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Conference on the History of the Religious Book

Jerusalem, January 27 - 31, 1997

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CONFERENCE ON THE HISTORY OF THE RELIGIOUS BOOK

École Pratique des Hautes Études,
Sciences historiques et philologiques
Centre de recherche français de Jérusalem (CNRS)
École Biblique et Archéologique Française

Jerusalem, January 27 - 31, 1997

The École pratique des Hautes Études, department of Historical and Philological Sciences, the French Biblical and Archeological School of Jerusalem and the French Research Center of Jerusalem inaugurated in 1997 a closer collaboration by organizing a one-week seminar on the theme of the "History of the Religious Book". The sessions took place at the French Biblical and Archeological School, located a few hundred metres from the Damascus Gate and from the Old City.

Following the opening of the conference by Mr. Dominique Bourel, director of the CRFJ (French Research Center of Jerusalem), Mr. Jean Vezin, senior researcher at the École pratique des Hautes Études (Department of Historical and Philological Sciences), presented a lecture entitled: "Turning the *Bible* into a Text during the Latin Middle Ages". Mr. Vezin provided details on the presentation of the most ancient manuscripts preserved today. After mentioning a single volume fourth-century Greek *Bible*, the *Codex Sinaiticus* (4 columns to a page, except for the *Psalms*), he presented the most ancient fragments preserved of the Latin *Bible* and of the *Gospels* of Saint-Gall. He analyzed the models adopted for the illustration, starting with the fragment of the *Kings* of Quedlimburg, and emphasized the problems of tradition as well as the role of the great libraries and major *scriptoria* (*Vivarium* in the fourth century and especially the great Carolingian abbeys: Saint-Martin of Tours, Corbie, Saint-Amand, etc.). The evolution ends with the considerable work done in the thirteenth century by the Dominicans of Saint-Jacques street in Paris; such as the revision of the text, the division in chapters, the exegesis and a very large distribution through numerous copies in small format.

In a second lecture, Mr. Jean Vezin dealt with the "Evolution of Liturgical Books", be they non-Biblical readings (homilies, Fathers of the Church, acts of the martyrs and the saints, the *legendae*), or chants (psalms and different lyrical texts from the *Bible*, litanies, formulae of benediction, orisons...). To the general scientific interest presented by the liturgical manuscripts (they give us accurate insight into the life of the Church) is

added, for the codicologists, a secondary interest (the manuscripts are more easily dated and better localized). Details of the types of manuscripts and their evolution in time allow us to follow very precisely the evolution of the liturgy itself (sacramentaries, evangelistaries, graduals, then missals, and different books of church services). The lectures of the day were concluded with a visit to the Armenian patriarchate's library, in the Old City of Jerusalem: presentation of manuscripts and ancient printed books, including the first books in Armenian, by the *custos* of the library, former Armenian bishop of Lyon.

On January 28th, Mrs. Geneviève Hasenohr, senior researcher at the École pratique des Hautes Études and professor at the University of Paris IV (Sorbonne), focused on the problems of the diffusion of religious books beyond the world of the clerics. She dealt first with the "Translation of the *Bible* into French", a very early phenomenon, inaugurated with the interlineary translation of the Psalter. Progressively, the translation is individualized, as the commentaries in the common language develop. The thirteenth century constitutes a very important period for the literature of oil (northern French), with the multiplication of genres and works (novels in prose, encyclopediae, ...), and the appearance of new translations of the *Bible*, comprising the first versions of the *Apocalypse* in French. The region of present-day northern France has a major role in this movement, with the *Roman de Dieu et de sa mère*, by Hermann de Valenciennes (end of the twelfth century), then the *Bible historiale* by Guyard des Moulins, canon of Aire-sur-Lys (beginning of the thirteenth century) whose success will continue until the mid-sixteenth century. The first entire French translation of the *Bible* was completed in Paris in the thirteenth century, based on the *Vulgate* as revised by the Dominicans. Finally, in the fourteenth century, the translation of the *Bible* became a royal enterprise. The most original translation is the one that Jean Le Bon ordered from Jean de Sy and which was continued under his successors by a team of Dominicans.

In a second lecture, Mrs. Hasenohr approached the essential problem of the religious book's diffusion among laymen, particularly from the fourteenth century on. The heterogeneous collections remain the most numerous, mixing proper religious texts with moralizing writings, in a perspective where spirituality holds an increasingly greater place. In the fifteenth century isolated texts begin to circulate, or even collected texts of a single author. The evolution of the material state demonstrates the displacements of uses and sensibilities. In France, the most common religious book in the hands of the laypeople is the book of *Hours*, whose diffusion is considerable (more than 300 manuscripts are kept by the sole Bibliothèque nationale), and for which great attention is given to the aesthetics (numerous illustrations). The vernacular tongue appears in it very early in the free prayers, whereas the corpus of liturgical texts which constitute the fixed and mandatory heart of the book of *Hours* will rarely be translated into French before the sixteenth century.

Tuesday afternoon it was possible to visit the Museum of the Book where a part of the manuscripts of Qumran (Dead Sea scrolls) is exhibited; the visit was led by Father Emile Puech, senior researcher at the CNRS, director of the *Revue de Qumrân* and one of the editors of these manuscripts.

Wednesday was dedicated to the beginning of typography in movable characters. Mr. Pierre Aquilon, associate professor at the François Rabelais University in Tours (France) and vice-director of the Center of Higher Studies of the Renaissance, dealt with the incunabula editions of the Latin *Bible* kept in France today: 794 complete copies have been identified, mostly editions of the *Vulgate*, with or without glosses. The city where most editions were printed is Venice, followed by the major editions of Rhineland and southern Germany (Nuremberg, Basel, Strasbourg). The accurate study of these copies reveals the great rapidity of circulation of these volumes, which sometimes have notes written only a few years following their printing date; the copy of the Latin *Bible* of Bourges given by Amerbach to Koberger between 1498 and 1502 shows thus the seal of Guillaume of Cambrai, the archbishop of Bourges between 1493 and 1505.

