

Seventy Years of My Reading the Bible

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Sedemdesiat rokov môjho čítania Bibliie

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I was born into a poor family of peasants and workers in a small village called Igram, Western Slovakia. This village used to be the *villa ioculatorum* ('village of jesters', or 'minstrels') of Bratislava Castle. It was so at least from the 12th or 13th century CE, and very probably even earlier. In the Middle Ages these jesters, musicians, dancers, and narrators of stories used to visit Bratislava Castle, called Poson in those times, to sing and dance in front of the owners or visitors of the castle belonging to Hungarian kings and queens. These people also used to travel from one castle or town to another, to sing about the history of their folk, its heroic deeds and suffering. Very probably they were Slavs and their repertoire might have been connected with the history of the people involved in the battle

near Bratislava on June 5–6 of the year 907, when the Hungarians (Magyars), nomadic people from the steppes beyond the River Volga coming to the plains of Central Europe, defeated the Bavarian army. In that year the Tang dynasty reached the end of its nearly three hundred years of rule over China, and the interregnum of the Five Dynasties began. The causes for these two dramatic events were at least partly similar: the mutually antagonized political powers ruling in then Bavaria, Austria, Bohemia and also Slovakia, and the vehement attack of the Hungarian horsemen accustomed to fighting and looting. If the Chinese needed exactly 200 years until they achieved a united rule under the Song Dynasty (906–1278), originally the Slavs and later the Slovaks in my country needed 1011 years to achieve it! In 1918 Slovaks joined the Czechs in the Czechoslovak Republic.

The new rulers did not like *ioculatores*, especially those who were not of Hungarian origin. These were unlikely sing odes on the victors of the battle near Bratislava. One of the writers and historians, living at the court of one of the four Kings named Bela (we do not know which one of them), wrote in his chronicle *Gesta Hungarorum* (The Deeds of Hungarians), that the »most noble Hungarian nation« (*nobilissima gens Hungariae*) knew its history »from the false stories of the villagers and the babbling songs of the minstrels« (*ex falsis fabulis rusticorum vel a garrulo cantu ioculatorum*).¹ These jesters or minstrels were called *igrici* which is an old Slavic term translated from the German *Spielleute*,² players in English. At the same times the clergy likewise forbade the activities of the minstrels, both Slavic and Hungarian, probably for their songs and the criticism of religious practices, as we know from a decision of the Esztergom (Hungary) synod from the year 1114.³ The *igrici* were usually educated men who had studied theology or other subjects, but for some reasons could not finish their studies. They needed to have some income for living and therefore chose this profession. They wore provocative dresses of vivid colours and attracted the attention of large audiences. They were targets of dislike both of the politicians and the clerics. Igram was the Hungarian name of the original Igrech—as it was used in an old Latin text dating from the year 1244.⁴ This historical document was

1 Anon., *Kronika anonymného notára kráľa Bela*, tr. by Vincent Múcska on the basis of the facsimile entitled *Anonymus Gesta Hungarorum* [Budapest, 1975] (Budmerice: Rak, 2000), 34.

2 *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Slovaciae* [Diplomatic Documents and Letters from the History of Slovakia], 2 vols., ed. by Richard Marsina (Bratislava: Obzor, 1971–85), 50.

3 Milan Pišút, *Dejiny slovenskej literatúry* [A History of Slovak Literature] (Bratislava: Osveta, 1960), 323.

4 *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Slovaciae*, 2: 115.

signed by the King of Hungary Bela IV (1206–1270), brother of Saint Elisabeth (1207–1231), two years after the lost war with Batu Khan (d1255), the grandson of Chinggis Khan (1167–1227). King Bela IV was a better politician than his father King Andrew II (*reg* 1205–1235), but a bad military strategist. Moreover, he met at war with Subotai (Sübetei, d1248), Batu Khan's best general. Bela let the Mongols entice his army, perhaps 100,000 strong, and certainly outnumbering that of Batu Khan led by Subotai as a Commander-in-Chief, into a narrow space at the confluence of the rivers Sajo and Hornad. In the night of April 11, 1241, the Mongol troops at first provoked Bela's knights to attack, then retreated, but other units crossed the river to attack the Hungarian cavalry both from the left and the right. Allegedly 50–70, 000 were butchered during the fight and flight. Only a part of the army, including the King's retinue, saved their souls.⁵ King Bela fled through the whole of South and West Slovakia, asked for asylum in Austria which was not granted, and finally reached Mediterranean islands in Dalmatia. In April 1241, probably some days after the battle of Sajo, the hordes of Orda Khan, older brother of Batu Khan, after the victorious battle of Legnica in Silesia, invaded the territory of Slovakia. Their aim was to unite with the armies led by Subotai and Batu in Hungary. They succeeded in February 1242 when they crossed the frozen Danube River. During about ten months before this they committed robbery and massacred masses of people, mostly in the countryside and in small townships. Especially Western and Southern Slovakia suffered. The suburbs of Bratislava, for instance Vydrica, not far away from the Bratislava Castle, were also destroyed.⁶

Why I am writing about all this? It is because it has some affinities with my life and places where I have lived for decades, and I am still living. Nobody knows about the fate of the *igríci* in my native village. It was only one kilometre from one of the roads leading from the valley of the Váh River to Bratislava. Mongols laid the siege to Trenčín as well as Bratislava Castle without success, but the villages of the valley were in great part destroyed, some of them were never restored again.⁷ The house of my family is situated on the Castle Hill in Bratislava. The Mongols did not siege the walls of Bratislava.

5 Richard A. Gabriel, *Subotai The Valiant. Genghis Khan's Greatest General* (Westport, CT; London: Praeger, 2004), 121–125. All these and other figures in this essay are probably exaggerated.

6 Cf. *Vojenské dejiny Slovenska* [Military History of Slovakia], 6 vols. so far (Bratislava: Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, 1994–2008), 1: 143–145; and Anton Špiesz, *Bratislava v stredoveku* [Bratislava in the Middle Ages] (Bratislava: Perfekt, 2001), 36.

7 *Vojenské dejiny Slovenska*, 1: 145.

Our house is 300 meters from Bratislava Castle. It is possible that Saint Elisabeth was born in this castle, or on another one called Sárosatak in contemporary Hungary. In 1211, at age four, she was betrothed to Louis IV, landgrave of Thuringia in Germany. Bratislava Castle became a *theatrum mundi* for a whole week—to some extent similar to the biblical Cana of Galilee only without Jesus who turned the water into wine there (Joh 2.7–10). It was not necessary. There was enough wine from the vineyards around the town and from the villages under the Lesser Carpathians, and for seven days, the King and Queen of Hungary, Hungarian aristocrats and Slav commoners, enjoyed the knightly tournaments, much singing, dancing, good food and drinks. At that time, Hungary was the most powerful kingdom in Central Europe. Political friendship with a part of Germany was very important. Louis' father Hermann I (1190–1216), was an influential politician, nephew of Frederick I Barbarossa (*ca* 1123–1190) and a friend of the powerful Pope Innocent III (1161–1216). In 1189 Barbarossa visited Bratislava and stayed for a long period, enlisting soldiers for the Third Crusade after Salad-ed-din's (Saladin) victory over the Franks in 1187 and the fall of Jerusalem under Muslim rule. The crusaders from Europe had their meeting point on the southern shore of the Danube on the site of modern Petržalka. Allegedly 150,000 were prepared to go to the Holy Land and liberate it from the hands of the infidels.⁸ This crusade led by the Emperor himself was not very successful. Barbarossa drowned in a river on the way. The crusaders proceeded further led by Richard I Lionheart of England and Philip II of France. At the end Richard remained alone, since Philip II and Leopold V of Austria and even the Hungarian knights returned home. Richard defeated Saladin at least in the last battles, but Jerusalem remained in Muslim hands. Only unarmed Christian pilgrims and merchants were allowed to enter the Holy City.

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The Thuringian prospective parents-in-law of the four years old bride allegedly came with two carts and left with thirteen full of presents.⁹ The destination of the future Saint Elisabeth was Wartburg Castle, the seat of Hermann I, well-known patron of knightly poetry, of the minnesingers, and notably of the *Hobe Minne* at the time flourishing in Germany. The greatest among these poets were Walther von Vogelweide (*ca* 1170–*ca* 1230), Wolfram von Eschenbach (*ca* 1170–

8 Špiesz, *Bratislava v stredoveku*, 34.

9 *Ibid.*, 34–35.

