

## **FORTY YEARS LESS ONE\***

### **An Historical Sketch of the C.B.A. (1936–1975)**

#### **BEGINNINGS**

The genesis of the Catholic Biblical Association of America in 1936 was the result of an idea whose time had come. At the invitation of His Excellency, the Most Rev. Edwin V. O'Hara, D.D., chairman of the Episcopal Committee on the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (henceforth CCD), a group of Scripture scholars had convened on January 18 at the Sulpician Seminary (later the Theological College of the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.) to plan for the preparation of a revised edition of the Challoner-Rheims version of the New Testament. During the meeting, the Rev. Romain Butin, S.M., proposed for the consideration of those present the opportuneness of forming a permanent association of Catholic Scripture scholars.

"This expression of an almost universal but secret desire was received with unanimous approval," so writes the earliest Chronicler of these events, and Bishop O'Hara was quick to offer the patronage of the CCD as an aid in the organization of the association, "since the ultimate aims of the Confraternity and the Association would be closely akin, and since the two organizations might be mutually helpful." Accordingly, Rev. William Newton, secretary of the Editorial Board for the revision of the English NT, was commissioned to effect an in-gathering of persons qualified in the knowledge of the Scriptures to attend the Second National Catechetical Congress of the CCD at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York on Saturday, October 3, and about 50 out of 140 who were contacted were present.

Bishop O'Hara opened both the morning and the afternoon sessions with prayer, asked the Rev. Edward P. Arbez, S.S., to preside, and contributed much to the success of the meeting by his kind encouragement, timely suggestions, and wise counsel. The April issue of Volume 17 of the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* for 1955 acknowledges the Association's debt to this farsighted Bishop by saluting him as "Founder and Father of the Catholic Biblical Association of America."

The Saturday afternoon session of the New York meeting on Oct. 3, 1936 was devoted to the establishment of the CBA. After two presentations that might be characterized as position papers had been delivered, outlining the advantages of a biblical society for laity and clergy respectively, the floor was given to Father Butin. The first step taken was a vote for the founding of a biblical association and it was unanimous. Fr. Butin then presented a plan for the organization of such an association and it was discussed point for point, with occasional voting in doubtful cases. Officers were elected according to the provisions of the tentative plan and then designated to serve as a general meeting of the following year, committee to draw up a draft of a Constitution and By-laws subject to the approval of the

The first president was Rev. Edward P. Arbez, S.S., of the graduate faculty of Sacred

\* Presidential address delivered at the thirty-eighth general meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association of America at Denver, Colorado on August 18, 1975.

Scripture, later chairman of the Department of Semitic and Egyptian languages at Catholic University. Fr. Arbez was honored by the association when the April issue of Volume 23 of the CBQ appeared in 1961 as a *Melanges Arbez*, wherein he was likewise acknowledged as co-founder of the CBA.

The first executive secretary, 1936-42, was Edward H. Donzé, S.M., and it is only fair to acknowledge the major role that he and his successors have played in the history of CBA: Joseph L. Lilly, C.M., 1942-48; Louis F. Hartman, C.S.S.R., 1948-70; and currently Joseph Jensen, O.S.B. Besides their scholarly achievements these men have been blessed with administrative skills, great patience, and a sense of humor that have served the association well. They have been extremely effective in their liaison work between CBA and the American Bishops, especially the Bishops' Committee for CCD, and their lengthy terms of office, especially that of Father Hartman, have provided a continuity of policy and an understanding of the association's resources and goals that is largely responsible for the success of the association's projects.

The first year of the new society's existence (1936-37) saw the leadership take hold with vigor and enthusiasm. An invitation was extended to about 225 prospective members with suitable qualifications and 100 charter members had enrolled by the following January 1, the deadline for that category. On April 11, 1937 the new officers met in Washington, D.C., in executive sessions, with Bishop O'Hara presiding, and drafted a constitution and by-laws which were mailed to all members. The program for the first general meeting in St. Louis, in conjunction with the Third National CCD Congress, was set, naming both the subjects of the papers and those to be requested to prepare them. A committee on nominations and a committee on enlargement of resources were formed. Father Newton was named Program Chairman and also asked to organize the first "Who's Who" or membership list, based on questionnaires that had been returned by prospective members, detailing their background, attainments, and interests in the Scripture field.

This planning session bore fruit at the St. Louis meeting held October 9 and 10, 1937, attended by 36 members, at which the Constitution and By-laws were revised and adopted. The general topic of the papers read was the revision of texts and versions in the past, leading up to the principles governing the revision of the English NT (which was the task in hand when Fr. Butin proposed the formation of the CBA), and to suggestions for the future revision of the English OT. Among the Neofilim of this pioneer period, the names of Plassmann, Butin, McGarry, Newton, Stapleton, Dirksen, Wendell Reilly, Steinmueller, Arbez, Callan, McClellan, Gaul, and Cummins are listed in that first program for presentations or reports. Bishop O'Hara was on hand to offer commendation and encouragement to the fledgling society, to share his vision, and to express the hope that "the Association will put the Bible in its proper exalted place in the teaching of religion."