Next Mr. Frédéric Barbier, senior researcher at the École pratique des Hautes Études and senior researcher at the CNRS, came back to the problem of the *incunabulum Bible* in the vernacular, namely the “German *Bible* of 1483”. This monumental edition produced by Anton Koberger of Nuremberg, essentially follows the text of the Strasbourg edition of Guenther Zainer (1475-1476) while the bookseller/printer obtained the engraved wood for the Quentell edition of the *Bible* in Cologne around 1479. The printing is estimated at 1500 copies, though the diffusion is mostly throughout German Europe. The 1483 *Bible* is certainly one of the biggest bookstore successes of the time.

The end of the afternoon was dedicated to visiting the library of the Greek Orthodox patriarchate of Jerusalem. Various library collections of manuscripts from Byzantine, Ethiopian, Serbian origin and an important collection of ancient print going back to the *incunabulum* period (Alde Manuce) were shown, though the number of exegetical works of the eighteenth and nineteenth century is equally remarkable.

On Thursday, Mr. Jean-Marc Châtelain, curator of the special collections of rare and precious books at the Bibliothèque Nationale of France and associate professor at the École pratique des Hautes Études, spoke on the “Sacred Emblematics, XVI-XVIIth centuries”. The phenomenon is very important; from the sixteenth century on, the books of *Hours* tend to disappear, and are replaced by emblematics encouraged by the tridentine Reform. The role of the Plantinian studio should be stressed here, along with the Jesuit establishments of the Gallo-Belgian provinces, as a result of which the edition of the emblems experienced its most considerable development in the seventeenth century. The emblem has a rhetorical content, made to highlight the meaning at the same time as it wins persuasion, and is based on elements that are more or less normalized (title, image, explanation). Mr. Châtelain’s presentation was based on the systematic study of a certain number of collected emblems, notably the *Veridicus christianus* by Father Jean David, S.J., given in Antwerp in 1601. Mr. Châtelain concluded by demonstrating that the various collected emblems belong to the model of methodical orison but that an important place is left to chance. The emblems are not necessarily classified, so that one browses at one’s leisure (cf. the image of the mythical bee) through the work, in the same manner as one would wander in a garden (cf. the image of the *hortus conclusus*).

The afternoon was dedicated to a visit to the archeological site of Qumran and to certain of the caves where the manuscripts were discovered. The visit was done under the guidance of Father Emile Puech.

The last day of the seminar was dedicated to the very important transformations that have occurred in the economy and the use of religious books in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mr. Dominique Bourel, senior researcher at the CNRS and director of the French Research Center of Jerusalem, presented a lecture on “*Aufklärung* and Religious Book”. The new exegetical German edition is mostly produced in Halle, around the pietist institutions (among them, the *Collegium orientale* which offers, among other things, Hebrew courses). From 1712 to 1719, 80 000 copies of the *Bible* could have been distributed, and their total is estimated at some two million for the entire eighteenth century. Mr. Bourel emphasized the place held by Halle and by the *Aufklärung* in the definition of a critical method inspired by philology and applied to biblical research. It is Witter who, as early as 1711, distinguishes for the first time the yahvist and elohist traditions, and the development of these works results, in 1787, in the definition of orientalism in terms of an autonomous science (Gabler, *De justo discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae*).

In a second part, Mr. Frédéric Barbier presented a double lecture on the “Religious Bookshop and the Second Gutenberg Revolution in France (end of the eighteenth century to 1914)”. He first insisted on the characteristics of the religious bookshop, especially devotional, which constitutes the principal pillar of the economy of the book under the Ancien Régime. The French Revolution breaks brutally with this ancient logic, bringing about the bankruptcy of a number of the major “bookshop keepers of Paris”, and sometimes even of the provinces. The fundamental change lies in the fact that the religious problem is now charged with an immediate political meaning, which explains, among other things, that a very large number of ancient copies are lost at that time (by lack of interest for what is often considered to be worthless, even evil “books”). In the long run, the market of the religious book in nineteenth century-France is characterized by this problematic. Mr. Barbier showed not only how, in a general manner, the tendency is towards a relative decrease in production but also how, and only in an apparently paradoxical fashion, the field of the religious book can reveal itself to be one of the most promising in the new economy of industrial publishing. The *Paroles d'un croyant* (Words of a Believer), or more so the *Vie de Jésus* (Life of Jesus), rank among the largest bookshop successes of the time, whereas the small book of moral instruction or of piety feeds a very active branch of the activity of the printing presses, especially in the provinces (Mame, Mégard, Lefort, etc...).

The seminar concluded with a detailed visit to the museum and especially to the library of the French Biblical and Archeological School (numerous old editions of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries). The entire works of the seminar will be the object of a publication by the *Revue biblique*.

For the occasion of the conference, Mr. Frédéric Barbier, senior lecturer at the École pratique des Hautes Études (Historical and Philological Sciences) and senior researcher

at the CNRS presented a public lecture on the theme “From Diderot to the Internet: books, media, mediatizations”. This lecture took place at the French Research Center of Jerusalem and was followed by a reception. The members of the conference were also received by the Ambassador of France to Israel, in Tel-Aviv, and by the Consul général of France, in Jerusalem.

Frédéric BARBIER
(Translation: Lisa Anteby)