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Treasuring the Word. Biblical Hermeneutics in Priestly Ministry

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Abstract: Biblical hermeneutics is necessary for meaningfulness, to avoid arbitrariness in interpretation, dogmatism and other extremes. Tradition plays an important role in the interpretation of Scripture. This position is substantiated through an interdisciplinary approach of history, philosophy, exegesis and theology. The viewpoints of several prominent thinkers are given in this regard.

Keywords: Bible, tradition, faith, exegesis, hermeneutics, text, reader, meaning.

Understanding is an art of hermeneutics because understanding means precisely responding to the issue that the pre-understanding raises. Bultmann expresses this as follows: "Every understanding, like every interpretation, is continuously oriented by the way the question is put and by standpoint (its *Woraufhin*). This is never without a pre-understanding of the matter it is questioning the text about."¹ Our pre-understanding is constituted not only of ideas, concepts and world-views but also of beliefs we have inherited from traditions both cultural and religious. If we as Christians believe the Bible to be the Living Word of God relevant for everyone at all moments of history, then biblical hermeneutics is inevitable.

We need hermeneutics to prevent us from locking up the richness of the Bible by interpreting it univocally, allowing us to recognise the meaningfulness of God's

Word in the concrete life situations of any reader at any historical epoch. It can also serve as a guardrail against the fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible, which in no way manifests a historical conscience of the formation of its canon and the development of its interpretative traditions. The danger of such a lack of historical perspective leads to an arbitrary interpretation of the Bible according to the whims and fancies of an individual and even to justify one's own ideology as if the Bible was meant to be an unfailing proof of one's own world-view of God, of human person and of the world. At the heart of this attitude is found the claim of self-sufficiency stemming from an epistemological dogmatism, namely "I possess the truth of the Bible and whatever I say or do is in perfect tune with God's Word." The "I" becomes prominent even to the detriment of real faith. This is a divinisation process of the self. A real danger indeed!

Biblical texts are therefore to be interpreted. This would then mean that we should not read our personal ideas into the text. Whence some important questions! Does the Faith Tradition play a role in the interpretation of Scripture? If so, how? Would the *Scriptura Sola* as claimed by the Reformation Churches be tenable? How to reconcile Scripture and the interpretative Faith Tradition? The historicity of the text is at the heart of the problematic. Our *thesis* is that the *Tradition plays an important role in the understanding of the Scripture*.

In order to substantiate this thesis, we need to adopt an interdisciplinary approach. Only through our knowledge of the interpretative tradition of the Bible, can we be precise about the progressive formation of this tradition in the course of history. Thus it becomes important not to rule out any helpful approach, both intellectual as well as

spiritual, to the study of the Bible. “We are not condemned to the ruinous alternative: either honouring the intelligence or nourishing the spiritual life.”² Faith is compatible with intelligence and it has to be so. The act of reading the Scripture receives “the promise of *an* intelligence that goes beyond *the intelligence*” and understanding itself proceeds “from the same spirit that inspired the Scripture.”³

1. Historical Approach

Two eminent thinkers of the 17th century, an exegete, Richard Simon, and a philosopher, Spinoza, had hermeneutical concerns. Simon, in his effort to have a scientific approach, became interested in the MT by comparing it with the LXX without neglecting other former translations. Spinoza gave a more philosophical dimension to the study of the Bible by subjecting it to philological, literary and historical analysis. This scientific exploration would continue till the Renaissance, paving the way for what is called “Textual Criticism” consisting of a comparative study of different manuscripts related both to the history of the redaction and to the authenticity of the biblical books.

After the Reformation there emerged a meeting place between Scripture on the one hand, and the question of the study of language as well as of the historical context of the biblical books on the other hand. This is due to the realisation that *Sola Scriptura* would not be adequate to have a deeper understanding of the meaning of the biblical texts. Thanks to this scientific method, the emergence of different meanings other than literal was observed. Literal interpretation is not insignificant but meaning cannot be confined to it. It should not be forgotten that the Scripture

has certain obscurities. For example, the Gospel of Mathew while quoting Micah (5,1) referring to Bethlehem as “small” changes it as “not small at all,” by which Origen would later interpret that the little Bethlehem became great thanks to Christ.