#### GOALS AND PROSPECTS IN 1937 AND 1952

Although the general purpose of the CBA—the promotion of Bible study—had been articulated in its many dimensions in various speeches, papers, and discussions by the founding fathers, the crystallization of several facets of the society's goals was achieved in the Constitution adopted in 1937. In that document the purpose is outlined as two-fold and classified as primary and secondary.

The first purpose was “to place at the disposal of the Episcopal Committee of the CCD a body of men qualified for the investigation of Biblical problems.” Secondly, the Association sought to promote better acquaintance among Scriptural scholars, to secure mutual encouragement and support in the biblical field, and to enlist the cooperation of the laity in the advancement and diffusion of biblical knowledge. The Association was incorporated in the District of Columbia on April 29, 1941, and reincorporated there on September 26, 1958 “for religious, scientific, educational, and charitable purposes.”

The Association did not allow the Constitution to fossilize its activities but showed its capacity for renewal when a new Constitution was adopted at Lisle, Illinois, in 1952, and ratified in Ottawa, Ontario in 1953. Besides acquiring a preamble, the purpose was outlined as three-fold, without classification. While retaining the original two goals, with some emendation, Section I committed the CBA to devote itself to the scientific study of the Bible and of its auxiliary sciences, “in conformity with the spirit and the instructions of the Catholic Church, which the Association acknowledges to be the only divinely appointed custodian and authoritative interpreter of the Holy Scriptures.”

An alert leadership also showed its ability to read the signs of the times by proposing various amendments over the years that showed the Association’s vitality and relevancy. In order to clarify the conditions required for membership, the new Constitution was slightly amended at Maryknoll, N.Y. in 1962, with a view to establishing up-dated criteria for active and associate membership. In the rewording of this article, the qualification of Catholic was not included for active membership. Again, at Notre Dame, in 1965, the category of honorary membership was added to the Constitution and By-laws, though limiting the number to 20 at any given time. Over the years the names of Albright, Tisserant, de Vaux, Alfrink, Benoit, Cazelles, Florit, Lyonnet, Wilson, Zerwick, and Aielle have graced the rolls.

Another source for recapturing the vision of their purpose as the founding fathers conceived it in 1937 is the referendum that was conducted while recruiting the original membership, when they were asked what works should be undertaken by the Association. It is remarkable that the majority of these proposals have been realized, and more besides, as the Association grew. The largest vote was accorded these three items: (1) practical and critical commentaries—the single volume NT Commentary of 1942 was an almost immediate, though modest, realization of this hope; (2) biblical periodical; (3) English versions of OT and NT. These were voted more than once: Catholic English Bibliography; various English aids to the study of the Scriptures; translation of books from the original languages; efforts to improve the seminary courses on Scripture; encouragement of Scripture text books in English; promotion of interest in the general reading of the Bible; aids for homiletic and catechetical uses of the Bible; a practical dictionary of the bible in English. These were voted once: promote study of oriental languages, history, and archeology; studies of the OT in the light of modern science; lists of biblical MSS found in this country; a student’s edition of the Bible with margin for notes; an English concordance of the Bible; provide funds for publication of biblical texts; issue a harmony of the Gospels; undertake field work in biblical archeology.

### *CBQ*

If the first practical achievement of the first general meeting of the CBA at St. Louis was the adoption of a constitution, the second general meeting at Hartford in 1938 pro-

ceeded with amazing celerity to the founding of *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, to begin publication in January, 1939. Evidently the Executive Board had prepared the proposal and placed it on the agenda. During the discussion 12 members voiced their opinions, pro and con, and it was decided in favor of the project by a vote of 26 to 5. Wendell S. Reilly, S.S., of St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, the first bearer of the SSD degree in the association, was elected the first Chief Editor, serving from 1939 to 1942, with four associate editors; Cyril Gaul, O.S.B., of St. Meinrad's Abbey, served as publishing editor for six and a half volumes, and enlisted the Abbey Press as the first printer for that period, ending April, 1945.

In launching the first volume in 1939, Father Reilly sketched its purposes and background. The first and all inclusive purpose was to provide the CBA with an organ. Members who desired to review the more important communications offered at general meetings would thus find them available in published form, and the Editors would have a nucleus of articles to start each volume from the carefully prepared presentations of the general meeting. "The only point discussed was whether we could afford it," wrote Dr. Reilly. "But during the last few years, the treasurer has been taking in membership dues at \$5.00 a year, and a number of bishops (including two Cardinals, O'Connell and Hayes) have made themselves our patrons and given contributions." Since the expenses of the first year were thus assured, there seemed to be no unreasonable risk in going ahead. It appears that Msgr. Steinmueller's committee on enlargement of resources had been highly successful.

