

Ecumenism and the United Bible Societies

Over the years, the Trinitarian Bible Society has repeatedly drawn attention to the compromise of faith and principle which is involved in joint Protestant-Catholic projects to translate and distribute the Scriptures. In the past twenty years there has been an enormous growth in the number of such ecumenical projects, and it is clear that the serious implications of this trend are not widely understood. In the following pages full information is given about this important subject.

Evangelical attitudes to Ecumenism

Whereas, in the past, evangelical Christians were certain that the Roman Catholic system of doctrine was fundamentally unbiblical and false, that the Roman Catholic church was the persecutor of true believers, and that Catholics as individuals were in need of conversion, many "evangelicals" now regard Roman Catholics, by and large, as fellow Christians. This change of attitude manifests itself in the increasing encouragement given to Catholic participation in local councils of churches, joint services, and even joint evangelistic campaigns, which are all regarded as a valid form of "common witness". The United Bible Societies (including the British and Foreign Bible Society, the American Bible Society and the other national Bible societies around the world) have played a leading role in this ecumenical process, to which they are deeply committed.

Conservative Protestant believers, on the other hand, have rightly viewed these developments with the utmost concern. Sometimes, regrettably, this concern has not been expressed in a constructive way, and the use of vituperative language has conveyed the impression of hostility, fear and suspicion. This approach has in turn evoked an adverse reaction, so that critics of the ecumenical movement are now automatically regarded by many as being "narrow" or "extremist" or "anti-Catholic".

In this situation the Trinitarian Bible Society, which is committed to the scriptural doctrines of the Reformation and adheres firmly to the Bible as the sole guide to all matters of Christian faith and practice, seeks to maintain a consistent and positive witness to salvation through faith alone in Christ Jesus. The Society has a responsibility to point out the dangers of an ecumenical approach to the Bible, and at the same time the Society has a responsibility to help provide Roman Catholics and Protestants alike with copies of the Bible, prayerfully seeking that God will graciously lead many into a right understanding of eternal truth.

Roman Catholic attitudes to Scripture

In the present century there has been a considerable change of attitude among Roman Catholics towards the Scriptures, especially since the Second Vatican Council (1962-5), leading to a greater emphasis on Scripture reading. Whereas in the past the Catholic authorities feared that private reading of the Bible would lead to "heresy", Catholics are now officially encouraged to read and study the Scriptures for themselves.

This development was naturally, and rightly, welcomed by evangelical believers, who had always seen the reading of the Scriptures as being the means by which individual Catholics could be led to embrace reformed doctrine. However it appears that with few exceptions this growth of Scripture reading among Catholics has not had the result which evangelicals expected or hoped for.

One reason for this disappointing outcome is that, in Roman Catholic circles, the current emphasis on the reading of Scripture is accompanied by an equal emphasis upon the authority of the Roman church. Catholics are exhorted not only to trust their church as being the infallible interpreter of Scripture, but also to look to the church as a source of divine truth *additional* to the truths of Scripture. The Bible is made "safe" for Roman Catholic use in several different ways, firstly by the inclusion of explanatory notes approved by Catholic authorities, secondly by the insertion of the Apocryphal books, and thirdly by subjecting the reader to courses of careful instruction in Catholic doctrine. Thereby the traditions of the church of Rome are comprehensively reinforced.

In view of these considerations, it has to be concluded that ecumenical projects for Bible translation and distribution are actually harmful, as they merely assist the Roman Catholic church to extend her influence and authority. The consistent evangelical believer needs to lay a firmer emphasis on the sound reformation principle of *sola scriptura*, that the Scriptures *alone* are the divinely appointed rule of

Christian faith and practice. The relaxation or abandonment of this Scriptural principle has caused immense harm in the worldwide work of Scripture distribution. It is essential that the Bibles which are distributed should not be accompanied by man-made doctrinal notes and interpretations, or bound up with Apocryphal uninspired books, and those who distribute the Bibles should be able to bear a sound, evangelical testimony to the sacred truths which those Bibles contain.

