

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).



ALBERTO ABLONDI

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".

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).