1220) and others. One of them participating at the poetry competition was coming from the Hungary, but he most probably was not from among the *igríci* from Igram. If by chance Hermann I heard songs by the *igríci*, he certainly did not like them. Hermann I was a secular sovereign, but his son and future daughter in law were different. They were pious Christians, and Louis IV participated in the 6th Crusade led by Frederick II (1194–1250), but his army was stricken with plague in 1226 and Louis IV died at Otranto in South Italy. The young Elisabeth devoted herself to helping the ill and poor citizens of the town. She and her three children were expelled from the castle and she died as a widow in Marburg. Very soon she was canonized as a saint in 1235. According to the opinion of one writer, she became the most venerated woman among Roman Catholics after the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ.¹⁰

As a young boy I was living with two saints. One was Saint Elisabeth to whom a late Romanesque and partly early Gothic church was consecrated in Kaplná, a village near Igram. The other was Saint Emeric (*ca* 1005–1031), the son of Saint Stephen (*ca* 975–1038), King of Hungary. Saint Emeric was patron of the Baroque church in Igram from the year 1776. During the mass on Sundays and on Festive days, I stood or kneeled in front of their images behind and over the main altars. Both of them were at least partly dressed in crimson vestures, and looked young and attractive to the audience. The young Emeric was a tall man standing in front of the picture of Saint Mary and the Child with a lily in his hand as a symbol of chastity since he allegedly made such a vow before getting married to a foreign Princess who has remained unknown to posterity. He died aged only 24 years old killed by a wild boar during a hunting expedition. Like Saint Elizabeth, he was educated by the strict Benedictine monk Saint Gerhard. In the case of Saint Elizabeth it was Conrad of Marburg. He was not a monk, but he was even more severe than Gerhard. In 1225 after he came a confessor of the pious Elisabeth, he proceeded with the same rigorous spirit as towards himself and the contemporary heretics, such as the Cathars or Waldenses as a papal inquisitor. On the picture in this church she is painted as a gracious young, slim Lady, with two crowns one on her head and one on the pedestal on her left side. With her right hand she gives alms to two poor beggars. She was different, probably with emaciated face due to fasting, mortification and hard labour. I knew something about Saint Elisabeth, but nothing about Saint Emeric. In my parental home there were no books, in the house of my maternal grandparents

10 Vera Schauber; Hanns Michael Schindler, *Rok se svatými* [A Year with the Saints; *Heilige und Patrone im Jahreslauf*, 1993], tr. by Vojtěch Pola and Terezie Brichtová (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1994), 597.

there were some by the Catholic Saint Adalbert (Vojtěch) Association that appeared with the ecclesiastical *nihil obstat* (i.e. ‘nothing stands in the way’ to be published), and a big illustrated *Bible* from the year 1936. After I had finished the compulsory *ABC*, I found it completely new and fresh on my grandmother’s chest which was the wedding present she received from her parents in 1908. The book was big and heavy and I had to use all my muscles to transfer it to another room where I used to watch grandmother’s methods of preparing food for the household including a total of ten adults and children. The book was illustrated with 240 woodcuts by the German artist Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794–1872) and his friends. Its aim was to instruct the people in »the realm of moral and religious life«. ¹¹

It was a purged edition of the Bible in paraphrases of the biblical texts, prepared for reading purposes of common or not well educated people who could chiefly enjoy the stories from the Old and New Testaments. Some books of the Old Testament, like Leviticus, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, are not mentioned at all, and from Deuteronomy, only last two chapters delineating the death of Moses. Since it was written and illustrated for Roman Catholics, much space was devoted to the Books of the Apocrypha, like The Second Book of Esdras, Judith, The First and The Second Book of Maccabees, Susanna and Tobit. I was enthralled by nearly all these stories, and I believed them fully. I liked the offering of Abel and was unhappy that Cain killed him. Noah’s story was one of the longest and most beautiful in the Old Testament and I enjoyed it, too. I did not know, of course, that it was much indebted to its Mesopotamian source. ¹² Reading it, I knew a mythical source of the origin of planting grapevines: »He planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and became drunk.« We had a small vineyard behind our house. I helped my parents to work in it. I liked some other stories from Genesis, Exodus and Joshua. For instance, in Gen 15.5 we may read the promise of God to Abram: »Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.«

As a young boy I read these words and I looked at the accompanying picture, probably one year before the Holocaust. I believed them. Millions of the descendants of Abram (later called Abraham which means a ‘father of multi-

11 Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, »Betrachtungen über den Beruf und die Mittel der bildenden Künste«, in *Die Bibel in Bildern* (Dortmund: Harenberg Kommunikation, 1983). It is a reprint of the first edition from the years 1852–60.

12 Andrew R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic. Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 700–725.

tude') died in the Nazi concentrations camps, and all my countrymen, including me, a small child, knew about it. Another story from the Genesis attracted my attention: Jacob's dream about the ladder leading to heaven. He dreamed that

a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, »I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.« (Gen 28.12-14)

What really happened was the dispersion of the descendants of Hebrews into the whole world after the Roman occupation. I liked to read the stories of the conquest of Canaan in the book of Joshua full of human corpses, men, women, children killed by the swords of the Hebrew men of war in Jericho, after its siege when their soldiers »utterly destroyed all that *was* in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and the ass, with the edge of the sword.« (Jos 6.21) Only Rahab the harlot did not die, since she had helped the Hebrew spies, and »all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron« (Jos 6.19), remained consecrated to the Lord and came into His treasury. For some reasons, as a young boy full of belief in biblical words and also probably because of the 'call to arms' around me during World War II, I enjoyed this reading and fully agreed with the expurgated and distorted version of our family Bible where I read in the content of Joshua, ch. 10: »Military fortune of the Chosen People brought fear and horror into the pagan countries.« I read the scenes of the battle against the Amorites during the first years of the war of German Nazis against the Soviet Union. According to the Bible God fought with Israelites against the Amorites with hailstones falling from heaven and the Sun and Moon obeyed the order of Joshua: »Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people avenged themselves upon their enemies« (Jos 10.12-13).

The great stones from heaven killing the Amorites were certainly an invention of the Deuteronomistic historians, and Joshua's words a wonderful rhetorical device. Where Jericho is concerned, archaeological finds show that it in Joshua's era it does not seem to have been occupied at all.¹³ The conquest of

13 Neil Asher Silberman, »Digging in the Land of the Bible«, in *Secrets of the Bible* (New York; London: Hatherleigh Press, 2004), 54. See also the more extensive analysis in the book by Richard A. Gabriel, *The Military History of Ancient Israel* (Westport, CT; London: Praeger, 2003), 131-133.

the Canaanite cities such as Ai, Gibeon, Makkedah, Lachish, Eglon, etc., in a quick succession is questionable, and its nature, too.¹⁴ We should much more believe to biblical archaeology than in biblical historiography. Too much inhuman and averse is ascribed by the ancient Hebrew historians to *yahwi saba'ot*, *Dominus Deus Sabaoth*, the Lord God of Hosts.¹⁵

3

It took me decades to understand why I enjoyed reading the Bible. Only after studying the works by some excellent scholars on the Bible as literature, like Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (1981), his *The World of Biblical Literature* (1992), his and Frank Kermode's *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (1997), Shimon Bar-Efrat's *Narrative Art in the Bible* (1998), the extensive volume by Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative. Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (1985), and some historical works like Moshe Weinfeld's *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (1992), John van Seters' *In Search of History. Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (1983), Baruch Halpern's *The Emergence of Israel in Canaan* (1983), and among others also the recent book by Thomas C. Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (2005), I understood that the beauty and value of the books is in their literary, and less in their historical parts. Because the Deuteronomistic histories from Exodus to Kings I and Kings II were written or canonized after the Babylonian captivity in 586 BCE, the historical parts, when reading them, made an impression on me not because they were truthful, but because they were well written. In the books just mentioned, it is possible to find proofs for this assertion. The historical parts could not be truthful because they were written according to the demands of theocracy, written often more than one millennium or some hundred years after the depicted facts really happened. These historical parts started with Moses' last speech to the people of Israel in the wilderness of the plain over the Red Sea: »Behold, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.« And further: »The LORD your God hath

14 Neil Asher Silberman, »Who Were the Israelites?«, in *Secrets of the Bible*, 38. Cf. also Gabriel, *The Military History of Ancient Israel*, 143–147.

15 Peter Partner, *God of Battles. Holy Wars of Christianity and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 4–8.

multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude« (Deut 1.8 and 10).

The Deuteronomistic history ended with the fall of Jerusalem and the second deportation. In the 9th year of reign of Zedekiah, King of Judah, he was taken into captivity, his sons slain, his eyes put out and the 'eternal' Davidic dynasty ended.

It was mainly the art of storytelling that enthralled me when reading the stories contained in the Deuteronomistic books of the Bible. Biblical historiography was, of course, influenced by ideological factors as formulated in the Deuteronomy, but this particular art played an »important part in the interaction between writer and readers, and it is natural that historians who wish to influence, persuade and attract their readers find themselves, deliberately or not, employing literary methods«. ¹⁶ Nothing similar was known before scholarship of the last hundred years, and in the Biblical studies it started only around the 1960s with Gunkel's *The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History* (English version in 1964) and in Martin Buber's *Schriften zur Bibel*, also in 1964. Some of the essays and books after Alter's *The Art of Biblical Literature* meant a revelation for me. I shall talk about it later.

In my childhood, I liked the Books of the Apocrypha, too—not all, but Judith, Susanna, Tobit and especially the first part of the Books of Maccabees. Although Judith is a completely fictional character in historical attire, I believed in her heroic spirit, in her love for her town and people which possibly never existed since Bethulia, a town where Judith lived and where she accomplished her heroic deed, has never been identified. During the siege of the town by Holofernes, a possibly fictional general of Nebuchadnezzar, Judith, the pious widow, believed to have said in front of Holofernes, together with one of the characters from her story (Achior) that »if there is no transgression in their [i.e. Israelite] nation, then let my lord pass them by; for their Lord will defend them, and their God will protect them, and we shall be put to shame before the whole world.« ¹⁷ To a great extent, the story is childish, but especially for a not very educated reader as I certainly was when eight or nine years old, very attractive. According to *The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, Holofernes' »whole army, and all the allies who had joined him, to break camp and move against

¹⁶ Yairah Amit, *History and Ideology. Introduction to Historiography in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 108.

¹⁷ Judith 5.21, quoted from *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament. Revised Standard Version*, ed. by Bruce M. Metzger (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Bethulia« was »one hundred and seventy thousand infantry and twelve thousand cavalry« (Judith 7.1–2). In my family Bible the translator or editor it changed into one hundred twenty thousand infantry and twenty two thousand cavalry. This was, of course, nonsense for the Near East in the 7th c. BCE. Judith as a chaste Hebrew woman is presented as more saintly in our family Bible than in the cited English *Revised Standard Version* translation.