Thanks to the discovery of the ancient texts of the Middle East, the exegetes from the time of Le Clerc (1697) to the time of Gunkel (19th century) followed the comparative method. In the beginning of the 20th century, Lagrange, the founder of the Biblical School in Jerusalem had the audacity to affirm that a scientific approach to the reading of the Bible could also lead to a spiritual enhancement. He held that the revealed truth does not change but it grows.⁴

Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* (1893), recommends a good formation of the exegetes both in biblical languages and in scientific methods. The beginning of 20th century witnessed some obstacles to the spirit of *Providentissimus Deus*. The encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* by Pope Pius XII in 1943 once again renewed this spirit, offering an invitation to the use of historical methods in the study of the Sacred Scripture. The Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* of the Vatican Council II brings together the wealth of the scientific research of the Bible and its study from within a faith tradition, underscoring the meaning and the significance of the First Testament for the Christians. The Pontifical Commission for the Bible in 1993 confirmed this by approving the historico-critical method for the study of the Sacred Scripture, which is “God’s Word in human language.”

In résumé we can say that every text has a history. “The

dimension of the historicity of the biblical text is an integral part of the identity of the Sacred Scripture.”⁵ Hence we need to seriously take into consideration the historicity of the Scripture without doing violence to the text, though its historicity is studied by means of scientific methods. The historico-critical method leads to the enhancement of faith. In the words of Paul Beauchamp: “if we humans cease to speak humanly, we do not listen to God!”⁶ We are at the very heart of the mystery of the incarnation. “For the words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as the word of the eternal Father, when He took to Himself the flesh of human weakness, was in every way made like men.” (*Dei Verbum* §13) The critical study of the Bible has some limitations. Some presuppositions of the historico-critical method need revision. Hence there is a need for philosophical hermeneutics to throw some light on the relation of the text to its reader.

2. Philosophical Approach

If we accept the affirmation of *Dei Verbum* quoted above, which is primarily a faith affirmation, then there is some justification for faith reading of the Bible. Nevertheless, can someone say that he/she fully understands the message of the Bible to the extent of a complete possession of the revealed truth as would claim some fundamentalists? Understanding a text is possible only because of the meeting of two worlds, namely the world of the author and that of the reader. The reader has his/her own history just as the text has its own. We are part of a tradition. As Gadamer notes, “the anticipation of meaning which guides our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity but is determined starting from the

community which binds us to the tradition.”⁷ Our hermeneutical stance is not our invention but a result of belonging to a tradition. Belonging to a tradition does not imply a blind adherence to it, nor understanding a text, a simple repetition of what the text says.

Our personal reflection on biblical texts is a hermeneutical task, but we place ourselves in our own faith tradition that would form part of our pre-understanding. “No one questions a text without having engaged a world of representations, of knowledge, of judgements, again a resemblance whose possibilities and limits will command his/her interpretation,”⁸ says Pelletier, commenting on the Heideggerian theme of “prejudice” in the act of understanding. Paul Ricœur holds that any interpretation can be described as the fusion of two horizons, the meeting of two worlds, one of the text and the other of the reader. In other words, the meaning is not locked up in the text itself; rather it emerges only when the reader of today with his/her own questions in mind enters in resonance with the text.

Ricœur further speaks of the autonomy of the text. The text has “a set of meanings that have broken their moorings to the psychology of the author” and “the text must speak for itself.”⁹ The life of the text gets renewed in the hands of a reader, for the reader is distanced from the author both in time and space. Rejecting “the alternative between alienating distanciation and participatory belonging,” he argues that a text “transcends its own psycho-sociological conditions of production and thereby opens itself to an unlimited series of readings themselves situated in different socio-cultural conditions. In short the text must be able to ... ‘decontextualize’ itself in such a way that it can be ‘recontextualized’ in a new situation