A second purpose suggested by Father Reilly was to be useful to priests, to enable them to carry on their biblical studies, and to teach the Bible in pulpit, in study clubs, and in the lecture hall. Three years later (1941) when the Editor asked himself, "What should be the content of our *CBQ*?" he replied in terms of those same two purposes.

Other thoughts or factors that struck the Editor as favorable to the new project were these:

(1) He noted the harmony between the secular priests and members of religious orders in the CBA: "They seem to be of one mind and heart."

(2) He anticipated differences of opinion, but felt the journal would provide a favorable climate for discussion where doubts and division of opinion were allowable. "Of course, we all see in the Church the divinely appointed defender and interpreter of the Bible and we shall be guided by her directions and by her mind," he wrote, anticipating in 1939 the sentiments of the new constitution of 1952/53.

(3) He allowed himself this modest boast, "Ours will be the only Catholic review devoted exclusively to the Bible in the English speaking world."

(4) He wrote further, "We shall try not to be controversial, but to seek and communicate the truth in a peaceable way. But there is a great need that those who believe in the Bible should speak out for the faith and hope that is in them and exercise some control over the statements and assumptions of those non-Catholics whose first principles exclude the supernatural."

Accordingly, the articles of the first three volumes, 1939-41, reflect the members' pre-occupation with text criticism, principles of bible revision, OT theology of the afterlife, NT aspects of the Resurrection, obscurities in the Latin Psalter, an appreciation of biblical archeology, methods and principles for improving the seminary curriculum, an attempt to review about 20 to 30 books per volume, and a survey of periodical literature for both testaments. This last category carried over under the next two editors with constantly improv-

ing coverage until 1958, before yielding place to the vastly superior *New Testament Abstracts*, inaugurated by CBA member John J. Collins, S.J., in 1956, and the *Elenchus bibliographicus biblicus* of the PBI in Rome.

The second Editor of *CBQ* was Michael J. Gruenthaner, S.J., serving 1942 to 1951, who was the first native-born holder of the SSD degree in the Association, and he was prompt to publish a statement on the needs and policy of the Quarterly in the January, 1943 issue. While gratified with progress, he called for more than 40 articles per year, preferably about 3000-5000 words, though brief notices throwing new light on difficult passages were also desirable. His work has been characterized as achieving a "high standard of excellence in presenting biblical articles of both a scientific and a more popular nature."

Some of the highlights of his editorship include the April, 1943 fascicle commemorating the 50th anniversary of the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*, on bible studies; a prodigious output of OT articles from his own pen, showing him to be an able Author-Editor; a broadening of horizons in Biblical News to cover items from all countries and an expansion of that section to include archeological news, originally reported by Edward Cerny; extensive treatment of the New Roman Psalter; articles on the Sensus Plenior, Second Isaiah, and the Dead Sea Scrolls; reports on the important Roman documents of those 9 years: *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943), the Letter to Cardinal Suhard (1948), *Humani Generis* and *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950).

He was succeeded for the period 1951-58 by Edward F. Siegman, C.P.P.S., who brought the *CBQ* to a higher plateau of scholarly achievement through his brilliant, perceptive and creative editorial leadership. He was especially concerned (1) with improving the teaching of Scripture in seminaries and colleges; (2) with promoting a balanced, positive interpretation of the decrees of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, as witnessed by his beautiful article by that title in the January, 1956 issue of *CBQ*; and (3) with effecting a procedure of cooperation between disciplines "if theology, whether biblical or patristic or speculative, is to become a living science in this country."

With great personal effort he expanded the Survey of Periodicals and improved its listings topically. He brought depth and strength, broader coverage and variety, richness and clarity of detail to archeological reports through enlisting the collaboration of Robert North, S.J., in that area. Book Reviews expanded in quantity and quality through the collaboration of several associate editors, notably John McKenzie and Bruce Vawter. He encouraged and promoted regional biblical meetings (at Washington, New York, Chicago, Boston, and Toronto) as sources of articles. The O'Hara Festschrift, April, 1955, was under his editorship.

The *CBQ* became truly the organ of its membership and more than ever before papers and themes, like the series on Messianism and on Inspiration in 1957/58 developed for the general meetings, attained the wider circulation that *CBQ* affords. The annual meetings were reported more promptly in the October issue just after they occurred instead of the following January as in previous years. When the biblical movement came under fire in the period before Vatican II, Father Siegman was a pillar of strength, "despite personal sufferings and injustice," and the CBA recognized the value of his work both by a resolution of "sympathy in his present anxieties" in 1962 and by electing him to the presidency in August, 1966, shortly before his death the following February 2. The April, 1967 issue of *CBQ* was also designated as a Memorial Volume in his honor.

Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., became Editor from 1958 to 1965 and the high level of scholarship was sustained and developed. He introduced the category known as *Miscel-*

*lanea Biblica*, which enabled contributors to present brief treatments of important insights, difficult passages, helpful surveys, and exegetical notes that were not suitable or ripe for comprehensive elaboration as articles but deserved to be aired to promote the ongoing scholarly enterprise. He edited the tribute to Father Arbez in April, 1961 (*Melanges Arbez*) for the latter's 80th birthday, and organized the 25th Anniversary issue of *CBQ* in 1963. This Jubilee volume devoted the January issue to 11 OT topics, and the July issue to 11 NT articles, written in four modern languages, by American and European scholars, Catholic and non-Catholic, and also featured letters of encouragement from Cardinal Cushing of Boston and Cardinal Meyer of Chicago. Cardinal Meyer was a charter member of the Association and the first American named a Member of the PBC when that category was reserved to Cardinals and other periti were designated as Consultants.

Articles on Apocalyptic, Wisdom research, Covenant, Studies in Deuteronomy, Midrash, Bultmann, the Messiahs of Qumran, the Four Gospels, but especially Johannine studies, Pauline studies (though surprisingly few), Inspiration, Hermeneutics and the Sensus Plenior, Intertestamental topics, suggest the breadth of his editorial vision; and the talents of Ahern, Bourke, Brown, Cahill, Dahood, Fitzmyer, Frank, Giblin, MacRae, McCarthy, John McKenzie, Moran, O'Rourke, Petersen, Skehan, Stanley, Vawter, and Wright provided major articles in this period, not to overlook Murphy's own productivity in the area of the Wisdom literature.

Possibly even more than his predecessor, Father Murphy was called upon to steer a steady course for *CBQ* through the troublous times for biblical studies of the early '60s. His balanced judgment is reflected in the editorial note, entitled "The Close of a Controversy" on p. 269 of the *Melanges Arbez* (*CBQ*, April, 1961), actually in reference to a distinct but parallel development on the Roman scene. He likewise made available to *CBQ* readers the text of the *Monitum* of the Holy Office in June, 1961 (with the commentary of Msgr. Robert Krumholz in his presidential address at the subsequent Cincinnati general meeting in August, 1961), and the magisterial "Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels," in Latin and English, issued by the PBC in April, 1964, which included the description of the three stages of Tradition involved in the transmission of the Gospel message that has received a general consensus among NT exegetes. Finally, Book Reviews maintained their high standard under the lengthy service (4 years) of Bruce Vawter, as well as Christian Ceroke, Robert Siebeneck, and Geoffrey Wood, and the circulation of *CBQ* in 1965 was just over 2000.

Perhaps my listeners may sense that the original purposes of *CBQ* seemed to call for both a scientific and a popular journal and this duality generated a kind of tension that was usually resolved by the editors since Reilly and Gruenthaner in favor of the scholarly over the popular. The Gordian knot was split in October, 1962 with the founding of the popular periodical *The Bible Today*, edited by Barnabas Ahern, Eugene Maly, and Mother Kathryn, R.C.S.J., all CBA members, but acting independently of CBA and in association with the Liturgical Press, Collegeville. *The Bible Today* has flourished over the years as a superb model of *haute vulgarization* and has freed up the *CBQ* as a vehicle of scholarly research.

The next Editor of *CBQ* was F. Bruce Vawter, C.M., from 1965 to 1968, and under his direction, the July, 1967 issue took the form of the *Hartman Festschrift*, on the occasion of Father Hartman's 40th year of Priesthood and 20th year as Executive Secretary of the CBA, the 19 articles reflecting the "subjects about which Fr. Hartman had from time to time shown special interest or in which he had been personally involved."

Under Father Vawter, and the succeeding editors, Msgr. Francis S. Rossiter

(1968-1972) and George T. Montague, S.M. (1972-75), there was a notable increase of articles from non-members of the CBA and for the first time a huge backlog of articles developed that fulfilled the dreams of earlier editors but necessarily became a mixed blessing.

Under Father Montague, and with the collaboration of Roland Murphy as Special Editor, the CBA paid well-deserved tribute to Msgr. Patrick W. Skehan in the October, 1974 issue of *CBQ* which took the form of a Festschrift marking his transition to Professor Emeritus in the Dept. of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at the Catholic University of America and his 65th birthday. Msgr. Skehan has been an indefatigable worker for all the Editors of *CBQ* for the “Forty Years less four” of the journal’s existence, but more significantly, as one of the Chief Editors of the New American Bible, and currently, one of the editors of the Qumran documents (Cave IV) for Oxford University Press. Some of his collected works became the first volume in the *CBQ* Monograph Series in 1971 under the title, *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom*, with bibliography to that date.

