

<Report>

**A Case Study of Two French Study or “Discovery”  
Bibles, *La Bible expliquée (BEX)* and *ZeBible*:  
Using a Contemporary Plain Language Translation with  
Abundant Explanatory Material in order to Give New Readers  
and Young People Access to the Bible Text**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. *La Bible expliquée (BEX)* and *ZeBible*: two recent projects of the French speaking Bible Societies that aim to make the Bible accessible to a wider public

The titles of the two recent study or “discovery” Bibles express their intention. *La Bible expliquée (BEX)* means *The Explained Bible*, and this is what it seeks to do - explain the Bible text to the non-initiated. As for *ZeBible*, “Ze” is the French pronunciation of “the” in English, often used with emphasis to mean “the best”: it is French youth language, and shows that it is *the* Bible for young people.

At the outset of this presentation, it is important to put the development of these two new Bible products into the context of the mission and ministry of

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Read and approved by Elsbeth Scherrer, Head of Global Publishing, UBS, senior editor at the French Bible Society when these Bibles were originally published.

Bible Societies to put readable and understandable Scriptures into the hands of ordinary people. These Bibles are adapted to the particular ministry of the French Bible Society and its partnership with other French speaking Bible Societies.

The aim in the two cases is to make the Bible more widely accessible to modern audiences that do not necessarily have the background knowledge or the contact with competent Bible teachers to be able to understand the nature and the message of the Bible. This is set in the context of increasing secularisation in the French speaking western world, with a growing proportion of the population having very little Christian education and contact with the church as an institution. However, that is not to say that there is no interest in spiritual or faith questions, but the spiritual dimension to life is often cultivated in a more informal and personal way.

In developing these two new discovery Bibles, one for adults and the other for young people, the French Bible Society has worked closely with all its main partners (Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches, Christian organisations, other Bible Societies) and involved a significant number of new partners. This high level of cooperation can be seen as one of the reasons for the success of the projects, particularly for *ZeBible* where a pilot committee is still active in what is an ongoing project. The involvement and approval of the Catholic church authorities is also a key factor in giving credibility to these Bibles and reassurance to new readers in a culture where the Catholic church remains the reference.

The French Bible Society is very aware that the translations and the publications it produces are not only for the French market, which is in itself diversified when taking into consideration the Caribbean and other offshore territories, but also for French speaking Canada, Switzerland and Belgium (a formal partnership “Bibli’O” exists between the Bible Societies from these countries – and also Lebanon), and for French speaking Africa. While these two products are aimed principally at the European and Canadian market, there is an increasing interest in Africa for the *BEX*.

Lastly, the cost of producing these two versions has been borne either by UBS grants (for the *BEX*) or by gifts and specific donations to the French Bible Society (for *ZeBible*), not to mention the voluntary work contributed by the

partners. This is not reflected in the selling prices of the Bibles which are kept deliberately moderate.

## **1.2. The base translation, the Bible in French common language (*BFC*)**

The *BEX* and *ZeBible* add study material to an existing translation, one of the five translations that the French Bible Society has developed. This translation is in plain language, common or “current” French (*La Bible en français “courant” - BFC*). It is the first functional equivalence translation that the French Bible Society undertook: the New Testament was first published in 1971, the whole Bible in 1985 and a revision in 1996 means that the current copyright is dated 1997. This version is tried and tested: it has sold well and gained in popularity, particularly in Catholic circles for schools and catechism classes. The Catholic version benefits from having the *Imprimatur* of the French bishops. However, it has been criticised in some Protestant circles for introducing excessive explanation into its translation and unnecessarily avoiding traditional theological language.

The *BEX* has taken into account some specific criticisms and updated the current language French version at some points. *ZeBible* has adopted this improved version and modified one or two other texts, particularly in Romans 11, in the light of comments received.