...”¹⁰ He further argues with the act of reading, that there is a triple dialectic in a phenomenology of reading: discordant concordance, lack of determinacy and excess of meaning, familiar and unfamiliar.¹¹

The meaning is therefore to be found in the fusion of the world of the text and that of the reader. “To understand is to understand oneself before the text,”¹² says Ricœur. The responsibility lies with the reader who has to take into account his/her lived experiences when he/she finds himself/herself before the text whose meaning takes him/her beyond the present to the future when the meaning will be comprehended in its fullness. This does not however mean that the reader can treat the text as if it were an authorless entity. Ricœur cautions against this trap of the fallacy of the absolute text when he says that “a text remains a discourse said by somebody to someone else about something. It is impossible to cancel out this main characteristic of discourse without reducing the texts to natural objects, i.e., to things which are not [hu]man-made but which, like pebbles, are found in the sand.”¹³

There is no hierarchical opposition between intelligence and spiritual life while reading the Bible. In the words of Pelletier, “it is not by getting away from the contemporary knowledge that one keeps the tradition, but by getting actively involved in it.”¹⁴ The contribution of modern sciences (and therefore of intelligence) is precious even if no science can exhaust the meaning of the Scripture. “Reading [of the Bible] proceeding from the same spirit that had inspired the Scripture, receives the promise of an intelligence which surpasses intelligence itself.”¹⁵

3. Exegetical Approach

Has there not always been hermeneutics in classical exegesis? It is obvious that it has been the case in the Jewish practice of biblical readings. According to the Jewish practice, reading and writing are inseparable. The term *miqrah* is used to refer to reading as proclamation in liturgy and *midrash* is used to indicate a rereading or interpretation in the creation of new texts. It is also true of the traditional Christian exegesis. Origen has already given thought to the role of the intelligence of the reader, with new and current questions in mind, capable of bringing out new meaning from the text that is read. Augustine, by making reference to his own personal life history, has affirmed that a re-examining of one's life in the light of biblical texts is a way to conversion. It is not a question of denying the obvious differences between the past and the present. Hermeneutics makes it possible to realise the importance of reading the Bible (written in the past) in the present, and of the understanding of its meaning for a contemporary reader.

In the Bible, hermeneutics is already at work when the Second Testament quotes the First, when Books of Wisdom quote Pentateuch, etc. One cannot read the Second Testament without any reference to the First. There is historical continuity of biblical texts. It is clear that the gospel narratives reflect a re-reading and re-interpretation of the First Testament books. Could the presence of the First Testament theology re-interpreted in the Second Testament be said to have an apologetic value? The authors of the books of the Second Testament, in all probability, would have liked to see themselves as the true heirs of what had been proclaimed, whose culmination is in bearing witness to the death and the resurrection of Jesus, which is the fulfilment of Israel's faith and hope, in

a nutshell, of the First Testament writings. In the episode of the disciples of Emmaus (Luc 24, 13-35), the renewed understanding of the Scripture in the light of the Pascal event opened the eyes of the disciples. It is in and through the Scripture (it is a reference obviously to the First Testament) that the disciples could recognize the Risen Christ. As says Pelletier, “the practice of citing the First Testament is an act of the intelligence of Faith, circulating in periods of history and in texts and arriving at the truth of the person of Christ recognized and confessed. This is why the Scripture is a true weaving of both old and new words having a theological value of the highest degree.”¹⁶

The progress in exegetical study today is also due to the renewed interest for the typological aspect of the Bible. Paul Beauchamp has consecrated his efforts, particularly in his book titled *L'un et l'autre testament*, to explore profoundly this aspect, trying to articulate all that contributes to the fulfilment of the First Testament writings in the person of Jesus Christ. This probably is due to a conviction that, in the words of Pelletier, “it is precisely the fulfilment that is at the theological horizon of the singularity of the biblical writing.”¹⁷ The assertion of Paul Beauchamp is very significant and relevant: “The old Scriptures are not fulfilled in the New, but in the acts and the deeds of Jesus Christ,” on realising that “to say that the act of Christ fulfils the Scriptures is in some way to express the totality of the essence of this act.”¹⁸ Does it not correspond to the readings of the Paschal Vigil? A creation leading towards the fullness in a re-creation! We can thus say that the Second Testament is a reinterpretation of the First from the perspective of faith in Christ dead and risen.