In the past 10 years *Miscellanea Biblica* became “Shorter Communications” and continued to attract contributions that might otherwise have escaped the notice of the scholarly community. Book Reviews maintained the highest standards under the careful editorship of Alexander Di Lella, Neil McEleney, James Reese, and currently, J. Mark Sheridan. Circulation is now over 3000, and presently *CBQ* is enduring production pangs for the sake of lowering publication costs.

The contents of *CBQ* have been indexed every 10 years through the patience and organizational abilities of Mother Kathryn Sullivan, R.C.S.J., of Manhattanville and a staff of workers, through Volume 30 (1968)—serving a grateful Association. Mother Sullivan was the first woman active member elected in 1947 at the 10th general meeting in Denver, and she has remained a vital, energetic, and productive part of CBA over the years. She organized and sustained the Visual Aids department of the CBA apostolate from 1948 to 1970 and no general meeting was considered complete without her report; she shared in the New York regional meetings since their inception in 1948; she became a co-editor in the trioka arrangement of *The Bible Today* in 1962; she was co-author with Msgr. Steinmueller of the *Companion to the NT* (1944) and the *Bible Encyclopedia, NT* (1950); and she has been honored by a citation from the PBC. Second among women members of *CBQ* was Sr. Emmanuel Collins, O.S.F., who shared in the production of the New American Bible.

## THE NEW AMERICAN BIBLE

In a certain sense the history of the CBA in the “Forty Years Less One” that we are reviewing is encapsulated in the history of the New American Bible. The original terrain where the idea of the CBA took root were the first meetings in 1936 when the project of a revision of the Received English Catholic version (Rheims 1582, Douay 1609, Challoner, 1750) was being organized.

The characteristic feature of the *first stage* of the work for both testaments was the use of the Vulgate as the basic text. Father Arbez, who served as Chief Editor, summarized the situation when he wrote: “There is not and there was not any regulation forbidding translation of the Bible from the original languages.... But the Vulgate is the recognized official text of the Catholic Church of the Latin rite, and its use is imposed, among other things, in

the (Latin) liturgy.... But the decree of the Council of Trent, declaring the Vulgate 'authentic,' is in itself a disciplinary decree: the Council did not mean to suppress or to displace the Oriental versions used in the Oriental Churches. On account of the place of the Vulgate in the Western Church, it is rather natural that people should wish to have a translation of that form of the text, and that too especially when, as in our case, the liturgical use of the version was contemplated."

The revised Challoner-Rheims version, known popularly as the CCD NT, was published in 1941 and quickly attained a circulation of over a million copies by 1945. The good progress of the OT revision is witnessed by a note describing the state of the work on Nov. 13, 1943: 14 books were complete or near completion, five more were awaiting editing. The others were well on their way. The deadline for all was June 1, 1944.

Before that deadline the situation changed completely and the new *second stage* began, which led to taking the Hebrew and Greek original texts as the basic text for the OT work. A response of the Biblical Commission regarding translations of Sacred Scripture into modern languages, approved on August 22, 1943, and the issuing of Pope Pius XII's programmatic encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in September, 1943, opened a new door. The encyclical dealt with special force on the study of Oriental languages and literatures, recourse to the original texts, and the application of the principles of textual criticism. Curiously the documents became known in this country only in the first months of 1944. Accordingly, the OT Committee was approached by Bishop O'Hara on the subject of shifting the basic text. "There was no hesitation," Father Arbez writes. "The Editors and Revisors were advised, by a letter dated March 15, 1944, of the re-orientation of the work and of the preparation of the principles necessitated by the change. On April 22, 1944, a letter was sent to the Catholic hierarchy to apprise them of the change."

From that time on, 1944, till the NAB appeared in 1970, the annual report of the general meetings reflected the progress of the work, planned in four volumes for the OT (two for the Historical Books) with a new translation of the NT from the Greek to follow. The goal for Volume I (Genesis-Ruth) was achieved in September, 1952, in time for the 5th centenary of the Gutenberg Bible and the feast of St. Jerome (Sept. 30), sharing publication honors with the newly completed Revised Standard Version. The other volumes did not always achieve their publication schedules, but Volume III (Job-Sirach) appeared in 1955, Volume IV (Isaia-Malachia) in 1961, and finally, Volume II (Samuel-Maccabees) in 1969. A supplementary series of textual notes pertaining to the OT is added in an appendix to the typical edition published by the St. Anthony Guild Press. Upon completion and publication of both testaments, the translation modified its title to THE NEW AMERICAN BIBLE, having been known as the Confraternity or CCD Version during the years of its preparation, but remaining always under the sponsorship of the Bishops' Committee of the CCD. Its preface reviews its salient characteristics, and the list of nearly 50 editors is found in the appendix of all editions produced by several publishing houses.