There is no trace of the words describing how »Holofernes' heart was ravished with her and he was moved with great desire to possess her; for he had been waiting for an opportunity to deceive her, ever since the day he first saw her« (Judith 12.16). Severing his head from his body was an act that could be and was admired by many readers and famous painters,¹⁸ but impossible to accomplish under the normal conditions in the highest positions in the armies or kingdoms. High officials of the state were always guarded by their servants, and women by their eunuchs. The outcome of Judith's action, namely hanging the head of Holofernes on the wall of the town is likewise improbable, as is the flight of the Assyrian army. Here the writer probably followed the death of King Saul and the hanging of his dead body by the victorious Philistines on the wall of the town of Beth Shean (1 Sam 31.10). The flight of the whole army was similar to that after the fight of David with Goliath. After striking the champion of the Philistines on his forehead and cutting off his head, David incited the men of Israel and Judah so that they »with shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron« (1 Sam 17.53), the territories of their enemies. Plundering of the camp is not mentioned in our family Bible, and neither is Judith's reward for her heroic deed: a tenth of Holofernes belongings, his silver dishes, his beds, bowls and all furniture. Later she dedicated a part of this booty to God, in the First Temple built by King Solomon.

Tobit is located in the Assyrian capital Niniveh, where the people of Northern Israel were taken as captives in the 8th c. BCE, was another story I appreciated much. The protagonists were two young people, pious and innocent—Tobias and Sarah, but they could not marry, because an evil demon Asmodeus killed seven of Sarah's *fiancés* during their wedding nights. The angel Raphael came to Tobias' rescue, and Asmodeus »fled to the remotest parts of Egypt and the angel bound him« (Tobit 8.3). I liked this story and felt pity with Sarah and a joy over the lucky fate of Tobias. Always having in my hands the

18 See an essay by Mary Jacobus, »Judith, Holofernes, and the Phallic Woman«, in her *Reading Woman. Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 111–136, written from a Freudian point of view and bringing the photos of some famous artists, of which Artemisia Gentileschi's *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (ca 1615–20) is probably the most cruel.

family Bible, even when reading the short content of this story, I tried not to look at the disgusting picture of Asmodeus being carried off by Raphael from their wedding bed.

I was even more enthralled when reading the stories concerned with Judas Maccabeus from The First Book of Maccabees, especially the one describing the battle of Emmaus (not the Emmaus from the Gospel by Luke, 24.13) which was about 25 miles west of Jerusalem where according to our family Bible 40,000 infantry and 7,000 cavalry were sent to Judah by the Seleucid king to plunder the country. Judah Maccabeus allegedly defeated the enemy army with only 3,000 men. The translator or editor overlooked that the Seleucids fought against the Israelites with five thousand infantry and a thousand cavalry only (Macc 4.1-2). Or was it his intention to show the power of God in military matters? As in the short speech by Judas Maccabeus to the men of Judah:

Do not fear their numbers or be afraid when they charge. Remember how our fathers were saved at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh with his forces pursued them. And now let us cry to Heaven, to see whether he will favour us and remember his covenant with our fathers and crush this army before us today. Then all the Gentiles will know that there is one who redeems and saves Israel (Macc 4.8-11).

On September 25, 2011, I had the opportunity to have, with Professor Benjamin C. Kedar of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, a look from the slopes east of present-day Modi'in at the possible battle-field described in ch. 4 of the First Book. From the panorama we had before us, it was plausible to conclude that the Seleucid soldiers were attacked unexpectedly by the Israelites coming from the narrow pass with trees. The enemies probably could not form their phalanxes or even start fighting. The message in our family Bible thus was completely misleading and not truthful.

4

Since many Christians do not regard *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament* as parts of the Bible, we may now return back to the Judges, Samuel 1 and 2, and Kings 1 and 2, as the most important historical books of the Bible.

Among the many stories from Judges, the most interesting for me and probably for many children of my age, were Samson's heroic deeds and tragic death, depicted in ch. 13.1-16 and 31. Samson was the last of the 13 Judges of the twelve tribes of Israel and Judah. They were not tribal, but national leaders. Most of them tried to follow the instructions of Deuteronomy, especially ch. 28.1:

And if you obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all commandments which I command you this day, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the world.

He was certainly not very ideal among them because he did not care much for the tribal or national interest, he was egocentric, selfish, but from the literary point of view most colourful. He was also not a pure Israelite construct, but to some extent a literary loan from Mesopotamia, similarly to Noah's Great Flood and his arc from the epic *Gilgamesh* and his main hero. Biblical scholars usually deny this impact, but it is possible. The well-known hero Gilgamesh was the 5th King of the First Dynasty of the City of Uruk (late 27th and early 26th c. BCE) and he became a main protagonist of the epic named after him. The originally Sumerian literary work is known best from its Akkadian version from later Neo-Assyrian version. Uruk as Erech is mentioned in Gen 10.10 and was not far from the City of Ur mentioned there as the place from which Abraham (at that time called Abram) started his wanderings to Haran in northern Mesopotamia, to Egypt and back to Canaan. The impact of Mesopotamian literature is possible, and also the on of the best experts on Samson and Delilah, James L. Crenshaw, does not fully negate this influence.¹⁹ According to my own reasoning, it was probably the fact that both Gilgamesh and Samson were men of highest positions, one in his City and the other in the territories of Israel and Judah as the 12th among 15 Judges between Joshua and King Saul. Enkidu, first an enemy and then the friend of Gilgamesh, was a customer to the harlot Šamchat who tried to 'civilize' him for living in the cultured world. Gilgamesh had also some experiences with the goddess of love Inanna (venerated in Sumer) and Ishtar (in Akkadian) mythology. If Gilgamesh rejected her love, Samson was enthralled by Delilah and found betrayal in her embrace.

The name Samson (in Hebrew *Šimšōn*) comes from *šemeš* which means 'sun'. He was born after an apparition »by the angel of the LORD« (Judges 13.3) to his mother, near the village of Beth Shemesh ('The House of Sun') in Zorah on the other side of the Valley of Sorek. It was situated only two or three kilometres from the water reservoir in the northern part of Beth Shemesh.²⁰ Samson means

19 James L. Crenshaw, *Samson. A Secret Betrayed, a Vow Ignored* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1978), esp. 17–19. For the influence of Mesopotamian art on Samson, see R. Mayer-Opificius, »Simson, der sechshockige Held?«, *Ugarit-Forschungen* 14. (1982), 149–151.

20 I visited this place on April 7, 2009, with the colleagues from the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research under the guidance of Dr. G. Barkay. Since the Zorah was situated just opposite Beth Shemesh, Samson had to descend from the hills to the valley on his escapades with foreign Philistine women in Timnah or Gaza.

'small sun'. His hairs were like the sun's rays and the strength of his muscles enormous. He was certainly part of the solar myth connected with Shamash, the Semitic god of the sun, originally named Utu by Sumerians. Like Shamash, also a god of justice who allegedly gave to King Hammurabi the famous code of laws,²¹ Samson was a judge, the highest in the country. His responsibility was to provide »for all events a moral and theological interpretation«. ²² Certainly Samson was not an ideal judge. In all his deeds there were no genuine religious concerns.

The first story in our family Bible depicted his victory over a young lion, possibly another loan from the *Gilgamesh* epic. We may see Gilgamesh fighting with a lion on the transfer of a seal from the 24th c. BCE in the British Museum. All his other heroic deeds, all unbelievable—except for children like me or those who believe in everything written in the Bible—nevertheless have great value as outstanding works of narrative literature. The two last tragic acts: the betrayal by Delilah and Samson's death in the Philistine temple were the inspirations for many works of literature and art.²³

Among the stories from the two Books of Samuel and the First of Kings, I was most enthralled by those about King David. His son Solomon did not find my sympathy so much, because when he became old »his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father« (1 Kings 11.4). In my childhood, I did not like anything connected to pagan beliefs, I did not like the worshippers of foreign faiths, although there were sympathetic features in some gods or goddesses of other nations, like Ashtoreth, the Hebrew word for Astarte, goddess of fertility and love, to some extent similar to Shulamite from the Song of Songs, a paradigmatic example of love between the sexes and one of the most beautiful love poems in World Literature. The same could be said about Dummuḫi, the Sumerian name for Hebrew »Tammuz«, the husband of Ishtar (likewise Astarte or Inanna), at first a shepherd, later a dying and resurrected god venerated also in Jerusalem (Ez 8.14).

I read with interest the stories about David as a great warrior and individual fighter. I will mention here briefly the words of Goliath to young David and David's reply, which I knew by heart when I was about nine or ten years old:

21 See fragment of the stele in the Louvre from the 18th c. BCE with Shamash presenting the code to Hammurabi. It is one of the most important legal documents in world history.

22 See Introduction to the Book of Judges in *The Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha*, 293.

23 See Madlyn Kahr, »Delilah«, in *Feminism and Art History*, ed. by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 119–145.

And the Philistine said to David, *Am* I a dog that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field. Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied (1 Sam 17.43–45).

And David slung a stone, struck Goliath on his forehead and killed him with the enemy's sword. My interest in David's mighty men was, of course, understandable when reading about all David's victories in many battles. Our family Bible mentions five out of 35. For obvious reason, it does not mention the last of them, Uriah (2 Sam 23.39), first husband of Bathsheba, whom David allowed to be killed so that he could take Bathsheba, mother of Solomon, as one of his eight wives. It does not mention his quite a few concubines and also not the last one Abishag who cherished him »and ministered to him: but the king knew her not« (1 Kings 1.4).