It would be fair to add that this common language translation is currently undergoing a complete revision, in line with contemporary trends for the earliest major functional equivalence translations. As well as updating the contemporary language, the intention is:

- To avoid paraphrased explanatory translations by following more closely the Hebrew and Greek text
- To restore some major theological terms (such as “resurrection” and “covenant”)
- To take into consideration the oral quality of the translation for liturgical use

This revised version should be published in 2019 (and should in time be used in future versions of the *BEX* and *ZeBible*).

In the meantime, it is interesting to note that the use of the French common language version in these two discovery Bibles seems to have rejuvenated the translation and changed its perception by certain readers. We suggest that associating this translation with study aids aimed at a clearly identified non-specialist public has clarified the original intention and target group of the translation itself. We will come back to this point at the end of our presentation.

### **1.3. The objectives and target groups of the *BEX* and *ZeBible***

The major aims of these two study Bibles are similar, but not identical. The general idea is to add non-specialist information and advice to help the reader overcome obstacles to understanding the text and to see the relevance of the Bible for everyday living in today's world. The angle of the commentaries is cultural (for the *BEX*) and existential (for *ZeBible*) rather than academic or dogmatic. *ZeBible* seeks to help young readers to find their way around the Bible according to their personal interests by offering different ways of approaching the Bible text. However, in both cases, the short commentaries are respectful of the reader and of the text: they do not seek to impose an interpretation or application, but rather to encourage the reader to think about the text for him or herself.

The target group is modern-day readers from a Christian or non-Christian background who will have particular questions about the Bible which need to be answered in order for him or her to read the Bible more openly, more confidently, more spiritually. These Bibles also take into consideration the contemporary demand for readily available supplementary information, otherwise provided by Internet.

#### **1.3.1. The *BEX***

The *BEX* tries to answer very basic questions such as:

Where does the Bible come from? Who wrote it and when was it written? Why are there two parts in the Bible? How can one deal with violent or shocking texts? How can we read the Bible when there are so many different interpretations – how can we avoid false interpretations? Can only believers read the Bible? To what extent is the Bible the foundation of modern culture?

On the back cover, the *BEX* claims to answer these questions. Its original

explanations are addressed to all readers in order to help them read the Bible for themselves, in a way that respects the text’s original intention, and to draw their own conclusions about its message. They allow the reader who is unfamiliar with the Bible to:

- Put the Bible texts into their historical and religious context
- Focus on the central message of the text
- Reflect on ways in which the Bible text is relevant to modern day issues
- Appreciate the spiritual quality of the Bible text

The *BEX* does not dictate doctrinal or ethical positions, but leaves the reader free to discover the treasures of the Bible for him or herself.

The target readership is made up of:

- Committed churched Christians who want to read the whole Bible
- Unchurched Christians looking for orientation who want to keep in touch with their roots
- Any seeker and enquiring mind who wants to discover the Bible as a spiritual heritage of Humanity

The *BEX* claims to be a reference book you need to have in your personal library, along with dictionaries or encyclopaedias, in order to access the artistic and cultural heritage of the Bible, and to understand the basics of the three monotheistic religions. In this regard, it is interesting to note the links between the *BEX* and the Exhibition produced by the French Bible Society, and launched at the UNESCO headquarters, “The Bible, a cultural heritage for Humanity”.

### **1.3.2. *ZeBible***

The aim of *ZeBible* is to take into account the difficulty that young people have in understanding and appreciating the relevance of the Bible today. Exposure to the Bible’s stories and background context is extremely limited in their general education and even in some church environments. This makes the Bible seem intriguing, even awe-inspiring, but inaccessible. Feeling able to read it for one’s self, knowing how to read it, knowing what to look out for and how

to handle the cultural distance that separates us from the biblical world, is not obvious for the average French teenager or young adult. People familiar with the Bible may think it is easy to find one's way in the Bible and to arrive at passages that speak profoundly to us, but experience suggests that for today's young people, it is not at all natural.

