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The Bible in the digital age: multimodal Scriptures in communities

1 Introduction: the interface between printed and digital biblical worlds

The entrance of the 2017 International Reformation Exposition in Wittenberg was described on the exhibition website as a "huge book" (*riesiges Buch*): a 27-meter-high Bible.[1] Within Protestant Church life, one could hardly find a clearer physical manifestation of the statement by reformed theologian Pierre Gisel, which he believed to be valid for the whole of Christianity: "Scripture *fills the place of the origin*, while it is a *historically secondary* phenomenon."[2] The visitors to the 2017 Exposition were indeed invited to enter at the point of "origin," through the gate consisting of a Bible. In the face of such a clear theological and cultural proclamation in the form of a giant Bible, it is a challenge to evaluate the impact of the digital turn on biblical studies.

But all Christian movements are currently engaging in the rise of digital biblical culture, and we can see its effects in academic institutions, qualifications, networks, meetings, and publications. The first research center of digital theology opened in 2014 at Durham University and awarded its first master's degree in digital theology in 2017. Likewise, Vrije University Amsterdam has offered a master's degree in biblical studies and digital humanities since 2015.[3] Brill has also

1 "Torraum Welcome," reformation2017, https://r2017.org/weltausstellung/welcome/.
2 Pierre Gisel, "Apocryphes et canon: leurs rapports et leur statut respectif. Un questionnement théologique," *Apocrypha* 7 (1996), 230.
3 "MA in Digital Theology," Durham University, https://www.dur.ac.uk/codec/courses/; "New MA Programme 'Biblical Studies and Digital Humanities'," Faculty of Religion and Theology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, http://www.godgeleerdheid.vu.nl/en/news-agenda/news-archive/2015/okt-dec/151023-new-ma-programme-biblical-studies-and-digital-humanities.aspx.

begun a new series, *Digital Biblical Studies*, and the present volume is part of De Gruyter's series *Introductions to Digital Humanities and Religion*.[4] The annual international SBL (Society for Biblical Literature) and EABS (European Association of Biblical Studies) meetings have organized digital humanities (DH) sections since 2012 and 2013 respectively.

A number of scholars have also already written overview articles on the relationship between biblical studies and the digital turn. For example, in 2010, Wido van Peursen highlighted the turn from texts to documents;[5] in 2012, Ulrich Schmid drafted a general outline of the evolution of the New Testament editions;[6] in 2014, the question was raised whether the New Testament would become a *biblaridion*, lost in the web, a topic I have developed further in other articles and collected essays.[7] In 2016, Carrie Schroeder demonstrated that the expansion of digital textual studies would include "'multimodal layered worlds', worlds of empowerment, engagement, and interactivity," a feature not specific to biblical studies but present in religious studies and beyond.[8] Religious studies

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[4] "Digital Biblical Studies," Brill, www.brill.com/dbs; "Introductions to Digital Humanities – Religion," De Gruyter, https://www.degruyter.com/serial/IDHR-B/html.

[5] Wido van Peursen, "Text Comparison and Digital Creativity: An Introduction," in *Text Comparison and Digital Creativity: The Production of Presence and Meaning in Digital Text Scholarship*, ed. Wido van Peursen, Ernst D. Thoutenhoofd, and Adrian Van der Weel, Scholarly Communication 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2010): 1–27.

[6] Ulrich Schmid, "Thoughts on a Digital Edition of the New Testament," in *Reading Tomorrow: From Ancient Manuscripts to the Digital Era / Lire Demain. Des manuscrits antiques à l'ère digitale*, ed. Claire Clivaz et al., in coll. with Benjamin Bertho (Lausanne: PPUR, 2012): 299–306. Previously see especially David C. Parker, "Through a Screen Darkly: Digital Texts and the New Testament," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25, no. 4 (2003): 395–411.

[7] Claire Clivaz, "New Testament in a Digital Culture: A *Biblaridion* (Little Book) Lost in the Web?", *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 3, no. 3 (2014): 20–38. See also Claire Clivaz, "Homer and the New Testament as 'Multitexts' in the Digital Age?", *Scholarly and Research Communication* 3, no. 3 (2012): 1–15, http://src-online.ca/index.php/src/article/view/97; Claire Clivaz, "Jamais deux sans trois! Théologie, exégèse et culture," in *Entre exégètes et théologiens: la Bible. 24ᵉ congrès de l'ACFEB (Toulouse 2011)*, ed. Elian Cuvillier and Bernadette Escaffre (Paris: Cerf, 2014): 253–69; Claire Clivaz, "Introduction: Digital Humanities in Jewish, Christian and Arabic Traditions," *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 5 (2016): 1–20. Collected essays: Claire Clivaz, Andrew Gregory, and David Hamidović, eds., *Digital Humanities in Biblical, Early Jewish and Early Christian Studies*, in coll. with Sarah Schulthess, Scholarly Communication 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Claire Clivaz, Paul Dilley, and David Hamidović, eds., *Ancient Worlds in Digital Culture*, in coll. with Apolline Thromas, Digital Biblical Studies 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Claire Clivaz et al., eds., "Digital Humanities in Jewish, Christian and Arabic Traditions," special issue, *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 5, no. 1 (2016).