Only the best is to be read in our family Bible about David, his bad deeds are concealed. If his adultery with Bathsheba is mentioned, it is because he later bewailed it and allegedly wrote in Ps 51.4: »Against thee, thee only [i.e. God], have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.« David sinned not only against God, but also against Bathsheba; according to Mosaic Law and also to Deuteronomy, he should be put to death (Lev 20.10, Deut 22.25), but probably because he was a King this did not happen. The love story between Amnon, his oldest son, and Tamar, Amnon's half-sister and its tragic end when Absalom, her brother, ordered to kill Amnon, and their father David »was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead« (2 Sam 13.39), is not even mentioned in our family Bible. It was certainly regarded as a bad example for Catholic readers. The death of Absalom, as a conspirator against David, was vividly depicted in the text, when his head was caught hold of the oak and his body taken up between heaven and earth in the moment before Joab, David's Commander-in-Chief, »took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he *was* yet alive in the midst of the oak« (2 Sam 18.14). After the early first millennium BCE, our family Bible devotes more space to David than to any other person except Jesus. It was certainly because he was regarded in the Old Testament as the builder of God's house, and the throne of his kingdom would be established forever (2 Sam 8.13), which according to the Gospels should be understood as meaning that the Christian era is but an extension of the Davidic dynasty. Jesus Christ, according to Mat 1.1, was »the son of David, son

of Abraham«, and according to Luk 2.3-4, he was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, because he was of the house and lineage of David.

Among the other writings of the Deuteronomistic historical books, two stories ending with tragic deaths attracted my attention. The first was connected to the life and death of Ahab, King of Israel, his troubles with the Prophet Elijah and *vice versa*, his doing »evil in the sight of the LORD above all« [Kings] that were before him« (1 King 16.30), or repeated once again when he allegedly »did more provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him« (1 Kings 16.33). The main problem and difficulty was that he took as his wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, the King of the Sidonians, and he worshipped together with her Baal, the main God of the peoples of Sidon and Tyre in Phoenicia. Jezebel as a believer in Baal, fed and protected his prophets, i.e. priests (1 Kings 18.19), but something similar was also done by Obadiah, governor of Ahab's house and by Ahab himself even in a greater measure with the prophets of the Jewish God (1 Kings 22.6). Jezebel persecuted and killed Yahweh's prophets (1 Kings 18.4 and 13), although a definite number is not given.

In the case of the Prophet Elijah 450 were butchered by him and his helpers at the brook of Kishon on the northern side of Mount Karmel (1 Kings 18.40). Deuteronomistic historians, as a reward of his labours let appear »a chariot of fire, and horses of fire [...], and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven« (2 King 2.11). These historians were really cruel to Ahab. They let the dogs lick up his blood after he fought against the Syrians for his own country and did not leave the battlefield until his death (1 Kings 22.38). Jezebel's death is depicted like in modern horror stories. Since she was a nightmare for these people and the worst woman in the old biblical history, her denouncement was even more inhuman. After she was thrown out of the windows of her palace during Jehu's *coup d'état*, the dogs came and ate her flesh (2 King 9.30-36). According to our family Bible, the depiction is even more visual: the wall under which she fell was spattered with blood, and when the people of Jehu came to bury her, they found only her skull, feet and hand bones. The latter was an 'invention' by the translator or editor. Nothing the like can be found in the original biblical texts.

5

I had my own *igris* in Igram for a few months in 1941-42. Since I never heard one fairy tale, poem or story from my mother or father, and the short literary pieces from the ABC (1939-40), one textbook (1940-41), and even the enthralling stories from our family Bible, were not enough for me, I yearned for other

sources of spiritual food. There were also no radios or newspapers in my own or my grandfather's families. An old gentleman lived near the house of my grandparents. He was a Jew, about seventy years old and the owner of a pub and butchery. Every week a Rabbi from a small town nearby came to look after *kosher* meat for his family, the rest he sold to the inhabitants of the village. Up to around the beginning of World War I, the peasants liked to visit his pub to drink wine and other alcoholic beverages, but not so much later. During World War II they enjoyed beer and wine in a pub owned by a disabled soldier from the village, a Christian, or in the so-called *viechy* ('wine-vaults'), selling wine by the individual producers for a short time in every year. My paternal grandfather was one of them. Church, the discussions of the neighbours in front of my grandfather's house and the *viechy* were 'my universities'²⁴ in the years of my childhood. From time to time, together with my maternal grandmother, I visited different shrines devoted to Saint Mary in Slovakia. These were the places of my pilgrimage.

In the cold days of the winter 1941–42 my Jewish *igric* often visited the house of my maternal grandfather, sat down in front of the oven, smoked his pipe and talked with my grandparents about all what had happened in the village and in their families during the last decades. I was sitting in front of him at the old big table, often having the family Bible before me. On my left side there hung an old photo of Saint Mary from the 13th station of *Via Dolorosa* in Jerusalem with a big sword in her heart and it seemed to me that she was looking at me.²⁵

The old Jew was not interested in the Bible before me, since he knew that the Rabbi would curse him for doing that, but he felt sympathy with my love for the stories, and brought with him a thick book of green colour and 'translated' their subjects for me. They were maybe written in German. They were probably the stories by Grimm brothers, or something similar. I liked to hear them, but I was afraid of them. They were fearful, but not horrid. In the spring of 1942 he did not come anymore. He and his two daughters were compelled to wear brown David's Star with the inscription »Jew«. One day in summer 1942 a commando of the Fascist organization Hlinkova garda (Hlinka Guard) came to the village and asked my grandfather's friend and his two daughters to take with them 50 kilograms of luggage, including food for ten days, and to wait for a transport at the next train station. They were taken on one of the 58 transports to concentration camps. The old gentleman allegedly died on the way and the two daughters died there. A few days before the last of these transports Monsignor

24 I bear in mind Maxim Gorky's *My Universities* (*Moi universitety*, 1923).

25 This photo is still hanging in the same place.

Jozef Tiso (1887–1947), President of the Slovak State, in one of his speeches ‘pronounced’ a new, never heard of command of love by God: »Slovak, throw down, drop off your evildoer.«²⁶ Jehu’s order was nearly the same. He said to the eunuchs of the castle concerning Jezebel: »Throw her down« (2 King 9.33). But he also ordered them to bury her because she was a king’s daughter. The sons and daughters of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not worthy to be buried after being massacred in different ways. Altogether more than 57,000 Jews were dragged away from Slovakia until August 1942, and nearly all of them died. No one was buried properly. Only their ashes were dispersed on the fields around the concentration barracks.

The name of the old Jew was Jacob Glass. Once in 1996 I told to the story to Wolfgang Kubin. He wrote a poem recalling his tragic fate and characterizing partly my future fate:

Holocaust

I

Die einfache Frage:

Wie überlebt

Die einfache Antwort:

Als Mensch unter dem Vieh

II

Jakob Glass

Der Geschichtenerzähler aus Igram

Tat seinen letzten Gang allein

Unterwegs ohne Kunde der Töchter

überliess er andern

das Ende seiner Geschichte²⁷

According to Wolfgang Kubin, I took over the role of the Jewish *igric* and became a messenger of the stories at first those concerned mostly with Chinese literature mostly to the Western readers and later also those connected with the Bible to the Chinese audience.

26 *Slovak* Aug 18, 1942, 4. *Slovak* was the newspaper of the Hlinka Guard.

27 Wolfgang Kubin, »Holocaust«, in »Die Reise nach Jerusalem. Für Irene and Marián Gálik«, *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* no 35 (Dec 1997–Mar 1998), 345. Follows the translation into English by Wolfgang Kubin: »I. The simple question: / How does one survive? / The simple answer: / As a man among cattle. // II. Jacob Glass / the storyteller from Igram, / did his last journey alone. / Without hearsay of his daughters / he let others / finish his story.« Kubin’s remark: »This sort poem of 1997 is typical for my early period. “As a man among cattle”: this is a pun. Confucius wanted to be a man among men. I like him for this.« (from Kubin’s letter to me, dated Sep 8, 2009; M. G.)

My experience with Jacob Glass was too short. After he left, my grandfather Ernest Orlický (1883–1969) remained at my side and was my model to be followed, especially in reading as much as possible. He did not buy our family Bible because of me, since I was only three years old and could not read it at the time it was bought. I never saw him have it in his hands. Possibly he was not interested in reading biblical stories from the Old Testament, and he heard in church Jesus' parables many times throughout the year. Once he said to me that he liked most of all during his life Christian August Vulpius' (1762–1827) penny dreadful novel Rinaldo Rinaldini, Robber Captain (*Rinaldo Rinaldini, der Räuberhauptmann*, 1799). He was a brother of Christiane Vulpius (1765–1816), Johann Wolfgang Goethe's wife. My grandfather read everything he got into his hands, but usually it should not be proscribed by the authorities of the Catholic Church. I do not have an idea how he got hold of Vulpius' work, otherwise a literary trash. Probably he read one translation into Slovak published in Budapest in 1908, or the second one published in Banská Bystrica in 1928.

From the 5th grade on in *Gymnasium* I began to study Latin. I was not bad in languages, and when reading and translating in class the works by Cicero, Ovid, Caesar and Seneca, at certain moment I came across a book signed by another Jacob, this time not Glass the Jew, but very probably a Catholic cleric. His surname was Koch. I do not have any idea who he was. The book was without title page and its first part was called *Paralipomenon. Hebraice Dibre Hajanim*. I did not understand the first Greek and the next two Hebrew words. But looking at the first verse where I found the word »Adam«, and in the fourth »Noe, Sem, Cham, et Japheth«, I knew immediately that the book should have something to do with the Bible. Only later I found that it was the 2nd volume of *Biblia sacra Vulgatae editionis* from the years 1592 and 1593, translated by Saint Jerome (ca 347–ca 419) into Latin and published in 1862. *Paralipomena* 1 and 2 are equal to the two books of the Chronicles in English translations, and nothing from them was included in our family Bible. I did not read the *Paralipomena* because these two books mostly repeat what already appeared in the two books of Samuel and King, respectively, with just minor changes. I did not even try to read The Book of Job, since I did not understand fully even the text in our family Bible. What I liked and learned by heart were only the words from ch. 1, verse 21, pronounced by Job after he lost all his property and before struck by fatal illness:

*Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit: sicut Domino placuit, ita factum est: sit nomen Domini benedictum.*²⁸

28 »The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.«

I enjoyed reading the Bible in Latin, because its language was much easier to understand than the works of the Latin classics with their complicated extended sentences, sometimes a few lines long. In the second volume of the *Vulgata*, I especially browsed through the Wisdom Books, mainly The Proverbs allegedly »of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel« (Prov 1.1). The most important proverb for me at that time was: *Timor Domini principium sapientiae*.²⁹ The book was an exhortation of a father to his son to be obedient, to believe in God, to follow moral instructions, and chiefly to beware of whores—probably there were many in Israel and Judah—, as in ch. 7 which is wholly devoted to seduction and how to keep a young man away from such a »stranger woman«:

Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death (Prov 7.25–28).

