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Il Nuovo Testamento Greco-Latino-Italiano – Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, Roma, 2020

1. Il Nuovo Testamento Greco Latino Italiano

In concurrence with the United Nations' International Translation Day, the trilingual New Testament Greek Latin and Italian, *Il Nuovo Testamento Greco-Latino-Italiano* (NTGLI), was published on the 30th of September 2020 by the Italian Catholic Bishops' Conference. The date of September 30th was chosen by the United Nations¹ on the recommendation of the International Federation of Translators, in honor of St. Jerome, translator of the Bible into Latin, the famous *Vulgata*, whom the Catholic Church remembers on the day of his death, the 30th of September, 420.

The publication of the NTGLI presents two specific innovations: one on a “textual” level for the editions of the New Testament here used, and one on a “cultural” level for the cooperation between different Christian confessions regarding the biblical text in view of its translation.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-translation-day> – 12 VIII 2021.

On the textual level, the work places, on facing pages, the text of the Greek New Testament and its translations into Latin and Italian in their most recent authoritative editions:

- *The Greek New Testament-5th Revised edition*, (GNT5) and related textual critical apparatus,
- *Nova Vulgata, Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio, Editio typica altera*, (NV) with related notes,
- *La Sacra Bibbia – Versione ufficiale della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana*, (CEI2008) with related notes.

In its textual dimension, the NTGLI is the only publication that reports the Greek text together with the entire textual critical apparatus of the GNT5, supplying rationales for the textual choices made: the textual apparatus reflects the results of the international interconfessional editorial committee (composed of Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger).

Furthermore, on the cultural level, the NTGLI is the first official publication by a national Catholic Bishops' Conference to present the GNT5, perhaps to date the most prestigious example of the cooperation on biblical text that began with the Second Vatican Council in 1965, as stated in the dogmatic constitution on divine revelation *Dei Verbum*, 22,² and its own official version of the Bible together with the text of the NV, which for the Catholic Church serves as a reference text for the liturgy. Collaboration on the biblical text in view of its translation fully involves ecumenical dialogue among the various Christian confessions regarding the study of the Bible, its translation and transmission, as also recalled by the Vatican post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 46,115.³ This ecumenical dynamic can already be detected in the foreword (*Presentazione*) of the NTGLI, signed by the Rev. Dr. Annette Kurschus, Praeses of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia and President of the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft (German Bible Society), of the Card. Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture and of the Card. Giuseppe Betori, Archbishop of Florence and curator of the work along with Dr. Valdo Bertalot, member of the Waldensian Evangelical Church.

² http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat_ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html – 12 VIII 2021.

³ http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html – 12 VIII 2021.

2. *The Greek New Testament-5th Revised edition*

The two most authoritative “textual-critical” scholarly editions of the Greek text of the New Testament to date are the *Nestle-Aland, Novum Testamentum Graece* (NA 28th edition) and *The Greek New Testament* (5th edition).

The first edition of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Eberhard Nestle, was published in 1898 by the Württembergische Bibelanstalt in Stuttgart, Germany (which in 1981 became Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft). It was based on a comparison of the three different major existing editions of the Greek New Testament (edited respectively by Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, and Weymouth, who was replaced by Weiss in 1901), and it indicated, in notes, the variants of the biblical passages where one edition differed from the other two.

In subsequent editions, starting from the thirteenth in 1927, edited by Erwin Nestle, son of Eberhard, the most important manuscripts also reflecting these textual variants were included, thus constituting a distinct textual-critical apparatus. In 1952 Kurt Aland, the editor associated with Erwin Nestle for the twenty-first edition, in the light of the great discoveries of manuscripts that took place in the twentieth century, started a broad revision and great expansion of this apparatus with the direct verification of the original manuscripts, a commitment carried out with the newborn *Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung* (INTF) of Münster, Westphalia, which led him in 1963 to the publication of the twenty-fifth edition of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*. From this point on, Nestle and Aland are both indicated as editors of the work: *Nestle-Aland, Novum Testamentum Graece*.

This work of revision of the textual-critical apparatus entailed an in-depth revision of the Greek text of the New Testament itself, a project undertaken and shared with the international and interconfessional editorial committee responsible for the publication of the nascent GNT, a presentation of the Greek text designed specifically for Bible translators. Kurt Aland served as a member of this committee.