The top committee of the general editorial board (Louis F. Hartman, Chairman OT, Myles M. Bourke, Chairman NT, Patrick W. Skehan, Vice Chairman Editorial Board, Stephen J. Hartdegen, Secretary Editorial Board, and Gerard S. Sloyan, English Editor NT) have been blessed to witness the consummation of their (properly emended) "possible dream." Though its actual publication date was Sept. 30, 1970, Father Hartman died on August 22 in the full satisfaction and joy of a shared accomplishment of the CBA, expressing no doubt his own special "Nunc dimittis."



## ECUMENICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The CBA has remained distinctively, authentically, proudly and effectively Catholic in its origins, its purposes, its published organs, its activities and achievements, its programs, its loyalty to the directives and guidelines of the Holy Father, the Pontifical Biblical Commission (on which we now have several CBA members), the American Bishops (including several CBA members), particularly the Bishops' Committee on the CCD, as it was known throughout the 26 years or more over which the NAB project was conducted, and as it is presently known, namely, the National Center of Religious Education-CCD. Accordingly, it is quite understandable that the CBA should provide fertile ground for the development of that quality of Ecumenism that the Church herself espouses, and especially because the Bible is historically the original focus of interest for all the religious Faiths of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and even for other non-Christian traditions, as the Constitution on Divine Revelation, Paragraph 25, suggests: "Editions of the Sacred Scriptures, provided with suitable comments, should be prepared also for the use of non-Christians and adapted to their situation."

In tracing the path of Ecumenism as it has been experienced in the CBA, the name and person of Professor William Foxwell Albright (1891-1971) must be recalled and the salutary influence he exercised on scholars of all Faiths. In his obituary, Msgr. Skehan first epitomizes his place in history: "American academic circles have lost their foremost spokesman for Biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies," and further on, continues: "Professor Albright's ties with the CBA go back to the beginnings. In 1926-27, the late Romain F. Butin, S.M., served as acting Director of the A.S.O.R. in Jerusalem while Albright was on an extended lecture tour in the U.S. It was under the impulse of this and subsequent contact with a number of cooperative scholarly endeavors of which Albright was a principal exponent that Fr. Butin proposed the founding of our Association when the opportunity came in 1936. For a full quarter of a century Dr. Albright has been an honorary life member of the CBA . . . ."

As early as the 7th general meeting of CBA at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana in 1944, Dr. Albright lectured on the relation between the Canaanite languages and biblical Hebrew, which was published in *CBQ*; in 1946, he was on the faculty of the first Summer Biblical Institute sponsored by CBA at Niagara University; and the occasions of friendly scholarly exchanges and mutual services and indebtedness became simply too numerous to record here.

The fruitful possibilities of collaboration across religious lines was also the theme of at least three presidential addresses that sought to shape the future of CBA in the pursuit of its well-published goals. Msgr. Stapleton, 9th president of CBA, spoke in Boston in 1946, as follows: "The collaboration I have in mind here is that with non-Catholic biblical scholars in scientific research. Certainly the time is opportune. There is among the most prominent non-Catholic scholars an earnest desire to work with scientists of all religious beliefs. The only requirements are scholarly training, scientific workmanship, a passion for objective truth. The higher we go in the world of biblical research, the warmer is the spirit of cooperation among scholars. That has been the experience of all who have been privileged to devote themselves to a life of study."

Msgr. Stapleton cited the fields of Archeology, Oriental Philology, Textual Criticism, Patrology, Ethnology, and the History and Literature of the ancient past, as areas of collab-

oration where a beginning might be made. But he deplored exclusive concentration on these fields, and expressed confidence in the results of a whole-hearted collaboration or cooperation with non-Catholic scholars, implying that exegesis and biblical theology would profit by such exchanges, leading to a fuller understanding of the Bible.

Msgr. Steinmueller, 15th president, who with Fr. John Callan, O.P. was one of the first American Consultors of the PBC over many years, in 1952 decried "biblical isolationists" and urged collaboration, citing the meeting of the largely Anglican Society of OT Study in Rome and their audience with the Holy Father as a sign of Rome's understanding that the complexity and vastness of modern biblical science called for such pooling of the God-given talents of mankind in mutual collaboration and friendly discussion. Similarly, Fr. Brendan McGrath, O.S.B., 22d president, in 1959, drew out the implications of such collaboration for achieving the fuller understanding of the Word of God, which is the goal of all genuine Scripture studies, under the rubric, "There may be something in what you say."

In cooperation with the CCD, the CBA sponsored Catholic Bible Sunday at Septuagesima from 1942-52, when it became Catholic Bible Week from 1952-59; but in 1960, the program became known as National Bible Week in the Fall, and was promoted ecumenically, with financial grants from CBA for promotional materials, till 1969, when sponsorship was transferred to the CCD. There the CBA presence continues to function through Fr. Stephen Hartdegen, O.F.M., who serves as Director for the U.S. Center for the Catholic Biblical Apostolate, a unit of the World Catholic Federation.