The Proverbs were written about two hundred years after Solomon, since some of them were collected by the people of Hezekiah, King of Judah (727–698 BCE) (Prov 25.1–28). This book of the Bible contains many traces of foreign, mainly Egyptian influence. Biblical scholars found some verbatim quotes from the *Instructions of Amenemopet* in 22.17–24.34, especially in its first part.³⁰

I paid hardly any attention to another great work of biblical wisdom entitled *Ecclesiastes, qui ab Hebreis Cobelet appelatur*. Its author was allegedly a son of King David, and the second verse in Latin was as follows:

Vanitas vanitatum, dixit Ecclesiastes, vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas.³¹

It was the only sentence that captured my attention.

The author's style and outlook were probably influenced to some extent by the Hellenistic culture of the third century B.C.E. He was acquainted with a notion that resembles the Greek idea of immortality of the soul [...], and in his writings may have been affected by Greek literary forms, such as *parainesis* (exhortation).³²

29 »The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge« (Prov 1.7).

30 H. Greßmann, »Die neugefundene Lehre von Amen-em-ope und frühexilische Spruchdichtung in Israel«, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 42 (1924), 272–296.

31 According to the *KjV*: »Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.« To this verse, as a 16 or 17 years old boy, I often heard the small attachment: »except of serving to God«. This is not immediately appended to this text. But in the end of the book we read: »Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole *duty* of man« (Eccl 12.13).

32 James G. Williams, »Proverbs and Ecclesiastes«, in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. by Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (London: Fontana Press, 1997), 277. See also F. Crüsemann, »Die unverändbare Welt. Überlegungen zur "Krisis der Weisheit" beim Prediger (Kohelet)«, in *Der Gott der kleinen Leute. Sozialgeschichtliche Bibelauslegungen*, 2 vols., ed. by Wolfgang Schottroff and

As a literary comparatist I later found that the author of the Ecclesiastes in spite of his faith in the authority of the wisdom of the Proverbs or Book of Job, was a sceptic, who, if he believed in the Wisdom with capital W as presented in the books just mentioned, would probably not see so many vanities in the life of human beings from birth to death: »But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh *is* vanity« (Eccl 11.8).

In the *Canticum Canticorum Salamonis quod Hebraice dicitur Sir Hasirim*, translated into English as The Song of Solomon, or later The Song of Songs, I was enthralled by the first verse of the *Vulgata* translation:

Osculetur me osculo oris sui, quia meliora sunt ubera tua vino, which could be translated into English as: »Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for your love is better than breasts.«³³ This translation seemed to me very strange at that time. In our family Bible, I saw the picture by the painter August Gaber (1823–1894) from Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld's *Werkstätte* of Solomon (in reality Jesus Christ) embracing Shulamite (in reality the Christian Church), and I did not understand why there should be kisses on lips between the two, and even less kisses on breasts. Our family Bible did not include this citation, but another that might have illustrated by the picture, translated in the *KjV* as: »His left hand *is* under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me« (Songs 2.6). Only much later did I comprehend that our family Bible presented the official allegorical explanation of love between Christ and the Church. As to the comparison of kisses on lips and on breasts, which is of course more intimate, it is necessary to say, that Saint Jerome when translating this first verse, did not consider that this desire was expressed by a woman to a man, and that men do not have breasts and they kiss women on their lips.³⁴

Wolfgang Stegermann (München: Kaiser [etc.], 1979), 1: 80–104; and H.-P. Müller, »Neige der althebräischen "Weisheit". Zum Denken Qohäläts«, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 90 (1978), 238–264. On the possibility of foreign (not only Greek) impact on the Ecclesiastes, see the profound and solid review-article by Otto Kaiser, »Beiträge zur Kohelet-Forschung. Eine Nachlese«, *Theologische Rundschau* 60,1 (1995), 1–31. In any case, there are some parallels between the *Ecclesiastes* and Near Eastern and Egyptian wisdom literature.

33 According to the *KjV*: »Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.«

34 Cf. *Das Hohelied*, ausgelegt von Jair Zakovitch (Freiburg i. B.: Herder, 2004), 111.

6

After two Jacobs and one family Bible, I started to study Chinese at Charles University in Prague in October 1953. I left both the second volume of *Vulgata* and our family Bible in Igram and had to devote myself fully to sinological studies. Much from the earlier readings remained in me. One of my sinological mates read the Bible daily, and we discussed it from time to time, but never openly in front of others. It could be understood as religious propaganda, and as such it was forbidden in socialist countries.

When reading the works by Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936), Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967), Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), Lao She 老舍 (1899–1966), Bing Xin 冰心 (1900–1999), Ai Qing 艾青 (1910–1986) and some other writers, easily obtainable in the Prague Lu Xun Library of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, it was also possible to write about the works where the impact of the Bible was visible, but I am afraid that apart from me nobody among the members of the Prague School of Sinology devoted any attention to it. Only later, after returning from my studies at Peking University (1958–60), after buying a copy of King James' version of the Bible in the Dong'an shichang 東安市場 (Bazaar of Eastern Peace), I dared to put something from the Bible into my works. It was dangerous because of the political and ideological control over publications. I was happy because the censors in Slovakia were not good in English, or they were not so much interested in scholarly work in the literary field.

In my book *The Genesis of Modern Chinese Literary Criticism* (1980), I pointed to Lu Xun's essay Assessing the »Critical Review« (1922) where he took the part of Daniel, a man of »excellent wisdom«, who explained the mysterious writing on the wall to the Babylonian King Belshazzar (*reg* 555–539). Just like Daniel, Lu Xun also judged that the journal *Xueheng*, propagating old Chinese language (*wenyan*) and culture was something similar to the mysterious *Tekel*: »Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.«³⁵ I mentioned Jesus three times when writing about Zhou Zuoren and Cheng Fangwu 成仿吾 (1896–1981).³⁶

In my next book *Milestones in Sino-Western Literary Confrontations* (1986) there are many citations from or allusions to the Bible. The book mentions Exodus in

35 »Gu "Xueheng"« 估《學衡》, *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集 [Complete Works of Lu Xun], 20 vols.. (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1973), 2: 98–101; Dan 5.27; and Marián Gálik, *The Genesis of Modern Chinese Literary Criticism* (1917–1930) (Bratislava: Veda; London: Curzon Press, 1980), 249.

36 Gálik, *The Genesis...*, 20, 68 and 85.

relation to Moses and Guo Moruo, then Judges in relation to Samson and Delilah, Guo Moruo and Arishima Takeo 有島武郎 (1878–1923), and the Song of Songs in relation to Guo Moruo and Sato Tomiko 佐藤富子 («Anna», 1893–1994),³⁷ and at the end again with Guo Moruo, Walt Whitman (1819–1892) and YHWH ('I am that I am') which stands for the name of God.³⁸ Jesus is mentioned in the poem »Huanghun« 黄昏 (Dusk) by the poet Feng Zhi 馮至 (1905–1993),³⁹ and The Song of Songs, the gospels by Matthew, Mark, John and Apocalypse in different parts of the book.⁴⁰ One more remark should be made here. The publisher asked me to find an appropriate sign for the book to be placed on the cover. I proposed two Chinese characters *ling fei* 令飛 which are also one of the many pseudonyms of Lu Xun. It was necessary to translate it into English and I used the wording from Gen 1.20 »(fowl) that may fly«, the words of God on the fifth day of Creation. I was asked by the Editor not to do that because it could harm me and probably even prevent publication of the book, but I did not change my mind.

Three years after publication of my *Milestones*, the political situation in central and eastern Europe rapidly changed, and at the end of 1989 the socialist order collapsed.

In 1988, Wang Meng's 王蒙 (b1934) literary triptych *On the Cross* meant a great surprise for me. Wang Meng, Minister of Culture of the PRC at that time, recalls that when attending elementary school and hearing about the episode on Golgotha, he was »immensely sad« and »immensely awestruck«. It seemed to him that the image of the cross should serve to awaken (*xingshi* 醒世) and admonish (*jingshi* 警示) mankind.⁴¹ In this literary work Wang Meng, or his *alter Ego* (as a writer) stresses some ideas presenting real virtues, which are the same as in Jesus' teaching: love among people (*renai* 仁愛), modesty (*qianbei* 謙卑), respect (*qianjing* 虔敬) and especially forgiveness (*kuanshu* 寬恕).⁴² I admired Wang Meng's courage, and that he had done it as the highest representative of Chinese culture. On May 11, 1990, I read a paper about this work by Wang Meng at the inter-

37 Marián Gálik, *Milestones in Sino-Western Literary Confrontation* (1898-1979) (Bratislava: Veda; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), 48–49.

38 *Ibid.*, 58–59.

39 *Ibid.*, 184–185.

40 *Ibid.*, 41, 48–49, 61, 67, 86 and 93.