In 1955, some national Bible Societies belonging to the global United Bible Societies fellowship (American BS, the Württembergische Bibelanstalt [which became the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/German BS], the Scottish BS, the British and Foreign BS and the Netherlands BS), established a committee of biblical and text-critical experts to prepare and publish an

edition of the Greek New Testament for use in translation. A major difference from the scholarly critical text was an apparatus which included only the textual variants significantly relevant for the translation and exegesis of the biblical text.

The first edition of the GNT, prepared by K. Aland, M. Black, C.M. Martini, B.M. Metzger, and A. Wikgren, was published by the United Bible Societies in 1966. With the third edition in 1975, the GNT began to publish the same Greek text, then republished in the twenty-sixth edition of the NA of 1979. The NA and the GNT would retain different textual critical apparatuses (together with the introductions, the appendices and the segmentation of the text), as dictated by the characteristic purposes and users of each publication. From the time of these two editions (GNT3 and NA26), the editorial responsibility for both publications has been held by the same international and interconfessional committee composed of the scholars Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger.

In the light of the 5,700 existing New Testament manuscripts along with the ancient versions and the patristic testimonies, the GNT highlights the textual variants (about 1,500) significantly relevant for translation, while the NA continues the critical search of the Greek text by identifying over 12,000 distinctive textual variants.

Since its first edition, the GNT has also provided translators with an evaluation of the “certainty” of each single variant with respect to the form of the original text, indicating very widely the different textual testimonies in support of each choice, using the alphabetic letters A–D:

- A → the text is certain,
- B → the text is almost certain,
- C → encountered difficulties in choosing the variant,
- D → great difficulty in choosing the variant.

In the GNT5 published in 2014, important corrections and additions were made: for example, the readings of 11 new papyri are included in the critical apparatus.

Furthermore, for the Catholic Letters in the GNT5 a fundamentally new methodological approach was followed for the Greek text and the related critical apparatus. For this part of the New Testament the *Editio Critica Maior* is already available, thus representing a new level of scientific research on the text developed by the INTF based on the “CBGM

genealogical coherence method” [Mink 2011] offering a new Greek text elaborated with this method. These results are already present in the NA28, with which GNT5 continues to share the same Greek New Testament text.

3. *Nova Vulgata, Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio, Editio typica altera*

The *Nova Vulgata* (NV) is a revision of St. Jerome’s *Vulgata* in its Sisto-Clementine edition of 1592, a revision started in 1965 following the Second Vatican Council and concluded in 1986 with the publication of the second edition, defined as *typica* for liturgical use.

In his message of the 23rd of December 1966 to the Pontifical Commission for the Neo-Vulgate, Pope Paul VI indicated the purpose of this revision:

[...] we are thinking of a text in which that of St. Jerome’s Vulgate will be respected *to the letter* where it faithfully reproduces the original text, as it results from the *present scientific editions*; it will be prudently corrected where *it deviates from it* or does not interpret it correctly, using the language of the Christian *latinitas biblica* so that the respect for the tradition is adapted to the healthy critical needs of our time [Stramare 1979 : 331].⁴

For the NV, the Latin basic text corresponds to the *Vulgata Stuttgartensia*, amending it on the basis of the contemporary partial textual critical *Vulgata* editions and of the original Hebrew and Greek texts: the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, the *Septuaginta* and *The Greek New Testament*.

Publication of the NV Psalter (1969), the NV New Testament (1970-71, three volumes), and the NV Old Testament (1976-77, four volumes) led to the publication of the entire NV Bible in 1979. Finally, in 1986, the second edition was published, reflecting some slight corrections: this is the *Nova Vulgata-Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio, Editio typica altera* used for the trilingual edition of NTGLI.

4. *La Sacra Bibbia-Versione ufficiale della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana*

With the liturgical reform initiated after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Italian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, the *Conferenza Episcopale Italiana* (CEI), decided to produce its own translation of the Bible into

⁴ See Stramare 1979: 331-338; see also Zilverberg 2017: 93-125.

Italian. Taking as a basis the text of the Bible in Italian published two years earlier by UTET, (edited by the well-known biblical scholars E. Galbiati, A. Penna, and P. Rossano⁵), the CEI began the revision in 1965 with a view to its use in the liturgy. The biblical scholars were assisted by a team of experts in Italian literature and language. This team's task was to ensure the language used was aesthetically and linguistically appropriate within the context of Italian culture.