However, it is not detailed factual information about the Bible that young people are interested in, but the relevance of its message for their lives. How can Bible experts help young people make sense of the Bible without betraying its original intention? They must take into account their education, their way of learning and how they are exposed to new ideas. They also need to realise that certain passages will shock or revolt young people, while historical or cultural details will leave them indifferent.

Bible Society editions of the Bible typically allow the text to determine the meaning, and do not give the reader moral or doctrinal interpretations. The question is then how to make the Bible relevant to the lives of young people without moralising or catechising them!

The target group for *ZeBible* was defined as following:

- Young people from 15 upwards, with average to good reading and general education standards, capable of deciphering a literary text in the course of their studies
- Young people with a notional Christian upbringing, but not necessarily with any regular church-going or confessional identity
- His or her Bible knowledge is virtually zero, with just a few notions acquired at church or at school
- She or he is curious and interested and open to new ideas and aware of the cultural importance of the Bible
- Young people becoming independent, preoccupied by questions of identity, meaning, values, justice, tolerance, authenticity and love

It is clear, however, that the motivation of the partners involved in this project is over and beyond helping young people to enjoy a cultural or educational experience. The desire is to see young people meet with God as they read and discover the Bible. A short introduction to the reader ends with this message: "The Bible, the Word of God for believers, is a place where we can meet God.

This meeting point changes our life and renews our intelligence. It is also a place to meet with and exchange with other readers.”

## 2. Presentation of the published Bibles

The aims of these two Bibles and their target audiences have determined the presentation of the published editions. This also takes into account the importance of the style of the Bible as a book-object in conveying to potential readers its nature and aims. The editorial choices seek to create the idea that the Bible is a quality product, but that it does not have to have a “religious” style and can therefore be opened and read as any other good book. The margins leave space for the reader to add his or her personal notes. For both the *BEX* and *ZeBible*, there is only one cover design available, with a coloured paper jacket, so as to be easily identifiable and to create a brand design. The paper jacket can be taken off, to reveal a more sober cover, but on which the title is embossed.

Both Bibles are printed in two colours to give a modern look to the Bible and enable the reader to distinguish between the Bible text and the commentaries. Both the *BEX* and *ZeBible* present the Bible text in one wide column and the commentaries in a second narrower column on the outer side. Each short commentary, or notice, has a title and the chapter and verse references to which it relates. There are no extra technical footnotes or cross references.

**2.1.** The *BEX* adds very little else to these short commentaries, apart from a Preface that explains the reason and philosophy of the *BEX* and an eight page Introduction to the Bible entitled “The Bible, an exceptional book”. This presents the contents and the origin of the Bible and concludes with the question: “How and why should we read the Bible?”.

The short introductions to each Bible book are more or less those of the base translation, the French common language version, with one or two extra paragraphs here and there to stress the present day use and relevance of the book. This is also the case for the glossary, where one or two additions have been made to the entries of the French common language version, but these are very largely reproduced.

The *BEX* exists in a Protestant version and a Catholic version with the deuterocanonical books integrated (sold at the same price). The Catholic version has the *Imprimatur* of the Canadian bishops for the commentaries (and the French common language translation the *Imprimatur* of the French bishops).

**2.2** The *ZeBible* column commentaries, or notices, are not at all those of the *BEX* – they were written specifically for young people according to the following criteria:

- To clarify the text’s meaning
- To help readers questioning their own identity and their relationship with other people, with the world, and with God
- To create an interaction with the text, encouraging the young person to read and reread it with specific questions in mind

To these short commentaries, *ZeBible* adds a wealth of extra material. In the Bible text itself there are also boxed features introducing the main characters (Abraham, Joseph, Thomas, Nicodemus...), maps, geographical items and genealogies, all designed to clarify the text. Certain verses are quoted in speech bubbles to bring the reader’s attention back to the text.

The introductions to each Bible book have all been written specifically for young people, with varied red and black typesetting features for presenting “Content”, “Author”, “Themes”, “Plan”, etc. The introductions always begin by answering in three or four lines the question: why read this book?