41 Wang Meng, »Shizijia shang« 十字架上的, *Zhongshan* 鐘山 3/1988 (May 15), 46.

42 *Ibid.*, 50.

national conference »Contemporary Chinese Fiction and its Literary Antecedents« sponsored by the Fairbank Centre, Harvard University.⁴³

7

Before a conference at Harvard during a lecture trip in the US organized by Professor Leo Lee Ou-fan 李歐梵, on May 3rd, I visited Sacramento, California, and met Lewis Stewart Robinson. He presented to me a book entitled *Double-Edged Sword. Christianity & 20th Century Chinese Fiction* (1986). This invaluable gift changed my Sinological orientation. This was a *punctum a quo* I decided to devote my future life mainly to studying the impact of the Bible, and to some extent of Christianity, on modern Chinese literature and to some extent culture. This book brought to me much new material I was never aware of before. Robinson left this field for reasons I do not know. At that moment he became my *guru*, although he was much younger than me. I had finished my PhD twenty years before him. He handed me, without knowing, his »bowl and robe« like Hongren 弘忍 (605–675) did to Huineng 惠能 (638–713).

One year later in September–October 1991 I met Dr. Tak-wai Wong 黃德偉 from Hong Kong University, and Professors John J. Deeney 李達三 and Tam Kwok-kan 譚國根 at the Hong Kong Chinese University. My duty was to study mostly Sino-Western comparative literature, for which Deeney and Tam were experts, but I often visited Dr. Wong in his luxury flat above Hong Kong, overlooking mountains and the sea, and enjoyed his rich library. Among his books I found two by Professor Liang Gong 梁工 (Henan University, Kaifeng), who was the best expert in China on literary aspects of the Bible after Professor Zhu Weizhi 朱維之 (1905–1999). Shortly before my stay in Hong Kong, Liang Gong presented his two first books and a bibliography to Dr. Wong⁴⁴ who was not interested in biblical studies. In this way I found the path to study the reception of the Bible in China after the Cultural Revolution (1966–76).

43 The German version of this presentation has been published in the translation by Raoul David Findeisen in *minima sinica* 2/1991, 55–82.

44 Liang Gong, *Shengjing shige* 聖經詩歌 [Biblical Poetry] (Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 1989), *Shengjing wenzue daodu* 聖經文學導讀 [Introduction to Literary Reading of the Bible] (Guilin: Lijiang chubanshe, 1990); and »Studies of the Bible as Literature in China (1980–1990)«, *Chinese / International Comparative Literature Bulletin* (Hong Kong), 2/1990 (Hong Kong), 35–36. The latter was edited by Dr. Wong.

Even before reading Wang Meng's impressive work, before the conference in Harvard and meeting with Lewis S. Robinson, I was informed by Professor Irene Eber of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in her letter to me of August 20, 1988, that she had started to study the translation of the Old Testament into Chinese from its original languages, namely the »questions of reception, transmutation of ideas, matters that touch on intellectual history and the movement of ideas from one cultural context into another«. I had devoted much attention to these problems in the 1970s and in 1980s, although not in connection with the Bible. She participated in the international symposium »Chinese Literature and European Context«, organized by me in Smolenice Castle, Slovakia, June 22–25, 1993. In my letter to her of March 10, 1993, I informed her briefly that at the conference I would like to discuss the possibility of organizing another conference on Chinese literature in relation to the Bible. Irene Eber would have liked to have it in Smolenice Castle, but I preferred Jerusalem. Wolfgang Kubin, Raoul D. Findeisen, Knut Walf, Francis K. H. So 蘇其康 and Chan Wing-ming 陳永明 present at the symposium agreed with my opinion. Shortly after this letter, Irene Eber was promoted as Louis Frieberg Professor of East Asian Studies, so she had more possibilities and she accepted our common wish. The International Workshop »The Bible in Modern China: The Literary and Intellectual Impact« was held in Jerusalem, The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, June 23–28, 1996. The proceedings of the same title, edited by Irene Eber, Sze-kar Wan 溫司卡 and Knut Walf in collaboration with Roman Malek were published by the Institut Monumenta Serica, Sankt Augustin 1999.

Even before publishing the Jerusalem proceedings Irene Eber and I tried to persuade our friends from the Catholic Fugen University in Taipei to organize a second workshop with the same or a similar topic. We were not lucky up to the beginning of 2000. Professor Nicholas Koss who agreed to organize it, was mute as a fish for a long time, if not for years, but on March 16, Irene Eber wrote to me: »Not all phoenixes rise from the ashes, but Koss did. Just the other day I had a message from him that the conference is still on.« This workshop on the Bible and China titled »The Bible and Chinese Culture« was held on January 5–8, 2002, at the Societatis Verbi Divini Theatre, Fugen University. It was successful with a large audience and lively discussions. It is a pity that, for different reasons not fully known to me, its proceedings even after ten years have not been published yet.

One year before the workshop in Taipei, at the 28th Deutscher Orientalistentag in Bamberg, March 26–30, 2001, in a session dedicated to the works by the Institut Monumenta Serica, my manuscript *Influence, Translation*

and Parallels: Selected Essays on the Bible in China was presented. It was the second book of Western Sinology on problems of reception of the Bible in Chinese literature after the PhD thesis by Lewis S. Robinson mentioned above. My book included an introduction by Irene Eber⁴⁵ and seventeen of my studies written or published between 1992 and 2001.

One year before, on the occasion of my 70th birthday, an international conference was organized by the Institute Monumenta Serica in Bratislava and Smolenice Castle (February 21-25, 2003). It was under the title »Fascination and Understanding. The Spirit of the Occident and the Spirit of China in Reciprocity«. The aim of this undertaking was

to provide an opportunity for the exchange of views between scholars whose research touches on various levels and in various dimensions upon the spirit of the Occident and the spirit of China. Thus, the participants were invited to elucidate and interpret the meaning of seminal ideas in the Occident (*Abendland*) and China which on one side arouse fascination and lead to attempts to achieve understanding and comparison but on the other side might prevent understanding (*Verstehen*) and lead to misunderstanding.⁴⁶

From 27 papers presented to the Organizing Committee about one third were concerned with the Bible and Christianity. All of them appeared in English.⁴⁷ in the journal *Monumenta Serica*, 53, 2005, pp. 249-459 and 54, 2006, pp. 151-415.

The year 2003 seems to have been a climax for interest in the literary Bible in China. From 1995-2003 at least nine monographs were published in China on this subject beginning with Ma Jia's 馬佳 *Wandering Under the Cross. Christian Culture and Modern Chinese Literature*.⁴⁸ It took about three years before it could be published, although the first lines were devoted to Marx and Engels, then in China considered the best experts on the Bible and Christianity. Dr. Ma Jia, a student of my friend Professor Ye Ziming 葉子銘 (1935-2005), who tried to overcome the ideological difficulties and antireligious bias using »Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, René Wellek's New Criticism, Sigmund Freud's and Jung's psychological theories and the Georg Brandes' methods of 'psychological study of literary history', philosophical and aesthetic ideas of Immanuel Kant

45 Irene Eber, »The Fountain of Living Waters«, in Marián Gálik, *Influence, Translation and Parallels: Selected Essays on the Bible in China* (St. Augustin: Monumenta Serica Institute, 2004), 9-22.

46 Roman Malek, »Fascination and Understanding. The Spirit of the Occident and the Spirit of China in Reciprocity (I). Introduction«, *Monumenta Serica* 53 (2005), 246.

47 *Monumenta Serica* 53 (2005), 249-459; 54 (2006), 151-415.

48 *Sbízijia xia de paibui. Jidu zongjiao wenhua he Zhongguo xiandai wenxue* 十字架下的徘徊——基督宗教文化和中國現代文學 (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1995).

and Hegel« (3). Three monographs appeared in 1998.⁴⁹ The publication year of Wang Xuefu's 王學富 book *Miwu shensuo de lüzhou* 迷雾深锁的绿洲 (Enchanting and Hidden Oasis) is not indicated but it was probably about 2000. Chinese readers were most interested by the most comprehensive of them all, Wang Benchao's Twentieth Century Chinese Literature and Culture, published in 2000 with a second printing in 2001.⁵⁰ Song Jianhua's book Christian Spirit and Cao Yu's Dramas also appeared in 2000.⁵¹ Another book by Wang Lieyao appeared two years later.⁵² In 2003, after some years of preparations, Xu Zhenglin's Modern Chinese Literature and Christianity was published.⁵³ For understandable reasons, these books paid only small attention to Taiwanese literature concerned with the Bible and Christianity.⁵⁴

The year 1999 was a climax of writings concerning the Bible and Christianity in relation to China in the West. Three books of unsurpassed value appeared in this year, which made an unusually impressive start in this neglected realm of scholarship. The first of them were the already mentioned proceedings of the Jerusalem workshop. The second one was the invaluable monograph by Irene Eber, *The Jewish Bishop and the Chinese Bible. S. I. J. Schereschewsky*, and the third *The Bible in China. The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of the Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China* by Jost Oliver Zetzsche, the first attempt to analyse the process of translation of the Union version as the most important among the Chinese translations of the Bible from the beginnings in 1890 to the end in 1919 when the complete *Guanhua beheben* 官話和合本 or *Mandarin Union Version* appeared.

- 49 Yang Jianlong 楊劍龍, *Kuangye de husheng—Zhongguo xiandai zuojia yu Jidujiao wenhua* 曠野的呼聲——中國現代作家與基督教文化 [Crying in the Wilderness. Contemporary Chinese Writers and Christian Culture]; Liu Yong 劉勇, *Zhongguo xiandai zuojia de zongjiao wenhua qingjie* 中國現代作家的宗教文化情結 [The Religious and Cultural Conditions in China and Modern Writers]; Wang Lieyao 王列耀, *Jidujiao yu Zhongguo xiandai wenxue* 基督教與中國現代文學 [Christianity and Modern Chinese Literature].
- 50 Wang Benchao 王本朝, 20 *shiji Zhongguo wenxue yu Jidujiao wenhua* 20世紀中國文學與基督教文化.
- 51 Song Jianhua 宋劍華, *Jidu jingshen yu Cao Yu xiju* 基督精神與曹禺戲劇.
- 52 *Jidujiao wenxue yu Zhongguo xiandai xiju de beiju yishi* 基督教文化與中國現代戲劇的悲劇意識.
- 53 Xu Zhenglin 許正林, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yu Jidujiao* 中國現代文學與基督教.
- 54 The Taiwanese woman writer Zhang Xiaofeng 張曉風 (b1941) is the only exception. See Yang Jianlong, *Kuangye de husheng*, 241–251, and Wang Benchao, 20 *shiji Zhongguo wenxue...*, 231–244.