In 1962, the CBA extended its practice of "observer exchange" begun with the SBL a few years earlier to several other learned societies. CBA programs both at the general meetings and on the regional level also bespeak this collaboration as non-Catholic scholars share their wisdom with us. The final stage (1967) of the production of the New American Bible brought an ecumenical vein through the cooperation of Professor David Noel Freedman for Genesis, Frank M. Cross, Jr., for 1-2 Samuel, Professor J. A. Sanders for Kings, and John Knox for the Pastoral Epistles. *CBQ* articles and book reviews, especially in the past 10 years, bespeak the collaboration envisioned in the presidential addresses. And of course there are countless cases where CBA members bring the CBA presence into the programs of other learned societies and of other ecumenical ventures, without directly involving the Association, for example, Roland Murphy and Dennis McCarthy's share in the *Handbook* for the Form Critical project sponsored by Claremont Graduate School and the participation of CBA members in the Anchor Bible series. CBA became a founding member of CSR in 1969 and participated in the 1972 International Congress of Learned Societies in the Field of Religion at Los Angeles, on the theme "Religion and the Humanizing of Man," Sept. 1-5, in connection with our 35th general meeting. Possibly the high-point of ecumenical cooperation thus far was the collaborative study by an 11 man ecumenical team that was published under the title, *Peter in the NT* (1973), and intended as background for the discussion of the role of the papacy in the universal Church, edited by Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann. This may well serve as a prototype for similar collaboration on other biblical themes that are vital to the ongoing process and the goals of ecumenism.

#### CBQMS

Authorized by the 30th general meeting in Montreal in 1967, CBA launched its second official organ to be known as the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly-Monograph Series* whose

purpose is “to facilitate the publication of books of scholarly nature in the biblical field that would otherwise find publication difficult to secure.” The first monographs appeared in 1971, *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom*, by Patrick W. Skehan; the second in 1972, *The Hidden Kingdom: A Redaction-Critical Study of the References to the Kingdom of God in Mark's Gospel*, by Aloysius M. Ambrozic; and the third in 1973, *The Use of tôrâ by Isaiah: His Debate with the Wisdom Tradition*, by Joseph Jensen, O.S.B. In 1974, the acceptance of three more manuscripts was announced, and the project has enjoyed the chairmanship, in turn, of Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Patrick W. Skehan, and presently, Bruce Vawter. The project was structured into the Constitution and By-laws by the amendments of 1972.

#### “MUTUAL ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT”

One of the intangible benefits that any association gives to its membership is especially well expressed in the CBA constitution as (mutual) “encouragement and support.” On several occasions in the “Forty Years Less One” it also took tangible form. When the CCD NT appeared in 1941, followed by the one volume NT Commentary in 1942, the Association showed a remarkable capacity for self-criticism of the home products, always offered in a constructive manner. Nevertheless, an attack was launched on the version of Philippians 2:6,7a in the pages of a contemporary journal in 1941 that was successfully answered by fellow members of the editorial board. Again, during the uneasy times 1959-61 when conscientious Catholic exegetes were exploring and applying the guidelines on literary forms that had been articulated in DAS since 1943, the CBA used its prestige to pass resolutions at the Cincinnati meeting in 1961 (and later at Maryknoll in 1962) that lent moral support to those under fire, namely, resolutions “respecting what are considered unwarranted attacks by a Catholic publication upon Catholic biblical scholars in America.” At another stage in the *Sturm und Drang* of post-Vatican II days, in 1969, the CBA passed resolutions favoring due process for any beleaguered members. Yet, with a genuine capacity for self-criticism, the members also amended the Constitution by strong majority vote in 1970 at Albany, to assure that the use of Resolutions would proceed in an orderly manner and allow the active members to be sufficiently informed beforehand for intelligent action. More recently, CBA members were alerted at L.A. in 1972 to “signs that suggest new attacks on sound biblical scholarship by reactionaries who place themselves above the hierarchy to sit in judgment on all,” and subsequently, in a resolution of 1973, CBA members reiterated their support for those who are being made the target of irresponsible attacks, which was expanded in detail in a “Letter to the American Bishops,” and signed by the Executive Board at the Douglaston general meeting.

#### THE DIFFUSION OF BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

The CBA was originally committed in its first Constitution to the diffusion of biblical knowledge, a phrase that was dropped in the second Constitution, and so the first decades showed an immense variety of projects to achieve that goal. Summer Bible Institutes were tried for priests in Niagara (1946) and Denver (1947), and for Sisters in New York City (1947), and they were reported as “a tremendous intellectual success and a moderate

financial success.” In the past 10 years summer institutes on biblical and theological themes are now sponsored by many theology departments of colleges and universities and dot the country. In Denver, in 1947, the evening session of the general meeting was open to the public. Bishop Sheen spoke on “The Cross and the Crisis,” and 7000 people were in attendance. Bible Sundays, Bible Weeks, and Public Lectures were CBA projects, conducted by CBA members and generously supported by CBA funds, until recent years. The publication of pamphlets was attempted in 1957 and achieved by 1959, but on a meager scale.