Roman Catholic Traditions and Teachings

There is not room in this article to give a detailed analysis of the Roman Catholic system of doctrine. However, it may be helpful to summarise here some of its main points:

- (a) The Sacrifice of the Mass is substituted for the Lord's Supper or Communion. In the Mass, the Catholic priest is said to "renew" upon the church altar the sacrifice which Christ made upon the Cross. This is in direct conflict with Hebrews ch. 9 and similar passages which teach that Christ's sacrifice was unique and complete, sufficient in itself to bear away the sins of the world.
- (b) Through "transubstantiation" the elements of bread and wine which are consecrated at the Mass are said to become the real living body and blood of Christ. This conflicts with the scriptural understanding of the Lord's Supper as a service of remembrance, and it leads to the idolatrous practice of giving worship to the consecrated bread.
- (c) The head of the church of Rome, the Pope, is said to be an infallible teacher in all matters of faith and morals, and the decrees of church councils are declared to be binding upon all Christians. This is to put the words of men on an equal level with the words of God, and is a denial of the sufficiency of Scripture as the Christian's rule of faith and practice.
- (d) The Virgin Mary, by the doctrine of her "immaculate conception", is said to be free from all taint of sin, and in the doctrine of the "assumption" she is said to have been taken up bodily into heaven when her earthly life ended. She is further said to have "co-operated" in Christ's work of redemption, and the faithful are expected to address their prayers to her. These teachings are all utterly contrary to the Word of God.
- (e) After death, most people are said to go to the place of "purgatory", an intermediate state between heaven and hell, so that they may be purified from the sins committed during their lifetime. The purifying process is said to consist in undergoing various forms of punishment, while the

duration and severity of these punishments are said to be alleviated by the prayers of the faithful and the offering of the sacrifice of the Mass. Support for these doctrines is claimed from the Apocryphal book, 2 Maccabees ch. 12, which encourages prayers for the dead (see, for example, p.175 of the Good News Bible Apocrypha, in the edition circulated by the British and Foreign Bible Society). Such teachings are a denial of the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice to cleanse the believer from all sin.

Along with these doctrines are many other unscriptural Roman Catholic teachings and practices, concerning for example the priesthood, indulgences, the rosary, vestments, confession, absolution, penance, prayers to the saints, and veneration of images. Roman Catholic attitudes on some matters may have changed or developed in recent times, but the basic Catholic doctrines remain unaltered and are constantly reinforced by the Pope and the Catholic clergy.

The ecumenical movement, and in particular ecumenical activity in the translation and distribution of the Scriptures, has not led to the change of a single Roman Catholic doctrine, but has if anything enabled the Roman Catholic church to enlarge her sphere of influence and control. Evangelical believers who remind themselves of the true nature of the Roman church will see that there can be no such thing as a joint Protestant-Catholic "common witness", and that joint projects to translate and distribute the Scriptures can only be a source of confusion and compromise in fundamental matters of the Christian faith.

The British and Foreign Bible Society

Many evangelicals who support the British and Foreign Bible Society (and the various other national Bible societies around the world) are not sufficiently aware that their financial contributions are being used to promote the circulation of Roman Catholic Bibles. By "Roman Catholic Bibles" is meant, not simply Bibles for Roman Catholics, but Bibles which contain Catholic doctrinal notes, the Apocryphal books, and the seal of approval (the "imprimatur") of Catholic bishops. It is precisely this type of Bible that is welcomed by the Catholic authorities as helping to reinforce the traditional (erroneous) Catholic teachings.

If any reader is surprised to learn of this, he has only to examine the 1985 catalogue of English Bibles and New Testaments issued by the British and Foreign Bible Society. On page 13 of their catalogue will be found details of three different editions of the New American Bible, described clearly as an "American Catholic translation". On the same page is an advertisement for four different editions of the Jerusalem Bible, described as "the work of Roman Catholic scholars". Editions

of the Revised Standard Version, the New English Bible and the Good News Bible containing the Apocrypha are advertised on pages 3 and 12. Three different editions of the Good News Bible are stamped with the imprimatur of Cardinal Basil Hume, the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, as clearly stated on pages 3 and 5 of the British and Foreign Bible Society's catalogue.

"Catholic edition with study helps"

One edition of the Good News Bible distributed by the British and Foreign Bible Society is explicitly described as "Catholic edition with study helps". On the back of the title page it carries the imprimatur of Cardinal Hume, declaring that the volume is "considered to be free from doctrinal or moral error".