After 2003 came a kind of certain ebbside. No more workshops like those in Jerusalem and Taipei were held, although there were some important international discussions, as at the IXth and Xth Congresses of Chinese Comparative Literature Association in Peking (2008) and in Shanghai (2011) where the panels on literature and religion, including Christianity and the Bible, had relatively many contributors. The same could also be said about The Seventh Summer Institute of 2011 with the topic »Jingdian fanyi yu jingwen biandu« 經典翻譯與經文辯讀 (Translating the Classics and Scriptural Reasoning), organized by the School of Liberal Arts and the Institute for the Study of Christian Culture, both People's University of China, Peking, and the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies, Hong Kong.⁵⁵ The 25th volume of the journal *Jidujiao wenhua xuekan* 基督教文化學刊 / *Journal for the Study of Christian Culture* (2011) was almost entirely devoted to the study of Bible and Christianity.⁵⁶ Some books appeared on the Bible and modern and contemporary literature. Two of them were written under the guidance or editorship of Yang Jianlong, the first, *The Literary Oasis. Modern Chinese Literature and Christian Culture*, in cooperation with a group of students from The Chinese University of Hong Kong.⁵⁷ This collection to some extent differs from those before 2003 because it deals not so much with an analysis of samples of the works by Chinese writers as a whole, but mostly with parts of them, usually short stories, one poem in prose (Lu Xun), one drama (Cao Yu) and one novel (Lao She). I suppose that the study of the impact of the

55 See *Duoyuan wenhua hudong zhong de wenxue duibua* 多元文化互動中的文學對話 [Literary Dialogues in the Context of Multicultural Interactions], 2 vols., ed. by Gao Xudong 高旭東 (Beijing daxue chubanshe), 533-578; »The Tenth Triennial Congress of the Chinese Comparative Literature Association. Conference Manual«, 218-239 (abstracts only); and »Translating the Classics and Scriptural Reasoning. Conference Manual with Papers and Abstracts of Keynote Speakers« (Beijing, 2011), with my paper »The Images of Shulamite in the Chinese Translations of the Bible (1919-2004)«, 12-22. All other full papers appeared in a separate volume of the same title, 362 pp.

56 I would like to point especially to Professor Yang Huilin 楊慧林 and his editorial foreword »Reasoning in the Reading of Scriptures«, Chinese version on pp 1-6, English on pp 7-15. I am happy that the Editors selected my paper »Song of Songs (*Šir Hašširim*) and Book of Songs (*Sbijing*): A Comparative Analysis«, tr. by Liu Yan 劉燕, 89-132.

57 *Wenxue de lüzhou—Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yu Jidujiao wenhua* 文學的綠洲——中國現代文學與基督教文化 (2006).

Bible and Christianity should go in this direction. More time and effort should be devoted to the analysis of individual works, and only later to writing monographs concerning writers or whole periods.

The second volume edited by Yang Jianlong: is showing a new and broader way to study the Bible and Christianity in the Chinese world.⁵⁸ Wang Benchao and Xu Zhenglin are among the authors. Shi Wei 施瑋, now living in the United States, is a *spiritus movens* of the new movement and initiator of the »Lingxing wenxue congshu« 靈性文學叢書 (Spiritual Literature Series; 2008ff). The participants in this new 'movement' (if I may call it such), include new faces, I have never met before. I mention here Tang Xiaolin (b1965), Liu Lixia (b1972), Chen Weihua (b1976) and Ji Bin (b1972) and their monographs.⁵⁹ I appreciate Ji Bin's book because of material yet unknown to me, and of new writers I had never heard of. But I have to admit that I do not fully agree with her opinions. From those she mentions Wang Meng is most familiar and close to me. He is not a Christian, but probably he was as a child. He sang a Christian Church song from his youth in front of me during his visit to Bratislava in 2008, and he had the courage to propagate some core Christian virtues as a Minister of Culture in 1988.

There is a difference between religion and literature, and the Bible and literary works written under their impact. Writers may have different attitudes towards the Bible or Christianity, for instance, Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) and T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) on one side, and Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) on the other, or Xu Dishan 許地山 (1893–1941) and Mu Dan 穆旦 (1918–1977) on one side, and Zhu Zhixin 朱執信 (1885–1920) and Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940) on the other. I suppose that the attitude of the scholars around Yang Huilin is more appropriate: It is necessary to study all canonical writings *sine ira et studio*. It is valid for Christian, Jewish, Confucian,

58 *Linghun zhengjiu yu lingxing wenxue* 靈魂拯救與靈魂文學 [Soul Salvation and Spiritual Literature].

59 Tang Xiaolin 唐小林, *Kanbujian de jianming: xiandai Hanyu shixue yu Jidujiao* 看不見的豎名：現代漢語詩學與基督教 [The Invisible Signs: Contemporary Chinese Poetics and Christianity; 2004]; Liu Lixia 劉麗霞, *Zhongguo Jidujiao wenxue de lishi cunzai* 中國基督教文學的歷史存在 [Historical Existence of Chinese Christian Literature; 2006]; Chen Weihua 陳偉華, *Jidujiao wenhua yu Zhongguo xiaoshuo xushi xinzhì* 基督教文化與中國小說敘事新質 [Christian Culture and the New Character of Narrative in Chinese Fiction; 2007]; and Ji Bin 季玢, *Yedi li de baibehua—Lun xin shiqi yilai de Zhongguo Jidujiao wenxue* 野地裡的百合花——論新時期以來的中國基督教文學 [Lilies in the Wilderness: On Recent Chinese Christian Literature; 2010].

Taoist, Buddhist, and where China is concerned also for Islamic works, since all they are all part of the cultural and religious heritage of the country.⁶⁰

If much more attention in biblical studies of the PRC in the last two or more decades is devoted to theology, mostly of Protestant orientation, and building up a 'Sino-Christian theology', literary studies are not neglected. Apart from those I have at least partly tried to show here, Professor Liang Gong is a most diligent student and introducer of knowledge about the reception of the biblical legacy among foreign writers. Twenty years after Zhu Weizhi's first swallow starting biblical literary studies in 1980,⁶¹ in 2000 a volume of studies edited by him appeared, with 30 contributors including himself covering ancient and medieval, and writers of modern and contemporary times.⁶² Special sections were devoted to Russian, Soviet and American works. Seven years later, another volume edited by Liang Gong followed.⁶³ There are just nine contributors, but the studies are more comprehensive, better elaborated, with many notes and rich bibliographies in English, Japanese and Chinese. Five volumes of the yearbook *Shengjing wenxue yanjiu / Biblical Literature Studies*, edited by Liang Gong and published by the People's Literature Publishing House, the greatest publisher for literature in the PRC, appeared from 2007 to 2011. In the opening issue we read:

As early as the early part of the twentieth century, modern Chinese scholars have made critical discussion on biblical literature. However, due to the long discontinuation of academic studies in the Mainland from the 1950s to 1970s, biblical literature studies in fact have just started from scratch in the 1980s. From then until now, scholars in the Mainland have made tremendous progress in the past twenty

60 At the 7th Summer Institute »Translating the Classics and Scriptural Reasoning«, Professor Zhang Hua 張華, Institute of World Religions, Peking Language and Culture University, in his short lecture proposed *The Koran* as a subject of comparative research. I offered to selected participants a copy of the volume *Eastern Christianity, Judaism and Islam between the Death of Muhammad and Tamerlane (632-1405)*, ed. by Martin Slobodník and me (Bratislava: Institute of Oriental Studies, 2011), as material showing the mutual relations among the three Abrahamic religions often full of hate, wars, persecutions, but also examples of understanding worthy of study in our global age which needs to proceed in the ecumenical endeavours. Liu Lixia, mentioned in this section, participated at this Summer Institute.

61 Zhu Weizhi, »Xibolai wenxue jianjie« 希伯來文學簡介 [A Short Introduction to Hebrew Literature], *Waiguo wenxue yanjiu* 外國文學研究 2/1980, 106–118.

62 *Shengjing yu Ou Mei zuojia zuopin* 聖經與歐美作家作品 [The Bible and the Works of European and American Writers].

63 *Shengjing shiyu zhongde Dongxifang wenxue* 聖經視域中的東西方文學 [Eastern and Western Literature in the Horizon of the Bible; 2007].

years. Nevertheless, compared with the present situation of international biblical literature studies, our academic standard is still of a lower level. There is the need to seek breakthroughs by various means.”⁶⁴

The first study »Shengjing yu wenxue yanjiu« 聖經與文學研究 (The Bible and Literary Study) was written by Leland Ryken, an American writer whose slim booklet *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (1984) in its Chinese version *Rube yuedu zuo wei wenxue de Shengjing* 如何閱讀作為文學的聖經 was published as the first of its kind in the PRC, also in 1984. The last study of the first volume, Wang Tao, Chinese Bible Translation and His Hermeneutical Strategy, shows a famous Chinese reformer, journalist and helping hand, who more or less concealed because of the political pressure, helped to translate the *Delegates'* version of the Bible into Chinese in 1875.⁶⁵ In the second volume published in 2008, I most appreciated Francis Landy's contribution.⁶⁶ All translations in this volume are from American authors. The greatest part of the translations in the five volumes published up to 2011 are written by the authors from English speaking countries, with the exception of four from France (Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes) and one from the Netherlands (Mieke Bal). No one is there from Germany, a country famous for its biblical studies. In volume 5 is opened by Zhuo Xinping 卓新平, Director of the Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and analyses the state of Chinese literature around the May Fourth Movement (1919) and at the end of the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st centuries. He points out the necessity »to explore the existence, influence and cultural significance of Biblical literature in these two crucial periods for China, the beginning and end of the 20th century, and to analyse further its function and position at the high tide of Chinese literature development.«⁶⁷ He recommends reading and study of the works by 33 authors briefly analysed in the book by Ji Bin mentioned above.⁶⁸

64 Liang Gong, »Chuangkan ci« 創刊詞 [Preface to the Inaugural Issue], *Shengjing wenxue yanjiu* 聖經文學研究 1 (2007), 4.

65 You Bin 游斌, »Wang Tao, Zhongwen Shengjing fanyi ji qi jieshixue celue« 王韜·中文聖經翻譯及其解釋學策略, *Shengjing wenxue yanjiu* 1 (2007).