Nevertheless, there is no question of being ignorant of

the socio-historical context in which these texts were born. We should not forget the conflict of the Israelites with the people of the other religious traditions in the Near East. Biblical texts took shape in the course of history in the process of trying to find meaning of life in conflicting situations. The Torah says, “You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you” (Dt. 4, 2). Yet the scribes never ceased adding to it, preventing God’s Word from becoming dead words. The research of Michaël Frishbane along these lines brought out the idea of intra-biblical exegesis. His creative innovations are made predominantly in the legislative codes of the Scripture. This intra-biblical exegesis is quite in tune with hermeneutics, namely every text must be reread and be reinterpreted so that the words of the past may have a resonance today and may prepare the future.

Schleiermacher was right to have insisted on the involvement of the reading subject in the act of reading. The reader engages in a dialogue with what is read by the intermediary of the book received from tradition. But the author is also a subject, who has a history of his own and who was himself a reader of the pre-existing texts and, by appropriating from those texts, has authored a book in a given time and place. Meaning must therefore constantly be thought of as the future of the text. A text is not limited to what is said or to what has been put down in writing; it goes far beyond than the words in it.

Pelletier exemplifies this by the Book of the Song of Songs, one of the enigmatic texts of the Bible, and on which many scholars have commented. Saint John of the Cross had realized the difficulty in interpreting these

songs. "These Canticles," he tells us, "since they were composed in the fervid love of overflowing mystical knowledge, are quite unable to express themselves adequately; and I, for my own part, do not claim to be able to do any more than throw some light on them in a very general way."¹⁹ Contemporary exegetical studies show that it is likely that it is a rewritten work. Questions have been raised if its origin has roots in Egyptian or Israelite love literature. This book signals that "writing a book in the Bible goes hand in hand with rereading pre-existing literature both of Israel and of other peoples."²⁰ Recent studies affirm that the meaning of this book in itself is exclusively literal and erotic. However, Ricœur perceives in this book a model for metaphorical writing. It expresses an erotic love but points to another meaning, namely nuptial. There is still another aspect to be underlined thanks to contemporary studies: This book is a song, that is, a dialogue, a vibrating personal address of one to another and not a speech on love. The reader is thus invited to re-enounce these words by taking his or her place in this exchange of voices. Usually, in the Christian tradition, this dialogue of love represents the bond between Christ and His Church. If we situate this poetic literature in the whole of the Bible, starting from creation in the Book of Genesis, up to the Book of Apocalypse speaking of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Book of the Song of Songs could be seen as offering an innovate meaning whose full understanding is in need of a future to come.

4. Theological Approach

There is a perennial risk of placing the Tradition over and above the Scripture. While theological reflections are to be based on the Bible, there exists a danger of reading

into the Bible what has been taught by the Tradition. This is why Lessing had once declared that “Religion is not an affair that should be received from one’s parents.” There could be another possible danger of reducing the Living Word of God by dissecting it through scientific exegetical methods as if these methods would have the last word. We can be certain about what we are not supposed to do, that is, replacing the Scripture by the Tradition.

Has the modern hermeneutics anything to do at all with all that concerns the Tradition? The Tradition forms part of what belongs to the “prejudice” (pre-understanding) of the reader, which is one of the fundamental hermeneutical principles, a constitutive element of every act of understanding, resulting from the fact that no judgement, no knowledge is inaugural, since every single gesture is part of a tradition and there can be no absolutely new beginnings.

