

APPROVED BIBLES

To the President
of the Episcopal Conference

439/69

The Cardinals and Bishops who are the members of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, assembled in Plenary Session, November, 1968, voted that information be circulated by the Secretariat among the Episcopal Conferences about approval given by various hierarchies for the use of editions of the Scriptures prepared and produced under auspices of the United Bible Societies, in order that Bishops in various parts of the world may know what Scriptures are available for immigrant workers, seamen, travellers and others speaking languages not native to an area where they happen to be.

With this letter we enclose a copy of a report containing that information together with information about other developments in relations between the Catholic Church and the Bible Societies. These developments are connected with the Second Vatican Council's call for "easy access to sacred Scripture for all" (*Dei Verbum*, 22). For the sake of convenience, we summarize here the information about Bible Societies' editions of the Scriptures approved by Catholic Bishops and some other editions produced under joint Catholic-Protestant auspices or with Protestant collaboration that have been similarly approved:

- Afrikaans: Bible (ed. of Bible Society with deuterocanonical Books added) (Episcopal Conference of South Africa)
- Danish: Bible (Bible Society) (notes from Jerusalem Bible published in a separate booklet) (Bishop of Copenhagen)
- Efik: Bible (Bible Society) (Episcopal Conference of Nigeria)

- English: Bible, Revised Standard Version (original ed., National Council of Churches of USA) (Bishops of Kenya and Tanzania); (original ed. with added annotations by various Protestant scholars: Oxford Annotated Bible, Oxford University Press, revised at a dozen places by Catholics (Archbishop of Boston, Mass., USA); (Catholic ed., Thomas Nelson and Catholic Truth Society) (Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, Scotland)
- Fiji: Bible (Bible Society) (Archbishop of Suva)
- French: New Testament, Revised Segond (Archbishop of Kinshasa, Congo)
- Frisian: Bible (Bible Society) (Archbishop of Utrecht)
- Italian: Bible (*La Biblia Concordata*, Mondadori) (Archbishops of Ravenna)
- Kurukh: Bible (Bible Society) (Archbishop of Ranchi, India)
- Mundari: Bible (Archbishop of Ranchi, India) (Bible Society)
- Samoan: Bible (Bible Society) (Archbishop of Samoa)
- Spanish: New Testament, Version Popular (Bible Society) (Bishop of San Felipe, Chile; Bishop of Santa Cruz, Bolivia; Bishop of Juli, Peru, et al.)
- Swahili: Bible (Bible Society) (Bishops of Kenya and Tanzania)
- Thai: Old Testament, Revised (Bible Society) (Episcopal Conference of Thailand)
- Yoruba: Bible (Bible Society) (Episcopal Conference of Nigeria)

A Spanish translation of the New Testament produced by a small mixed group of Catholic and Protestant scholars under the auspices of the Herder Publishing Company and the Taizé Brotherhood has been approved by the Episcopal Conference of Latin America (CELAM) and a similar project in Portuguese is in progress. In a few areas (Hong Kong, Katanga in the Congo) the Bishops of the region have given approval for the use of all editions in all languages available in the Bible Society bookstores of those regions.

The Cardinals and Bishops assembled in the same Plenary Session of the Secretariat also voted that this letter accompanying the foregoing information should state the following two points:

- (1) in general, there is no difficulty in cooperating with other Christians such as the members of a Bible Society in securing use of an accurate translation of the Scriptures in schools and among the Catholic faithful provided there is "in some way or other" (*quovis modo*) a study of the Bible, and provided the edition is a faithful and integral one which does not attack dogmas of Catholic faith in introductions and annotations (cf. CIC, c. 1400); and
- (2) since Vatican II stressed that the Bible should be easily accessible to all, Bishops may endorse for general Catholic use editions of the Scriptures without annotations produced under auspices of other Christian groups, such as a Bible Society, when there is no Catholic edition with annotations at a price the people can pay (provided the Bishops are satisfied that the translation is good enough) until such time as it becomes possible to fulfil more adequately the pastoral use of the Bible legislated in *Dei Verbum*, Chapter 6, i.e., until there is a complete Bible with annotations or helps for readers in an edition that makes such a book easily accessible to all and available at all times.

These two points had already been made in responses to inquiries from several Episcopal Conferences (e.g., Kenya, Nigeria, Peru). They are now communicated to all as a result of the latest Plenary Session of this Secretariat.

Respectfully in Our Lord,

† J. G. M. Willebrands
The Secretary