To this is added at the front a short guide “How to find your way around the Bible” and a long section “Tools for reading the Bible” composed of the following elements:

- Welcome to the world of the Bible
- How to read the Bible
- An overview of the Bible
- The Covenant – a contract between God and Humanity
- Historical, geographical and sociological contexts
- The canon – a list of Bible books
- Inspiration – who wrote the Bible?



- Bible languages – Hebrew, Aramean and Greek
- Transmission of Bible texts – copies and manuscripts
- Translating the Bible
- Literary genres – how to respect the meaning of a text
- Reading programmes – 5 programmes based on Christian festivals, 10 programmes about the basics (People matter, the Holy Spirit at work, Wisdom a-b-c, Social justice, Landmarks for living, Joining God’s project, Responding to God’s call, a Dialogue with God, Alone or together, the God of many faces) and 9 programmes about Journeys in the Bible
- Thematic reading suggestions (with intriguing titles and associated graphics), developed in consultation with a specialist in young people’s psychology – Love, Prayer, Forgiveness, Personal identity, a God who saves, a God who seems absent, Meaning in life, Ecology, Doubt and Faith, Strength and Weakness, being True, the End of the World, Violence, Faithfulness, Wars and Peace, Family, the Spirit of the Law, Death, room for the Stranger, Suffering, Truth and Freedom, Fear, Real power, being Human, Choice and Responsibility, Evil, Me from God’s point of view, Happiness, Generosity, God’s different names, Relationships and Sexuality, the Supernatural, Loneliness, Women in the Bible
- A list of “Not to be missed” texts in the Bible
- A list of “Where to find help in the Bible when I am...” afraid, worried, etc.

At the back of the Bible the reader can find several indexes, a glossary, a chronological table and maps.

*ZeBible* exists in one inter-confessional version: it follows the Hebrew canon and adds the Catholic deuterocanonical books grouped together at the end of the Old Testament. This arrangement follows the precedent of the well-known and widely used and accepted French Ecumenical translation, *Traduction Oeuménique de la Bible (TOB)*, first published in 1975.

### **3. Working principles**

In line with general Bible Society principles, these two study or discovery Bible projects were conducted on an inter-confessional basis with a large

number of contributors representing many different churches. The content of the short commentaries is unashamedly Christian, but non-confessional.

### **3.1. Contributors and validation process for the *BEX***

The *BEX* Project was notably international, with over eighty authors from France, Canada and Africa. The Canadian input was particularly significant, with four members of the editorial committee living and working in Canada.

To respect the inter-confessional character of the project, the authors worked in pairs, each coming from a different background. The commentaries were then read by a committee of three — a Catholic, a mainline Protestant and an Evangelical. The editorial committee was also made up of Christians from very different backgrounds. The *BEX* project also made a particular effort to take into consideration the Jewish perspective on the Bible text.

### **3.2. The *ZeBible* committee**

The initial writing of the extra material followed similar principles to the *BEX*, but the teams were not only inter-confessional, but were made up of a biblical scholar and a person involved in youth work, in regular contact with the target reader.

The authors involved in the *ZeBible* project were mainly from France itself. It is a Bible product specifically adapted to the French market and French young people. This more local character might explain the very extensive and ongoing partnership involved in *ZeBible*. It is a notable feature of this project, and probably a reason for its success, that the French Bible Society is only one of a number of active partners. These partners are institutional, but have been represented by very motivated and engaged individuals. These partners include the Orthodox churches of France, Reformed and Lutheran churches, the Adventist churches, the Catholic school chaplaincy service, the Franciscan communities, several Christian Scout and Guide movements, the Salvation Army, Alpha Courses, Scripture Union and several associations working with young people.

The initial funding of the project was even wider, with financial and wider support contributions from several Protestant and Catholic foundations and from

the Scottish, Irish, Australian and British Bible Societies.