The revision produced a text of superior readability. At times, however, this achievement came at the cost of losses to the exegetical revision, which was based on the contemporary textual critical editions of the original Hebrew and Greek texts, such as the *Biblia Hebraica*, the *Septuaginta*, the *Novum Testamentum graece et latine*, (A. Merk ed.) and *The Greek New Testament* along with the first volumes of the *Nova Vulgata*, published until then by the Pontifical Commission for the Neo-Vulgate. The definitive text, approved by the 8th CEI General Assembly (14th-19th June 1971), appeared in its first edition in December 1971 and in its second edition, which included corrections requested by the Vatican for some texts used in the liturgy, in April 1974 (CEI1971-74).

Over time the liturgical use of this translation has made evident the need to include, through its extensive revision, **almost a new translation**, corrections of inaccuracies present in the text together with various improvements, especially after the publishing of the entire *Nova Vulgata* in its second edition in 1986, declared *typica* for liturgical use.

In 1988 the CEI initiated an extensive and in-depth revision of the CEI 1971-74 based on the most recent critical editions of the original Hebrew and Greek texts: the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1997, 5th ed.) the *Septuaginta* (1971, 9th ed.), the *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece* (1993, 27th ed.) and *The Greek New Testament* (1993, 4th ed.), these last two both edited by the international and interconfessional team mentioned above.

Among the criteria which guided the revision work, particularly important are those relating to the original texts and to the type of translation, indicated here:

⁵ *La Sacra Bibbia, tradotta dai testi originali e commentata a cura di Enrico Galbiati, Angelo Penna e Piero Rossano* (1963), 3 vols., UTET, Turin. See Betori 2020: 11-15.

- the CEI 1971-74 was revised on the basis of the original texts (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) according to the best and most recent critical editions available, and also of the *Nova Vulgata* translation, and according to the classical principles of textual criticism and exegesis;
- in cases of doubtful or disputed textual readings, reference was made first to the *Septuaginta* for the Old Testament, and then to the *Vulgata*, but taking into account the *Nova Vulgata*;
- inaccuracies, inconsistencies and errors in the CEI 1971-74 translation were corrected by following shared choices among the exegetes and having as a reference, in doubtful cases, the *Nova Vulgata*;
- an attempt was made to recover closer adherence to the tone and style of the original languages, moving towards a more literal translation, as also indicated by the Vatican document *Liturgiam authenticam* published in 2001,⁶ without, however, compromising the intelligibility of the text when read or listened to;
- particular attention was paid to the correspondence of the Synoptic texts, to the variety of literary styles and genres in the books of the Bible, while also seeking uniformity and continuity of the vocabulary;
- particular attention was also paid to the rendering of the text into a good level of the Italian language, with expressive methods of immediate understanding and communication in relation to the contemporary cultural context, avoiding archaic words and syntax, paying attention to the rhythm of the sentences, and also taking into account the needs of the liturgical proclamation.

After the Vatican *recognitio* for the liturgical use of the text and the final approval by the Presidency of the CEI, the Bible was published in 2008. Although created for liturgical use, in its 1971 edition and then in its 2008 edition the CEI Bible has, in fact, become a reference text for theological study, for spiritual formation and for pastoral action: **almost a new *Vulgata*.**

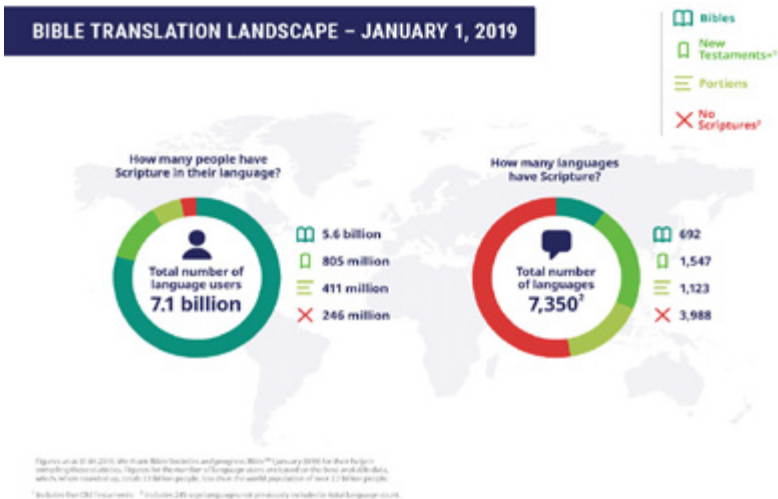
⁶ http://www.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20010507_liturgiam-authenticam_en.html – 13 VIII 2021; but see also Zilverberg 2017: 103 ff; http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio_20170903_magnum-principium.html – 13 VIII 2021.