Between the Old and New Testaments is a section headed "Deuterocanonical Books/Apocrypha". Turning to the end of the volume we find a 30-page appendix entitled "Helps to the understanding of the Bible, Good News Version, prepared and edited by Joseph Rhymmer". The opening page of this section contains a number of misleading statements. The Bible is described as "a supremely authoritative source of religious truth". At a superficial glance, this statement might appear to be a perfectly acceptable acknowledgement of Biblical authority. However, the use of the indefinite article (*a* supremely authoritative source) is a deliberate implication that there are *other* authoritative sources of religious truth outside of the Word of God. This choice of wording was no mere slip of the pen, for in the next sentence we read that "other sources of information about God may carry weight, particularly, for Catholics, the voice of the Pope, and they may even be accorded equal weight to that of the Bible". Here we have it stated plainly, in a Bible distributed by the British and Foreign Bible Society, that the words of the Pope may be of equal authority with the Word of God. Further down the same page we are told that "the insights and accumulated wisdom of the Church must be used to help appreciate the full meaning of the biblical text and the truths it contains". In other words the Holy Scriptures by themselves are insufficient and need to be supplemented by the words of the Pope and the traditions of the Roman Catholic church, according to this edition which the British and Foreign Bible Society distributes.

Again on the same page we are informed that "the Church gives such importance to the Bible that parts of it are read at every Mass". The implication is that the Bible is given a special honour by being read on such occasions. Yet the 16th century Reformers strenuously denied the claim that the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Mass is taught in the

Bible, and they were prepared to die at the stake to oppose this very teaching, which they considered to be a mockery of Christ's unique and perfect sacrifice upon the Cross.

Those evangelicals who support the British and Foreign Bible Society need to ask themselves whether they are in agreement with the distribution of such an edition, which so openly promotes erroneous Roman Catholic doctrine. The same question needs to be asked by supporters of other Christian organisations which distribute such literature. Many evangelical bookshops have no hesitation in selling Roman Catholic Bibles. Most of the Scripture Union bookshops in England, for example, stock editions containing the Apocrypha. Some Scripture Union branches actually stock (or are planning to stock) the Catholic edition of the Good News Bible which we have just described.

Background to the Ecumenical Bible Projects

The details of English ecumenical Bible distribution given above are just a small part of a worldwide trend that has been gathering momentum over the last twenty years. At a major conference of Bible societies in 1964 it was agreed that a "common text" should be prepared in the original languages of Greek and Hebrew, and that this text should be translated into other languages so as to provide a "common Bible" acceptable to Protestants and Catholics alike. On the Catholic side, this concept of a "common Bible" was encouraged by a decree of the Second Vatican Council, in 1965, explicitly referring to the possibility of "co-operation with the separated brethren" (i.e. Protestants) in translation projects. In 1966 the British and Foreign Bible Society amended its constitution so that it could include the Apocrypha in its translations, to make them acceptable among Roman Catholic readers. The same policy was adopted by the United Bible Societies, including most national Bible societies around the world.

Ten years later it was possible to report that, during that decade, more than 130 interconfessional (i.e. joint Protestant-Catholic) translation projects had been undertaken, and that interconfessional New Testaments had been completed in more than 50 languages. By 1984 the pace had quickened, and it was reported that out of a total of 590 translation projects of the United Bible Societies, as many as 390 were of the interconfessional type (*Word-Event* No. 56, p.28; 1984). It is relevant here to note that over 20% of the British and Foreign Bible Society's income in 1984 was spent on UBS projects overseas, a contribution of approximately two million pounds towards projects which are mostly ecumenical in character. An even larger sum was expected to be contributed to UBS projects in 1985. (*Word in Action* No. 47, p.2; 1985).

The hidden purpose of "interconfessional" translations

The Roman Catholic participants in these translation projects are represented by an organisation known as the "World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate" (WCFBA). One of the leaders of this organisation recently stated that such projects were "an act of common witness and an expression of common grounds". He went on to suggest that "this collaboration opens doors to a better understanding of each other's point of view and prepares the way for ecumenical dialogue", and he affirmed that "the WCFBA is not merely interested in, but committed to this common witness in joint Bible work, which does break new ground for future ecumenism".

The new president of the WCFBA, the Right Reverend Monsignor Alberto Ablondi, is the Catholic Bishop of Livorno in Italy. Simultaneously he is a member of the General Committee and European Regional Executive Committee of the United Bible Societies, thus playing a part in the formulation and review of UBS general policy. His own view of interconfessional translation projects is that they are "one of the important advancements of post-Vatican II ecumenism – an important step towards unity", and that they "will help overcome prejudice in a divided Church" (*Word-Event* No. 57, p.6; 1984).