66 »The Song of Songs and the Garden of Eden«, originally in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979).

67 Zhuo Xinping, »Shengjing wenxue zai xiandai Zhongguo de yiyi« 聖經文學在現代中國的意義 [The Significance of Biblical Literature in Modern China] *Shengjing wenxue yanjiu* 5 (2011), 2.

68 Ibid., 8.

Probably after reading my study on Lü Zhenzhong 呂振中 (1898–1988)⁶⁹ and our meeting in Berlin in 2001, Daniel K. T. Choi in his study published in the same 2011 volume, mentioned my *re'ai* 熱愛 ('deep love') for the Bible.⁷⁰

9

After March 2001, when I had handed my manuscript of *Influence, Translation and Parallels: Selected Essays on the Bible in China* to Professor Roman Malek, I searched for material, studied and wrote about the literary reception of the Bible in China. I have not just done this, although I have promised to do it. In a letter to Malek from October 1996 I wrote that up to the end of my life I would devote myself to spreading the *Verba Domini* to Chinese readers. I met my promise only to some extent, but I have added a few essays to the book published in 2004.⁷¹

- 69 »Lü Zhenzhong—A Chinese Translator of the Bible«, *Asiatische Studien / Etudes asiatiques* 52,4 (2000). 815–838.
- 70 »Zhongwen Shengjing fanyi de lishi huigu he yanjiu« 中文聖經翻譯的歷史回顧和研究 [Historical Research on Chinese Bible Translation], *Shengjing wenxue yanjiu* 5 (2011), 219–220.
- 71 (1) »The Bible as a Source of Modern Literature. From Zhou Zuoren to Haizi«, in *From National Tradition to Globalization, From Realism to Modernism: The Trends in Modern Chinese Literature* (Saint Petersburg: Saint Petersburg State University, 2004), 42–74 Chinese version »“Shengjing” dui Zhongguo xiandai shige de yingxiang: Cong Zhou Zuoren dao Haizi« 《聖經》對中國現代詩歌的影響：從周作人到海子, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue luncong* 中國現代文學論叢 1,2 (2007), 105–125; (2) »Bi Gan's Heart in the Intra- and Intercultural Process«, in *From Skin to Heart. Perceptions of Emotions and Bodily Sensation in Traditional Culture*, ed. by Paolo Santangelo and Ulrike Middendorf (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 261–278, Chinese version in my book *Jieke he Siluofake de Hanxue yanjiu* 捷克和斯洛伐克漢學研究 [Studies in Czech and Slovak Sinology] (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2009), 32–44; (3) »The Bible in the Literature of the Chinese Mainland in the Twentieth Century«, *Asian and African Studies* NS 16,1 (2007), 68–80; (4) »Jesus The Proletarian: A Biography by Zhu Weizhi (1905–1999)«, in *The Chinese Face of Jesus Christ*, 3 vols. in 4 parts, ed. by Roman Malek (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2002–07), 3b: 1335–1351; (5) »The Song of Songs and the New Vision of Love in Modern Chinese Literature. An Essay on the Hebrew-Chinese Interliterary Process«, *Rivista degli Studi orientali*. NS 78, suppl. 4 (»Passioni d' Oriente. Eros ed emozioni nella civiltà asiatiche sezione Asia orientale«, 2007), 47–59, Chinese version »Zhongguo xiandai wenxue dui aiqing de quanxin shuxie yu “Yage”—Lun Xibolai yu Zhongguo wenxue de hudong« 中國現代文學對愛情的全新書寫與《雅歌》——論希伯來與中國文學的互動, *Changjiang xueshu* 長江學術 4/2007, 18–26;

During the years 2007 to 2011, I had the opportunity to spend five months of study at the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem as a fellow of the American Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and as a guest of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities. I had the possibility to use the libraries at the 'Albrights', of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, both of Giv'at Ram and Mount Scopus, and one of the best equipped libraries on the Bible in the world—of the *École Biblique*. The hospitality of Professor Seymour Gitin, Director of the Albright Institute, the friendship of Irene Eber and Lihi Yariv-Laor, both from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, of Professors Yohanan Friedmann and Benjamin C. Kedar, both from the Israel Academy, made my stay in the Holy Land pleasant and extremely useful. During this time I wrote two studies well received among scholars, and suggested as a new trend in the study of typological affinities between the Hebrew and early Chinese historiography.⁷² In the next years, if the time and my health allow me, I would like to proceed in writing both typological (parallel) and influence studies concerning the Bible and China in relation to literature and mainly to the 'sacred continua' from the end of the 2nd millennium BCE up to about the end of the Chunqiu 春秋 period (ca 481 BCE) and the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity (586 BCE).

(6) »Psalm 98 According to Han Suyin and the People's New Democracy in China«, in *Dem Text ein Freund. Erkundungen des chinesischen Altertums*, Robert H. Gassmann gewidmet, ed. by Roland Altenburger & al. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 335–349; (7) »The Reception of the Bible in Chinese Literature of the Twentieth Century and the Indigenous Response«, *Han-Zhong yanyu wenhua yanjiu* 韓中言語文化研究 22 (2010), 315–332.

- 72 »King David (ca. 1037–ca. 967 B.C.) and Duke Wen of Jin (ca. 697–628 B.C.): Paradigmatic Rulers from the Hebrew Deuteronomistic and Early Chinese Confucian Historiography«, *Asian and African Studies* NS 19,1 (2010), 1–25, Chinese version »Dawei wang yu Jin Wengong: Xibolai shendian lishixue he Zhongguo zaoqi Rujia biannianshi zhong de liang wei tongzhizhe fanli« 大衛王與晉文公：希伯來申典歷史學和中國早期儒家編年史中的兩位統治者範例, *Jidujiao sixiang pinglun* 基督教思想評論 12 (2011), 4–24; »Hebrew Deuteronomistic and Early Chinese Confucian Historiography«, *Frontiers of History in China* 5,3 (2010), 343–362; »Hebrew Deuteronomistic and Early Chinese Confucian Historiography: A Comparative Approach«, Chinese version »Xibolai shenmingjipai shixue yu Zhongguo Rujia zaoqi shixue: yi zhong bijiao yanjiu fangfa« 希伯來神銘記派詩學與中國儒家早期史學：一種比較研究方法, *Shijie Hanxue* 世界漢學 Spring 2009, 50–62.

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In my eightieth year I am looking back at more than seventy years of first reading, and then, in the last more than two decades, of studying the Bible.

Meetings with Tak-wai Wong in his flat in Hong Kong (1991), Irene Eber and others in Smolenice Castle (1993), Ma Jia in Peking Olympic Hotel (1996), Roman Malek in Monumenta Serica Institute (1997), Yang Jianlong in the Peking Holiday Inn (1999), brought good results. My meeting with Yang Huilin, Yang Jianlong, Daniel Yeung (Institute of Sino-Christian Studies, Hong Kong), Daniel K. T. Choi and their colleagues from all parts of the PRC in Berlin (2001), was a good opportunity to come into contact with scholars interested in the Bible and its meaning in connection with theology, but also with literature. Where literature is concerned, the 3-year sojourn of Professor Ye Rong 葉蓉 at Comenius University, Bratislava (2001–04), provided a good opportunity for mutual help in the study of the biblical impact on modern and contemporary Chinese literature.⁷³ Meeting with Professor Liang Hui 梁慧 in the Institute of Sino-Cultural Studies (2006), with Professors Yan Chunde 閻純德, Li Ling 李玲 and Dr. Li Yan 李燕 of Beijing University of Language and Culture (2007) made it possible to translate and edit my studies into Chinese. I may say the same about Professor Liu Yan 劉燕, Beijing International Studies University, and her students and friends (2009). Last but not least, I should mention Professor Geng Youzhuang 耿幼狀, Dr. Zhang Jing 張靖 and Nangong Meifang 南宮梅芳 from the 7th Summer Institute (Peking 2011).

My work stretching over more than seventy years would have been impossible, or would have gone in another direction without the sincere and friendly help of all mentioned in this paper.

In spite of my admiration for Ecclesiastes and his conviction, I do not agree that »to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly« is only a »vexation of spirit«, or »striving after wind« (1.17–18). I agree much more with the first sentence of Confucius' *Lunyu* 論語 (The Analects): »To learn and at due times to repeat what one has learnt, is that not after all a pleasure?«

73 Ye Rong, »The Different Approaches to the Bible by Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1910–1998) and Wang Meng 王蒙 (1934–)«, *Studia Orientalia Slovaca* 2 (2003), 29–45; »From Obscure Poets to the Sacrificed Lamb of the Kingdom of Contemporary Chinese Poetry«, *Asian and African Studies* NS 14.1 (2005), 56–65; and »A Summary View of Two High Tides of the Impact of Christianity on Twentieth Century Chinese Literature«, *Monumenta Serica* 54 (2006), 363–393.

I hope that some time in the near future somebody in the West will take the »bowl and robe« from me and continue biblical literary and historical studies in their relationship to ancient and modern China.

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