When launched, *ZeBible* received the formal support of the Council of Christian churches in France, the major ecumenical body, representing the Catholic and Orthodox bishops, the French Protestant Federation, the Evangelical council of all the main churches present in France. Various well known personalities, music bands and businesses also lent their support to the venture.

However, what is very original to this project is the ambitious ongoing follow up and presence of *ZeBible* on the social media. The aim has been to encourage young people to share with one another their questions and discoveries about the Bible. The basic assumptions are that young people read a lot, but differently, that they look for answers to existential questions by communicating between themselves, and that they are more interested in spirituality than in organised religion. The Internet site (<http://zebible.com>), Facebook page (<https://fr-fr.facebook.com/zebible>) and Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/ZeBible/>) publish very regularly stylish “cards” designed by a Christian marketing firm to illustrate Bible verses. These can be printed, shared or “liked”. A Web-series of short films set in a High school was also developed and Bible study materials based on the questions raised in the films are available on the Internet site for use by youth groups. Currently, short videos illustrating Bible verses are being put on-line. The ideas, the specific projects and the relatively high budget and fund raising are all decided by the *ZeBible* committee partners together.

This partnership encourages “ownership” of *ZeBible* in many different Christian circles, notably for youth leaders and teachers, and the use of social media means that *ZeBible* has become a recognised and sought-after product, sold in High street bookshops, selling well over 100,000 copies since it was launched in 2011.

#### **4. Examples of commentaries from the *BEX* and *ZeBible***

In the following table are reproduced and translated the French common language version (in the central column) of the Bible text and the short commentaries of the *BEX* (left) and *ZeBible* (right). The layout is similar to the printed Bibles. Two extracts are proposed, Joshua 1:1-9 and Matthew 9:32-38.

Table 1. Translation of the French *BFC* text and the notes of the *BEX* and *ZeBible*

The Explained Bible ( <i>BEX</i> )	French common language Bible text ( <i>BFC</i> )	<i>ZeBible</i>
<b>Joshua 1:1-9</b>		
<p><i>Introduction to Joshua</i> ... <i>In giving to his people a land, God keeps the promises he made to the Israelites' ancestors and which he renewed to Moses. In the history of the relationship between God and Israel, the conquest of Canaan fulfils a similar role to the Exodus from Egypt: God intervenes in the people's destiny and fights at their side, bringing them success and victory...</i></p> <p><b>Be courageous and keep the Law! (1:6-9)</b> The words of encouragement to be strong, repeated four times (vv. 6, 7, 9, 18), are not first and foremost related to the portrait of Joshua as a military chief but as a</p>	<p><b>Joshua succeeds to Moses</b> <sup>1</sup>Moses, the Lord's servant was dead. So the Lord said to Joshua, son of Nun, Moses' helper: <sup>2</sup>“My servant Moses is dead. Now it is up to you to cross the River Jordan with all the people and enter the land that I am giving the Israelites. <sup>3</sup>As I promised Moses, every place that you walk over, I will give it to you as your property. <sup>4</sup>From South to North, your territory will stretch from the desert to the mountains of Lebanon. From East to West, it will go from the Euphrates, the Great River, to the Mediterranean Sea, including the Hittite country. <sup>5</sup>All through your life, no-one will be able to defeat you because I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. I will never abandon you, I will never leave you without help. <sup>6</sup>Be courageous and strong, because it is up to you to give to the people this land that I promised to their ancestors. <sup>7</sup>You will just need to be courageous and strong and to put into practice all of the Law that Moses passed on to you: never depart from it, and you will succeed</p>	<p><b>A promise is a promise! (1:3)</b> Settling in the land will fulfil the promise God made to Abraham. Just as he promised, God will give this land. We can always count on God's word. He will always do what he has promised. He remembers his promises and doesn't need to note them in his diary!</p> <p><b>I will never abandon you, I will never leave you without help. (1:5)</b></p> <p><b>The Key to success 1:6-9</b> God directs the operations, but Joshua mustn't stand by and wait for God to do everything. God gives him advice about how to succeed – trust God and do what he says.</p>