Evangelicals who contribute to the various national Bible societies around the world will do well to pause and ask themselves whether they wish their financial contributions to be used in this way, to promote unity with the Roman Catholic church on a basis of unsound doctrine.

The personnel of the United Bible Societies

We have just mentioned one prominent Catholic bishop who is on two of the main committees of the United Bible Societies. In fact a large number of Catholics, including several bishops, serve as members of national Bible society boards or on regional committees, as well as translators (*Word-Event* No. 56, p.28; 1984). The introduction to the 1984 Annual Report of the United Bible Societies (p.5) refers to "the generally interconfessional character" of the national Bible societies, and states that "in order to allow for the participation of Christians from all traditions that exist in their country, several Bible Societies changed their constitution in 1984, and now have members of all Christian denominations on their board".



ALBERTO ABLONDI

This discreetly worded statement can be spelled out more clearly, as meaning that several formerly Protestant Bible societies have altered their rules so as to allow Roman Catholics to be elected to their governing committee, hence promoting increased Catholic influence and control over Bible translation and distribution.

Among the UBS Vice-Presidents will be found the name of Dr. Francis Arinze, who is not only a Roman Catholic archbishop (of Onitsha in Nigeria) but has also recently been made a Cardinal by the Pope. It is not a little disturbing to see that one of his fellow vice-presidents is the Rev. Dr. John R. W. Stott, who has a reputation as an evangelical writer and preacher. The "honorary president" of this fundamentally ecumenical organisation is Lord Coggan, the former Archbishop of Canterbury. The Chairman of the UBS Council is Miss Alice Ball, who is also a senior official in the American Bible Society. Another prominent name is the Very Reverend Gunnar Stalsett, who is a member of the UBS general committee and is at the same time on the executive committee of the World Council of Churches and is the general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation.

It can also be mentioned here that one of the joint editors of the widely-used UBS Greek New Testament is a Roman Catholic cardinal, namely Carlo M. Martini, the bishop of Milan.

Ecumenical projects of the United Bible Societies

AFRICA

Burundi. In Burundi "a new interconfessional translation of the Bible in Kirundi [the national language] was started two years ago by the Roman Catholics together with the Protestants: work is done by a staff of three – a Roman Catholic and a Protestant translator, and a typist". In 1984 the Burundi Bible Society arranged to print "40,000 copies of the traditional Catholic version of the New Testament in Kirundi" and "the UBS signed an agreement with the Roman Catholic bishopric in Burundi regarding the production of this edition, which will be printed until the new interconfessional translation is completed" (*UBS Report* 1983.20 and 1984.21).

Cameroun. Here we are informed that the Roman Catholic church takes "an active part in joint translation and distribution projects" (*UBS Report* 1984.22).

Central African Republic. It is stated that "the Sango Bible translation project [in the country's main official language] is going ahead with the full co-operation of the Roman Catholic Church" (*UBS Report* 1984.23).

Ethiopia. The report mentions with evident satisfaction that "the annual general assembly of the Bible Society of Ethiopia was held in the Patriarchate conference hall of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church" (*UBS Report* 1984.26).

Ivory Coast. Among other translation projects, "work on the translation of the New Testament in "français fondamental" (simple French) for people who are only just literate is being done by two Roman Catholic nuns". In the previous year "one of the highlights of the year for the Bible Society in Ivory Coast was the launching of the Français Courant Bible (the Bible in Today's French). The dedication service was attended by church leaders from various denominations, and the Roman Catholic cardinal flew from Rome specially to be present" (*UBS Report* 1983.27 and 1984.30).

Kenya. The recently elected chairman of the Bible Society of Kenya is Mr. Peter Kiarie, who was described as "the first Catholic to hold this post in the Society's history" (*Word-Event* No. 59, p.32; 1985).

Madagascar. The 1983 Report refers to "the new ecumenical translation" in the national language. During the year a UBS translations coordinator "visited Madagascar and was able to meet with various church leaders, including the Cardinal, to discuss the new translation of the Malagasy Bible". In the following year, "Protestant and Roman Catholic translators continued to work on the preparation of the New Testament" (*UBS Report* 1983.31 and 1984.33).

Mauretania. Distribution of the Scriptures here through the hands of Roman Catholics is encouraged by the United Bible Societies: "two Roman Catholic priests who were contacted agreed to do Scripture distribution for the Bible Society to the extent that the local situation would allow" (*UBS Report* 1984.35).