5. *The NTGLI: a tool for new translations*

Some data help us to contextualize the potential of the NTGLI as a tool for future translations of the biblical text.

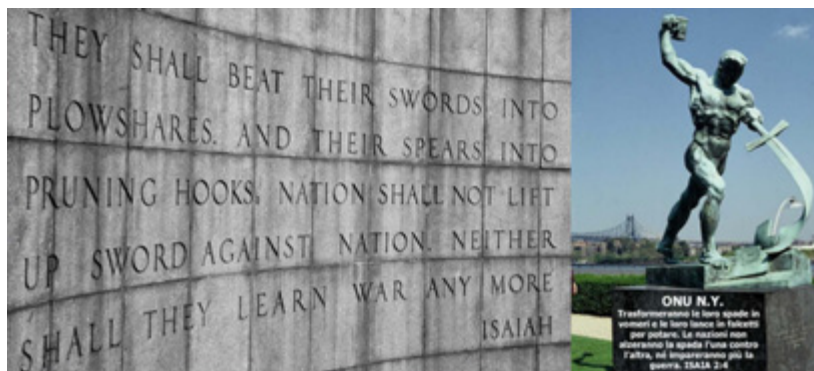
The first set of data concerns the languages into which the Bible has been translated, namely its linguistic accessibility. Out of a world population of around 7.1 billion people speaking their own language or languages, the Bible is accessible to 5.6 billion people, the New Testament to 805 million, and individual biblical books to 411 million, while 245 million people have no access to it.

However, out of the 7,350 languages spoken in the world, of which over 60% are found in Asia (32%) and Africa (30%), only 692 languages have the entire Bible translated, only 1,547 the entire New Testament, and only 1,123 individual biblical books, while 3,988 languages have no biblical translation (data from 2019 Ethnologue-UBS Global Scripture Access Report).



The second set of data concerns a specific group of people. Almost half of the approximately 40,000 students who attend the various Faculties of Theology of the Catholic universities in Rome come from continents other than Europe, and these students, like other Italian and European students,

have the Italian language as basic linguistic reference for their theological studies, including those referring directly to biblical text.



In view of these data, the NTGLI, which presents the New Testament text in Greek, Latin and Italian in the most recent authoritative editions, can potentially be a strategic tool for future translations of the New Testament, as also hoped for in *Verbum Domini*, 115:

“...During the Synod, it was clear that a number of local Churches still lack a complete translation of the Bible in their own languages... For this reason the Synod considered it important, above all, to train specialists who are dedicated to translating the Bible into the various languages...”

This commitment is in alignment with the affirmation of peace for humanity as expressed by the United Nations, as defined in its charter, and engraved in its monuments in New York (Chap. 1, Art. 1; see Appendix: NTGLI, Matthew chap. 6 and 1 Corinthians chap.13):

United Nations Charter, Chapter I: Purposes and Principles: Article 1

The Purposes of the United Nations are:

1. *To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace;*

2. To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace...

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ABSTRACT

On the same day of the United Nations International Translation Day, the 30th of September 2020, *Il Nuovo Testamento Greco-Latino-Italiano* was published by the Italian Catholic Bishops' Conference (CEI), a date chosen by the United Nations in honor of St. Jerome. The publication of the NTGLI presents two specific innovations: 1. at a 'textual' level for the most recent editions of the New Testament used (*The Greek New Testament-5th Revised edition; Nova Vulgata, Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio, Editio typica altera; La Sacra Bibbia - Versione ufficiale della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana*) and 2. at a 'cultural' level for the cooperation among different Christian confessions in Bible translating.

In 1988 the *Conferenza Episcopale Italiana* initiated an extensive and in-depth revision of the CEI1971-74 Bible based on the most recent critical editions of the original Hebrew and Greek texts. The new CEI Bible was published in 2008. Created for the liturgical use, with its 1971-74 edition the CEI Bible became the reference text, almost a new *Vulgata*.

The NTGLI is a strategic tool for future translations of the New Testament in the 4,000 languages without a Bible translation, also aiming to contribute to the affirmation of peace for humanity, as stated in the United Nations Charter:

"United Nations Charter, Chapter I, Purposes and Principles, Article 1: The Purposes of the United Nations are: To maintain international peace and security...[and] to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples..."

Keywords: Bible, New Testament, translation, Greek, Latin, Italian