<p>man who will live according to God’s Law, passed on by Moses. Listening and putting in to practice God’s word will bring him strength and victory. The same recommendations are made to a King in Deuteronomy 17:16-20.</p>	<p>in everything you undertake. <sup>8</sup>Repeat all the time the teachings in the Book of the Law, meditate on them day and night so that you will do everything that is written. Then you will accomplish your projects and they will succeed. <sup>9</sup>Do not forget that I have told you to be courageous and strong. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, because I, the Lord your God, will be with you wherever you go”.</p>	<p>He repeats: “Be courageous and strong”. In the Bible, success is when God’s plans are fulfilled. When God gives someone a mission, he always helps and sustains them by his presence: “I will be with you wherever you go”.</p>
<p><b>Matthew 9:32-38</b></p>		
<p><b>Two reactions: joy or blindness (9:32-38)</b>          Jesus’s exceptional personality drew out contrasted reactions. Witnessing Jesus’s kindness towards sick and unhappy people, the crowds recognize the novelty of his ministry and renewal that it brings. But some religious leaders, blinded by their opposition to Jesus’s ministry, proffer insinuations and unfounded accusations. Jesus calls those who believe in him to engage in the work in the large field of the world so that the greatest number of people can hear the</p>	<p><b>Jesus heals a man unable to speak</b>  <sup>32</sup>As they were leaving, people brought to Jesus a man unable to speak because he was possessed by an evil spirit. <sup>33</sup>As soon as Jesus had driven out the evil spirit, the man began to talk. In the crowd, people were amazed and said: “We have never seen anything like this in Israel!” <sup>34</sup>But the Pharisees stated clearly: It’s the chief of evil spirits who gives him the power to drive out spirits!”.</p> <p><b>Jesus has pity on the crowds</b>  <sup>35</sup>Jesus toured the villages and towns; he taught in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom and healing all sicknesses and handicaps. <sup>36</sup>His heart was full of pity for the crowds he saw because these people</p>	<p><b>Exorcism or healing? (9:32-34)</b>          In Jesus’ day, people thought that mental illnesses and other affections like epilepsy were due to possession by a demon. At other periods, people spoke of insanity. The two terms, possession and insanity, express the idea that the person affected has lost the control of his life. By his miracles, Jesus restores people’s physical and mental wholeness and their dignity. It is always a moment of liberation and restoration.</p>

<p>Good News of liberation.</p>	<p>were tired and discouraged, like a flock without a shepherd.  <sup>37</sup>He said to his disciples: “The harvest is great, but there are few workers to bring it in. <sup>38</sup>Pray to the owner of the harvest to send out more workers to do this.</p>	<p><b>Pray to the owner of the harvest to send out more workers to do this. (9:38)</b></p>
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These examples make it clear that the *BEX* and *ZeBible* do not necessarily choose to comment the same verses. This reminds us that there is always a choice involved in selecting the verses that seem to make a point relevant to 21st century life or that will lead the reader to reflect on the spiritual value of the text. Other points of interest are left aside. These choices are made by the editorial teams and it is their inter-confessional character which reduces the subjectivism of the choices made. We can also note that the need to select the parts of the biblical text that receive a commentary is dictated by the space available for the commentaries, next to the text, which, unlike a footnote system, is fixed.

With the above examples, it would be difficult to conclude as to the difference in orientation of the commentaries. The first two from *ZeBible* are pastoral and highlight aspects of our relationship with God. But the third, on healing or exorcism, deals with a possible objection that a young person might bring up when reading Matthew 9:32-34.

We could conclude that the *BEX* contains more cross references and background information, and this is probably true on the whole, but the second commentary on Matthew 9:32-38 gently proposes to the reader that his reaction to Jesus is significant and engaging.