Mozambique. A translator of the Gitonga New Testament, who was apparently murdered in December, 1984, was a Catholic priest: "He had already completed the first draft of the translation, and his place on the translation team has been taken by another Roman Catholic priest" (*UBS Report* 1984.38).

Nigeria. The national translation committee of the Bible Society of Nigeria now includes among its members "the Right Reverend Dr. G. G. Ganaka, the Catholic Bishop of Jos" (*UBS Report* 1984.40).

Rwanda. Here there is a "team of translators working on the common language ecumenical translation of the Bible in the Kinyarwanda language" [the official national language]. Their 1983 report laments that "we are still handicapped, however, in that we do not have a full-time Catholic translator". In the following year it was reported that a translation seminar was held at a Benedictine monastery. (*UBS Report* 1983.38 and 1984.42).

Seychelles. The new UBS work in these islands is fully ecumenical in principle and practice: "the work of the Bible Society in the Seychelles acquired a new dimension with the setting up of a consultative committee made up of three representatives from the Roman Catholic, the Anglican and the Seventh Day Adventist Churches. This

committee will supervise Scripture translation, production and distribution in the Seychelles". The general secretary of the Bible Society of Mauritius holds regular annual meetings with the Roman Catholic Bishops of Seychelles, Réunion and Mauritius. (*UBS Report* 1984.36, 41).

Zambia. Not all interconfessional translations are welcomed by the readers for whom they are designed. In 1983 the interconfessional revised Bemba Bible was heralded as a remarkable success and was said to be "anticipated with a lot of excitement". The next year, however, it was reported that "the much-awaited new interconfessional Bemba Bible turned out to be unwanted" and that it met with a poor reception. (*UBS Report* 1983.48 and 1984.53).

Zimbabwe. A revision of the Shona Bible is in progress, being one of the main languages of the country. The Bible Society in Zimbabwe mentioned that "the keen participation of the Roman Catholics in the continuing revision of the Shona New Testament shows our very cordial relationship with them" (*UBS Report* 1983.49).

THE AMERICAS

In the Catholic-dominated countries of Latin America, the United Bible Societies are planning joint translation and distribution projects with the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference for Latin America and with the "World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate". The UBS have appointed a special "consultant for interconfessional translations", a Miss Maria Teresa Porcile, who is herself a Roman Catholic.

In a number of languages the UBS are providing editions of the Apocrypha for the use of Roman Catholics, for example in the Quechua and Aymara languages for Bolivia, and in Creole for Haiti. In Mexico, future editions of the Bible would include a special printed recommendation from the Catholic Archbishop, Monsignor Ernesto Cardinal Corripio-Ahumada (*UBS Report* 1984.82).

Brazil. An ecumenical team has been working on a new Bible in Brazilian Portuguese, for Brazil. This is expected to be published shortly, to be followed by a second edition containing the Apocrypha (*UBS World Report* 180, May 1985, p.3). The most prominent member of the translation committee is the Rev. Dr. Robert Bratcher, who is a UBS international translation consultant. He was the chief translator of the English "Good News Bible". One feature of his writings is his explicit denial of the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures.

Netherlands Antilles. The team engaged on translating the Bible into Papiamentu, one of the two main official languages, includes a Roman Catholic priest and two Catholic nuns, as well as Protestant members (*UBS World Report* 181, June 1985, p.11).

UBS Ecumenical Projects, continued

Nicaragua. In 1983 there was a programme to distribute 200,000 New Testaments "with the help of several Evangelical churches and the participation of the Capuchin Fathers" (*UBS Report* 1983.77).

Paraguay. It was reported in 1983 that "the Paraguayan Bible Society maintains excellent relationships with all sectors of the Christian public" and that the Catholic church is "the main distributor of the Bible Society's Popular Version New Testament" (*UBS Report* 1983.79).

Canada. The ecumenical objectives of the national Canadian Bible Society were seen in the bestowing of an honorary life governorship upon Monsigneur Louis-Albert Vachon, who is Archbishop of Quebec and Roman Catholic Primate of Canada. This was described as "a particularly happy note during the year" (*UBS Report* 1983.62).

ASIA

Japan. The Japan Bible Society reported that "a most important aspect of our work is the completion of the interconfessional Bible. Both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Churches are awaiting its publication" (*UBS Report* 1984.112).

Philippines. Many national Bible societies have in recent years amended their constitution so as to permit Roman Catholic participation. The rules of the Philippine Bible Society now provide for five out of eighteen directors on its governing board to be Roman Catholics. The Catholic Archbishop of Manila, Cardinal L. Sin, is an honorary member (*UBS Report* 1984.122).