The Reformation Denominations already had “prejudices” when they affirmed that Tradition is both unnecessary and necessarily corrupting. It is quite true that theology should never be static and petrified in a given Tradition. However, it should not be forgotten that in so far as Tradition has a historic continuity and it is in and through the history to which we belong that we have gained knowledge, we cannot dispense with Tradition as is easily imagined. We are the heirs of a historical Tradition in which we have our role to play, as adding layers of creative and innovative thinking to this tradition, taking it ahead towards the future. This is to ensure that the tradition does not remain merely a deposit of the dead past but a living present relevant for tomorrow. Thus interpreting a text is never a task of reproduction but of an innovative understanding. In the words of Pelletier, “my

act of reading is only a way of inserting myself in a process which precedes me and will continue to go beyond me.”²¹

Theologians before us help us to know how they have read and interpreted the Scripture to respond to the questions of their time in their respective contexts. Their reading of the Scripture has not only helped them to understand God’s Word but also to understand themselves in the light of God’s Word, that would have necessarily transformed their own lives and would have shaped their thinking. The same is true of us, the contemporary readers of the Bible. This dynamism keeps going and therefore the understanding of the Scripture can never said to be complete once and for all. “The great lesson is certainly not to be too hasty to believe that by virtue of critical knowledge, we have arrived at the profound layers of meaning. It is precisely for this reason that reading has within itself a dimension of promise.”²²

Every believer can and must enter into his/her “act of memory.” The former exegeses of the Bible throughout history constitute a collective memory of Faith. However, every new reader must make the Word of God both alive and relevant in his/her present day context without ignoring the collective memory of Faith, which binds him/her to the believing community, not only of the present, but also of the past starting from the very first Christians. Both reception and creation are at work since no innovation is possible without reception. Faith is a continuity of Tradition, for the Gospel message is transmitted from one person to another, from one generation to another. Irenaeus puts it so succinctly: “When any person has been taught from the mouth of another, he is termed the son of him who instructs him,

and the latter [is called] his father.”²³

Let us not forget that the Church through various generations, since two millennia, has handed down the Bible to us. Besides, in written discourse not only does its original sender disappear in the text, but also its first “receiver” or interlocutor as well as, for the same reason, the horizon of the original discourse: current addressees (or readers) receiving the message have another “world” of interests, concerns, culture and so on. The change of addressee is more important in the case of religious texts, mythical or not, for these claim ongoing meaning and validity for centuries, generation after generation. “Any text is open to many readings, none of which repeats another. The greater the distance from the author, the greater the dimensions acquired by the rereading of a text.”²⁴

A text, therefore, does not have a univocal meaning. “Hermeneutical age is one of many meanings.”²⁵ Equivocal meaning is due to the fact of interpretation. This would not necessarily mean that one could make the text say anything according to one’s own likes and dislikes. Nevertheless, the Bible should remain an “open Book,” not only because many Christians read it but also because research scholars are interested in it as it is considered to have contributed to the shaping of the consciousness of the contemporary culture.

The reader therefore has a significant place in the interpretation of a text. “The text grows together with its reader,” says Gregory the great. The more a reader understands the meaning of a text, the more he/she examines his/her own life in the light of the message of the text. In other words, both the reader and the text

continue to grow together. It serves no purpose to believe that one has understood biblical texts, if it does not help the reader change his/her life for the better. Does not Saint John evoke this idea when he says “Those who say ‘I love God’, and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen” (1 Jn. 4, 20)?

There remains another question to be addressed. Is the interpreter conscious of his/her “prejudices,” that can both facilitate understanding and obstruct it as well. Ricœur might illumine us on this point through his dual concept, “to explain” and “to understand.” Both acts of explaining and of understanding, according to him, must go hand in hand so that the “otherness” of the text may surface. In the words of Levinas, “The true relation does not delete the otherness.” Could one wipe out what hinders the understanding of a text, particularly in the context of a faith-reading of the Scripture? Pelletier says that “reading the Bible implies giving consent to listen to the text stating what one hardly or partly knows and even what one does not want to know!”²⁶ The Bible invites the reader to make a centripetal movement of the self and to enter into an experience of becoming stranger to one’s own self. Would not the Bible be, to borrow the image from Pelletier, a new burning bush to which one refuses to come close for fear of getting burnt, or in which one ventures confidently in reverence?