Then, new models for such activity appeared on the scene in 1960, when other agencies became the sponsors of several vehicles of *haute vulgarization* that nevertheless engaged the talents of many CBA members: The Paulist Pamphlet Bible Series (1960-1975), The NT Reading Guide (1960), *The Bible Today* (1962) and the OT Reading Guide (1965) out of Collegeville. But the high point of this goal has been achieved for the present in the publication of the Jerome Biblical Commentary in 1968, “a compact commentary on the whole Bible written by Roman Catholic scholars according to the principles of modern biblical criticism, saluted by Cardinal Bea in its Preface as fulfilling the goal affirmed in paragraph 22 of the Constitution on Divine Revelation of Vatican II, giving the faithful “full access to Sacred Scripture,” and making a fruitful contribution to ecumenism. The chief editors were Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer, and Roland Murphy, who in addition to their own masterful contributions, edited the participation of 50 scholars, most of them members of the CBA. A careful reading of the Editors’ preface gives a clear picture of the goal that was sought and attained.

#### PROSPECTS IN 1975

The CBA cannot rest on its laurels and even with its monumental achievement in the publication of the NAB, it is important to recall the philosophy and outlook of its first Chief Editor, Father Arbez, writing in 1952. “But it would be a misfortune if the completion of the version were to mean the end of the work on it. It is in the nature of man’s achievements that they never attain full perfection. All scholars, I think, realize their inability to reach their ideal. As one goes on in life, one becomes more aware of one’s limitations and imperfections: there is always so much more to learn than one knows! This is true of the Biblical sciences: almost every day brings new material that helps us to understand some things better but also raises new problems. And evidently this has a bearing on the intelligence of the text of the Bible. . . . To keep up with the developments of biblical knowledge, a translation should be kept up to date, by revision, correction, from time to time. Hence I conclude with the wish and the hope that the new version will mark only a beginning of work and progress.” With that built-in capacity for self-criticism the editors will no doubt seek a new translation of the Psalms that will be suitable for use in the new Breviary or will wish to review their NT renditions in response to the reviews and criticisms of their peers.

Another area of service to the American hierarchy seems to be opening up as a consequence of the Letter to the American Bishops of 1973. In the sequel, it has been recommended that a permanent mechanism for consultation between Bishops and scholars be devised, and a joint committee from the Catholic scholarly societies has already met for that purpose. This may well be the vehicle that has long been sought for achieving inter-

disciplinary understanding and cooperation and thereby vitalizing the science of Theology on the American scene.

We have not attempted to survey all the worthy causes that the CBA has subsidized with grants over the years for the promotion of bible studies, though the PBI and Ecole Biblique professorships come readily to mind. However, the suggested scholarship program for the help of young biblical scholars, and the proposed CBA Research and Publications Committee, whose function would be to evaluate present operations and propose new needs, should be an excellent vehicle for opening up prospects for the years to come. The CBA currently lists 580 active members and 202 associate members. A referendum of their talents, needs, suggestions, and prophetic vision would be a fruitful first step, providing helpful guidance to the new Research Committee and envisioning new goals for our young and vigorous association.

### CONCLUSION

We were motivated to undertake this historical study of CBA in view of the larger context of the Bicentennial celebration in our country which is prompting historians of most of our institutions to examine the records of 200 years of achievement. Although four decades of activity dedicated to bringing the faithful of our nation to a better familiarity, understanding and love of God's work and Christ's message through a scientific presentation of the Bible's values seems slight as part of American history and infinitesimal as part of salvation history, we are aware by Faith that the Church in America has a role to play in the mission of the Church Universal. We suggest, too, that the achievements of the CBA in little more than one generation would compare favorably with any single generation of accomplishments in other sectors of the vineyard.

World War II brought an awareness into our general meetings of 1940-45 of the handicaps suffered by the Church in Europe on all levels of her mission, but especially as they imposed limitations on biblical studies; and this awareness provided impetus for taking up our share of these responsibilities in a country whose constitutional guarantees provided an atmosphere of "liberty and justice for all" that we acknowledge as an indispensable factor for the progress of our Association.

With gratitude to God and with appreciation of the civil liberties of the USA, as President of the Catholic Biblical Association of America I rededicate the energies and the resources of our membership to the high purposes for which it was founded. May we, with the Fathers of Vatican Council II, hope for a new surge of spiritual vitality from intensified veneration of God's Word, which "lasts forever."

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