### **5. The interaction between the Bible translation in French common language and the objectives and presentation of the *BEX* and *ZeBible***

As we have already stated, the translation of the Bible chosen for these two Bible discovery projects was the French common language version, the first

functional equivalence translation undertaken by the French Bible Society. There was an alternative available, a more recent functional equivalence translation in fundamental French, dating from 2000, ‘Parole de Vie’(Word of life), with a more limited vocabulary and the extended use of the present tense. The decision to use the older French common language version for the *ZeBible* was the choice of young people consulted by a questionnaire, which reflects its already wide use in schools and youth groups. The young people consulted appreciated its association of easy to read language and serious literary and textual qualities. The *Imprimatur* from the French Catholic bishops was also an important factor (but the ‘Parole de Vie’ version also has the *Imprimatur*).

The circulation of the French common language version has been multiplied by its use by the *BEX* and *ZeBible*, but what is interesting is that the public often see it as new translation, or react to it in a different way. This is particularly true of church leaders and a more informed Christian public who had been reticent about the French common language version in the past.

We have suggested that the use of the French common language version in the *BEX* and *ZeBible* clarifies the original intention of the translation. To develop this point, we propose the following comments:

- The similarity of language level and style between the Bible text and the short commentaries demonstrates that the Bible translation itself is deliberately in an everyday language designed to communicate the Bible text and its message to the “ordinary” non-initiated French reader.
- The non-specialist reference material, particularly of the *BEX*, emphasises the fact that modern readers lack even the basic background information on the Bible’s historical and cultural context and that some explanation in the Bible translation itself is sometimes necessary in order for the text to be understood.
- The concern of *ZeBible* in particular to help young people to connect with reading the Bible, illustrated by the content and the style specially developed for their age-group, interacts with the anxiety that many church leaders have about the transmission of Bible knowledge to the young, and underlines the importance of a common language translation for this age group.
- The existential, spiritual and faith-inspiring commentaries of *ZeBible* show

that the primary concern of the French common language translation was for mission and outreach, to give ordinary people access to the Bible and the Christian message, and not to challenge or change church traditions or theological positions.

- In some cases, the content of the short commentaries, developed by inter-confessional teams, will inform the reader of possible reasons for the French common language translation decisions.

The success of these two study or discovery Bibles also questions the reluctance in some circles to introduce commentaries in the Bible text itself. In the new digital world where information is so freely available, is it better to provide the non-initiated reader with the background knowledge and tools for a reasonable interpretation of the Bible text or to let her or him navigate on her or his own on the Internet?

<Keywords>

Discovery Bible, Youth Bible, cultural information, existential approach, reception.

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Katie Badie  
(French Bible Society)

This article shows the growing importance of publishing Bibles with notes, commentaries and articles that aim to help the unfamiliar reader to understand, read and appreciate the relevance of the Bible. It also suggests that the material added to a translation and its presentation can change the way that particular translation is received.

The two study Bibles, both published by the French Bible Society, are *La Bible expliquée* (“The Bible explained”), or the *BEX*, first published in 2004 and *ZeBible* for young people, first published in 2011.

Both Bibles add short commentaries or notices on the outside margins. The general idea is to add non-specialist information and advice to help the reader overcome obstacles to understanding the text and to see the relevance of the Bible for everyday living in today’s world. The angle of the commentaries is cultural (for the *BEX*) and existential (for *ZeBible*) rather than academic or dogmatic. *ZeBible* seeks to help young readers to find their way around the Bible according to their personal interests by offering different tools for approaching the Bible text. However, in both cases, the short commentaries are respectful of the reader and of the text: they do not seek to impose an interpretation or application, but rather to encourage the reader to think about the text for him or herself.

The article will also highlight the importance of developing the extra-biblical material in mixed confession working groups and, for the case of *ZeBible*, the concept of ongoing partnerships and the use of social media to accompany the published Bible.