We should first of all underline the relevance of biblical hermeneutics in modernity that calls for disengagement with tradition. Modernity would like to affirm the autonomy of intelligence of an individual who can and must dispense the tradition from the so called objective and scientific intellectual pursuit without which reason can

be endangered. Pelletier's approach to the biblical hermeneutics is therefore both relevant and inspiring. Taking insights from philosophical reflections, she adopts an inter-disciplinary, scientific and systematic approach to help us understand the need of the Tradition in the interpretation of the Scripture. To use the philosophical language of Ricœur, we are "indebted" to the Tradition. Pelletier founds her arguments on a fundamental phenomenological presupposition, that is, meaning is not objectively present in the text but emerges from an encounter between the reader and the text in a given space and time. And, both the reader and the text are part of one Tradition or another.

Our *sitz-im-leben* comprises of three dimensions, namely, anthropological, theological and cosmological. The Bible is the revelation of God to human persons in the world. From this perspective, the content of Pelletier's book deserves appreciation. If God reveals Himself in the Scripture it is because we humans can get to "know" Him. There arises inevitably a philosophical problem, namely, how is it possible for the finite and the infinite to have an encounter? To put it differently, how can the finite human person understand the revelation of the infinite God? We do not enter into the detail and the suitability of this question. Nevertheless, we shall give a brief response from the perspective of Christian Faith. In so far as the human person is created in the image and likeness of God, he/she has the trace of the infinity with himself/herself (a fundamental precept both of Descartes and of Levinas), which make both understanding and non-understanding possible, thus leaving space for the art of interpretation to be at work. Non-understanding, we dare say, is the condition of the possibility of understanding.

Language is what makes a person human, but it alone cannot make understanding and transmission of a text complete. It hides as much as it reveals, especially emotions cannot be fully expressed by the medium of language. The Bible, while being the revelation of God's plan is also and perhaps even more a revelation of His Love expressed in feeble human language. Hence, the need for rich symbolism in the Bible, that calls for the need of hermeneutics.

If the world is the locus of divine revelation and as a human person is "Being-in-the-world," then the need to understand God's Word in human language demands of us a certain sensitivity to the socio-historical realities of all times, yesterday, today and tomorrow. Pelletier underlines the importance of the socio-historical reality in biblical hermeneutics. In so far as the human person is "Being-in-the-world," he/she is also "Being-with" (*Mitsein* in Heideggerian language) and therefore any interpretation that does not take into account the presence of "others," is not fully receptive to God's revelation, for every human person is created not for himself/herself but to be related to others in love. Whence our claim: God continues to reveal Himself in many other ways even today, though the revelation in the Scripture is normative for us Christians. However, it is imperative that we learn to interpret the divine revelation in the signs of the times with the help of biblical knowledge, and also to understand and appreciate better the Scripture with the help of what is 'revealed' today, here and now.

The tradition therefore has its proper place, playing a positive role in biblical hermeneutics. There is a continuity of the transmission of Faith by the interpretation of a biblical text that a biblical scholar studies scientifically.

As belonging to the Tradition, he/she does not begin his/her study from scratch, from a zero-point, rather he/she confronts the text with what he/she has inherited from the faith tradition, but of course with his/her questions in the present-day context. As Rorty has said, “we cannot step out of our tradition in as much as we cannot step out of our skin,” and it is rightly so because the Tradition does not belong to us, on the contrary, we belong to the Tradition.

The reader is not an isolated individual but one belonging to a community. So he/she shares in the world of meaning of the Tradition to which he/she belongs. His/her “prejudices” are shaped by the Tradition in which he/she is a part. Tradition is not a tangible reality, nevertheless it is ubiquitous. It is not a static reality either; it is dynamic as it forms people and is formed in the process. Belonging to a Tradition, therefore, does not necessarily mean being imprisoned in a petrified Tradition, rather it means keeping alive the Tradition but being cautious at the same time not to interpret the biblical texts without having any historical consciousness of the Faith Tradition to which one belongs. This in no way goes against the possibility of plurality of interpretations, though there is no room for a haphazard interpretation. The Tradition neither constrains us nor does it lock us up in the by-gone past, but what has been passed on to us by the Tradition cannot be ignored in as much as we cannot be silent about our own findings that add up to the Tradition.

