and musician. He serves as Executive Director of Global Bible Ministry and Head of Global Bible Translation for the United Bible Societies. From 2001 to 2011, he was general secretary of the Catholic Biblical Federation; in 2008 he served as expert during the Bishops' Synod on "The Word of God in the Life and the Mission of the Church". Among his biblical-theological publications are "Reading the Bible as the 'Word of God,'" in *Biblical Reflections*, UBS 2016; "Die Kraft des Wortes. Bedeutung der Reformation für Sprachen und Gesellschaften," in *EKD Themenmagazin*, 2016; "The Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*: History and Relevancy for Today," in BICAM Publications, Accra, 2007.

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Munib Younan is former Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (1998-2018) and former President of the Lutheran World Federation (2010-2017). In 2016 he received the Niwano Peace Prize for his work on interreligious dialogue among Jews, Christians and Muslims, especially in Jerusalem. He is author of *Witnessing for Peace: In Jerusalem and the World* (Fortress Press, 2003).

