

53. Hugh Latimer, *The Works of Hugh Latimer*, vol.I., Cambridge: Parker Society, 1844, 445.
54. Davies, *Cranmer's Godly Order*, 53-59.
55. *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward IV*, 225.
56. *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward IV*, 389.
57. For a comprehensive listing, see Cuming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy*, 78-79.
58. *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward IV*, 212.
59. *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward IV*, 223.
60. *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward IV*, 347.
61. *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward IV*, 347.
62. *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward IV*, 377.
63. *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward IV*, 377.
64. *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward IV*, 393.
65. See Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 448-503.
66. Clark, *Civilisation: A Personal View*, 159.

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# READING FROM THE BIBLE AT MASS

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SOME YEARS back a Lasallian confrère engaged with the in-service formation of religious educators wrote for his students: 'Unless a biblical book is listened to or read it remains a lifeless object...It is when the book is being listened to in a community which believes it to be the inspired word, that it becomes the inspired word... Moreover, it is in the context of a Christian community that the meaning of a biblical text is interpreted and applied to the particular day-to-day life situations of that community.' (Br Peter Heaney fsc)

When I was wrestling in years gone by with topics like inspiration or revelation and how to present them in the formation of religious educators, I found I came to invoking the analogous cases of great literary texts or great musical texts, on the good old pedagogical principle of proceeding from the known to the unknown.

Shakespeare's manuscript, in which the Hamlet soliloquy on existence occurs, 'remains a lifeless object' until, for example,

a Sydney actor in 2015, backed by a production team, declaims ('interprets') it to an audience who interpret and apply it 'to the particular day-to-day life situations of that community' just as a Garrick did for 18th century Londoners. A Biblical text needs not just a translator (the term 'interpreter' is used more and more these days by professional translators) to move it from one language form to another, as the interpreter stands between them, but the printed word needs bringing to life by being vocalised, and not just vocalised any old how but interpreted by proper declamation. The production team enhances good declamation by lighting, props, sets, *etc.* A good liturgical setting enhances the ecclesial proclamation of the Word of God. The lector is like a midwife aiding birth.

Beethoven's score, in which the 4th movement of the 9th symphony appears, 'remains a lifeless object' until, for example, Herbert von Karajan, in Berlin in 1980, backed by a production team, directed the

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and associated soloist and choir in a rousing rendition of the 'Song of Joy'. The audience hears the sung and accompanied words of the Schiller ode and applies it 'to the particular day-to-day life situations of that community'.

'Hamlet' continues to be performed and needs to be performed (interpreted) continually so that the *'sitz im leben'* of the Prince of Denmark (and of the Bard of Avon) can be interpreted into every other *'sitz im leben'* of place and time (just as long as the text is not misrepresented)—similarly for Beethoven's 9th.

The basic error of fundamentalism becomes evident, as does the basic error of subjectivism in textual interpretation. The scripture scholars rack their brains to get the authentic text, but that rigorously (re-) established text 'remains a lifeless object', as the confrère wrote, unless and until it is proclaimed in a community of believers. Subjectivism vitiates the text by introducing elements not present in the original. 'Private interpretation' is a well-known problem.

New performances (interpretations) of



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Beethoven (for example) are not only justifiable but required. Varying performances (interpretations) are not only justifiable but required (as long as the score is not misrepresented).

What is said here of Shakespeare and Beethoven applies equally of course to contemporary playwrights or composers.

Private reading of the biblical, literary or musical text is not to be denied. It also gives life to the text and equally becomes an inspired text for the reader or private 'performer'. Public reading of a biblical text in a faith assembly is not the only locus of revelation though it is paradigmatic and to be valued higher than the private reading.

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*It must be said that Christ himself 'is present in his word, since it is he who speaks when Scripture is read in Church'. Indeed, 'the liturgical celebration becomes the continuing, complete and effective proclamation of God's word. The word of God, constantly proclaimed in the liturgy, is always a living and effective word through the power of the Holy spirit. It expresses the Father's love that never fails in its effectiveness towards us.' The Church has always realised that in the liturgical action the word of God is accomplished by the interior working of the Holy Spirit who makes it effective in the hearts of the faithful.*

—*Verbum Domini*, no. 52