We are heirs of a given Tradition and it is our duty to keep it alive in as much as we have to keep God’s Word alive by placing ourselves at the heart both of the Scripture and of the Tradition. Understanding a text is neither to

repeat what the text says nor to confine the meaning to what the interpretative Tradition says, but to go beyond what has been passed on to us, of course not ignoring it. "To understand what a text says could not be reduced to identify its historical referent, to restore the cultural universe which saw the text being born or to explicit the conditions in which it was written."²⁷ Hermeneutics makes the debate on the role and the importance of the Tradition relevant especially since the Bible has been handed down, as a canon of Faith, from one generation to another. The theological Tradition, which is a reflection on and an articulation of the meaning of the Bible, God's Word, is inevitable. We can neither distance ourselves from the tradition, nor can we leave it in the lapse of memory.

Finally, what is Tradition, if not a dynamics of reading and rereading in a given period of history, which would enable the present day reader to understand a biblical passage addressing him/her in his/her day to day life? "Reading is not limited to a passive recognition of a fixed and static meaning. To read is not to repeat an immutable meaning, even if the relation to the text in the context of Faith directs the reader from the very outset towards the mystery of Christ."²⁸ Let us conclude this paper by citing a Hassidic anecdote: "A disciple went to see his master who asked him: 'What did you learn?' The disciple replied: "I went through the Talmud thrice," and the master told him: "But, did the Talmud go through you?"²⁹

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¹ Rudolf Bultmann, "The Problem of Hermeneutics," cited by Paul RICŒUR, *The Symbolism of Evil* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 326-327.

² Anne-Marie Pelletier, *D'âge en âge les Ecritures* (Bruxelles: Lessius, 2004), 161; translation mine.

³ Ibid., 165; translation and emphasis mine.

⁴ « La vérité révélée ne se transforme pas, elle grandit ».

⁵ Pelletier, *D'âge en âge les Ecritures*, 39-40; translation mine.

⁶ Paul Beauchamp, *Parler d'Ecritures saintes*, (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 22; translation mine.

⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Donald G. Marshall (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1979), 315.

⁸ Ibid., 56; translation mine.

⁹ Paul Ricœur, "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics," eds. Charles E. Reagan and David Steward, *The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 154.

¹⁰ Paul Ricœur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 83.

¹¹ See Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative* (vol. 3), trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 168-169.

¹² Ricœur, *From Text to Action*, 88.

¹³ Paul Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory* (Texas: Christian University Press, 1976), 30.

¹⁴ Pelletier, *D'âge en âge les Ecritures*, 163; translation mine.

¹⁵ Ibid., 165; translation mine.

¹⁶ Ibid., 86; translation mine.

¹⁷ Ibid., 95; translation mine.

¹⁸ Paul Beauchamp, "Accomplir les Ecritures: un chemin de théologie biblique," in *Revue biblique*, 1992, 151; translation mine.

¹⁹ Cited by Charles Bernard, "Symbolisme et conscience affective," in

Gregorianum, 61/3, 1980, 437-438.

²⁰ Pelletier, *D'âge en âge les Ecritures*, 112; translation mine.

²¹ Ibid., 121 ; translation mine.

²² Ibid., 135 ; translation mine.

²³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV, 41, 2; (accessed on February 08, 2010 from the online source <http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-01/anf01-62.htm>).

²⁴ Servino J. Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York/ Orbis, 1987), 19.

²⁵ Pelletier, *D'âge en âge les Ecritures*, 139; translation mine.

²⁶ Ibid., 149; translation mine.

²⁷ Gadamar, *Truth and Method*, 53.

²⁸ Pelletier, *D'âge en âge les Ecritures*, 141; translation mine.

²⁹ Cited by Jean Greisch, *Entendre d'une autre oreille*, (Paris: Bayard, 2006), 293.