Sri Lanka. In January 1983 a new interconfessional Sinhala Bible was published, this being the national language. The ecumenical dimension of the Bible Society there was further demonstrated by the official presence of its representatives at the consecration services of two Roman Catholic bishops. The report for the following year mentions that the new Bible "is quietly gaining in acceptance". (*UBS Report* 1983.115 and 1984.126).

EUROPE

Eastern Europe. In Yugoslavia the Roman Catholic church has published a Slovenian New Testament that was translated with the assistance of UBS consultants, and there is joint co-operation between the UBS and the Serbian Orthodox church on the publication of a revised New Testament in Serbian. For Czechoslovakia 70,000 copies of the Czech Ecumenical Translation of the Bible were supplied through the UBS. In Romania, the UBS in 1984 provided paper for the printing of 40,000 New Testaments on the printing press of the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate. Paper was similarly provided in 1983 for the printing of 50,000 Bibles on the same press.

Egypt. A Roman Catholic priest is described as "one of the most outstanding" volunteer helpers of the Bible Society distribution programme (*UBS Report* 1984.139).

Greece. The advisory committees of the Greek Bible Society include Protestant, Greek Orthodox and Catholic members (*UBS Report* 1984.146).

Italy. The 1983 report indicates that the Bible Society in Italy hoped for a Catholic priest to join its staff, and "new formulas" for joint Protestant-Catholic co-operation were being considered. It is now reported that the Franciscan Order (OFM) has formally accepted the Bible Society's request to "offer their structures" for the distribution of the interconfessional translation in Italian (*UBS Report* 1984.152). In June 1985, the new interconfessional Italian Bible was published. It includes the Apocrypha and has the imprimatur of the Catholic bishop of Turin (*UBS World Report* 183, August 1985, p.2).

Malta. The Bible Society of Malta was formerly an autonomous Catholic organisation. On 1st October, 1984, it was accepted as an associate member of the United Bible Societies. It is at present promoting the distribution of a Maltese Bible translated by a Roman Catholic committee.

Norway. In 1984 "a new constitution was adopted which makes the [Norwegian] Bible Society fully ecumenical" (*UBS Report* 1984.158). An example of the result of this change of approach is found in the inclusion of a female Catholic journalist on the Norwegian Bible Society's committee.

Portugal. The "New Testament in Today's Portuguese" includes "a special episcopal recommendation to the Catholics" (*UBS Report* 1983.148).

Spain. Interconfessional New Testaments were published by the UBS in Basque and Spanish, and work began on the interconfessional translation of the Catalan Old Testament in 1984 (*UBS Report* 1984.130, 163).

The Evangelical Alternative

It should be freely acknowledged that, whatever may be the defects of the versions which are distributed, the United Bible Societies have been responsible for placing copies of the Bible in the hands of millions of people around the world who would otherwise not have any form of access to the Word of God. But at the same time it must be understood that the ecumenical character of most of the UBS work is causing immense spiritual harm, and confusion and error in matters of doctrine. No evangelical Christian who is aware of the facts given in this article will be easy in their minds about giving support to the work of the United Bible Societies.

It is appropriate, therefore, that evangelical believers will decide to channel their support towards truly evangelical organisations which

seek to be consistently biblical in their principles and their practice. The Trinitarian Bible Society does not claim to be the only such organisation. Other evangelical groups are responsible, for example, for hundreds of translation projects into tribal languages in remote parts of the world, and the TBS gives assistance in the publication of some of of these translations. Although such projects are important and attract generous support, it needs to be borne in mind that they mainly involve languages which are spoken by small numbers of people, sometimes just a few thousand.

Many of the ecumenical translation projects of the United Bible Societies, on the other hand, are concerned with the major languages of the world, some of them spoken by many millions of people. It is the deliberate policy of the UBS to concentrate on the official national languages, and on languages which have more than one million literate speakers. While evangelicals have been directing their support towards the minor languages, the United Bible Societies have quietly been replacing the older Protestant Bibles in the major languages by new ecumenical translations. It is time for these matters to be seen in the correct perspective. Hence the Trinitarian Bible Society, while increasingly involved in Bible translations for the tribal minority groups, also looks for greatly increased support in its work of making available trustworthy translations of the Word of God in the major world languages.

TBS LOCAL MEETINGS