[8] Caroline T. Schroeder, "The Digital Humanities as Cultural Capital: Implications for Biblical and Religious Studies," *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 5, no. 1 (2016), 43.

have also been prolific with regards to the digital turn, notably the work of Heidi Campbell, who published an overview of the topic in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. She developed these topics further in publications in 2015 and 2016.[9] In 2017, Jeffrey Siker published the first monograph about the Bible in a digital age.[10]

However, on its own, this rigorous digital research does not engage with the fact that an important epistemological turn is at stake, nor does it explore this turn's impact on the theological and cultural attachments to the Bible as a printed book. Despite many years of study dedicated to the digital turn in the humanities and biblical studies, such a question can only be studied in increments. Embedded in a quickly evolving cultural context, considerable effort must be made to reorient our minds, which are so accustomed to printed culture. A renewed attention to the famous adage *sola scriptura* and the theological impact of the digital turn in New Testament studies is necessary. A possible model or starting point is the Swiss Federation of Protestant Churches (SEK) publication of a Reformation commemoration study on the topic, entitled *Sola lectura*.

Written by a group of Swiss theologians, the text clearly states that the transition from the "Gutenberg-Galaxie" to the world of electronic media challenges the reading culture of Christianity based on the Bible. This turning point will then be relativized by the long-term perspective. In the history of Christian media, one can indeed observe several affinities between the Christian message and the book as medium. But this relationship is not related by essence to Christianity; it does not reach the identity of the Christian faith. [...] Christianity is not a religion of the book.[11]

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9 Heidi A. Campbell, ed., *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013); Heidi A. Campbell and Brian Altenhofen, "Methodological Challenges, Innovations and Growing Pains in Digital Religion Research," in *Digital Methodologies in the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Sariva Cheruvallil–Contractor and Suha Shakkour (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015): 1–12; including theology: Heidi A. Campbell and Stephen Garner, *Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith in Digital Culture* (Buffalo, NY: Baker Academy, 2016). See also notably Olivier Krüger, *Die mediale Religion. Probleme und Perspektiven religionswissenschaftlicher und wissenssoziologischer Medienforschung*, Reihe Religion und Medien 1 (Bielfeld: Transcript Verlag, 2012); Tim Hutchings, *Creating Church Online* (Oxford: Routledge, 2017).
10 Jeffrey S. Siker, *Liquid Scripture: The Bible in a Digital World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017); Claire Clivaz, "Review of Jeffrey S. Siker, *Liquid Scripture: The Bible in a Digital World*," *Review of Biblical Literature* 5 (2018): 1–6, https://www.sblcentral.org/home/bookDetails/11851.
11 SEK, *Sola lectura? Aktuelle Herausforderungen des Lesens aus protestantischer Sicht* (Bern: Stämpfli AG, 2016), https://www.evref.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/18_sola_lectura_de.pdf. My English translation.

Arguing for "the emancipation of the writing from the book," this SEK document also underlines "that 'Scripture' in the electronic format will become more interactive and so less canonical: it won't be a pre-existent, printed holy Scripture, but a part of an ongoing process of communication."[12] Consequently, moving beyond *sola scriptura*, the focus is placed on *sola lectura*, reminding one that "to read is a core competence of Protestantism. From the beginning, the Reformation was related to the reading experiment, based on the Bible and developing from it."[13] The SEK document does not claim to make all people enter through "the welcome gate of the book," in contrast to the Wittenberg Reformation Exposition.[14] Instead, it attempts to understand the challenge of the emancipation of the writing from the book[15] and writing's participation in the communication process.

Well before the rise of the digital turn, Karl Barth insisted on considering writing as a communication process with an "invisible community." In a short video recording now available on Vimeo,[16] Barth comments on his process of writing his commentary on the epistle to the Romans. He was looking for interpretive comrades during the early 1920s:

> What I was trying to reach with that? Initially not a book that I wanted to publish. But a collection of manuscripts, which I read to my friends. But then, step by step, it was supposed to become a book anyway. And so it resulted in a book. But if I get asked what I tried to reach with it, I can only say I was looking for comrades, for fellow men and fellow Christians, who possibly, out of the same confusion that I found myself in, were also about to reach out for the Bible, and the New Testament and the Epistle to the Romans, in a very different way. And with them together, sort of in an invisible community, to read this old text.

Keeping in mind the SEK document and this statement in the Barth video, it is worth testing this emancipation of the biblical text from the book and exploring how emancipation would – for better or worse – reconnect the biblical text to diverse communities while pointing to processes of communication. The first section of this article claims that the "the emancipation of the writing from the book" is a challenge for the entire academic humanities community. The symbolic dimensions of the Bible as a particular book have had backward effects on the

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12 Ibid., 10. My English translation.

13 Ibid., 31. My English translation.

14 See p. 21 above.

15 Ibid., 10.

16 The Center for Barth Studies, "Karl Barth & the Epistle to the Romans," Vimeo, uploaded 28 March 2014, https://vimeo.com/90346827; no year or place are indicated for the video itself on Vimeo.

constitution of digital humanities research in which religious representations are often present but not always assumed or criticized as such.

The second section below presents an update on the latest steps of the production of Greek New Testament critical editions. Their recent multiplication points to the diversification of the academic communities that are studying it. This section raises the question of the canon and whether the digital Bible tends to be "less canonical"[17] and also more multicultural and multilingual, as shown for example by PAVONe, the Platform of the Arabic Versions of the New Testament.[18]

Finally, the third section analyzes the challenge of the digital Bible, which is becoming increasingly multimodal on a daily basis, its text associated with images, sounds, and music. Diverse Christian communities are already spreading biblical content in multimodal ways, such as the successful application YouVersion[19] or the Facebook page *Pain de ce jour*.[20] Every day it becomes more difficult to avoid considering what these evolutions could mean for the future of biblical studies. As a theological horizon, this analysis of a few challenges related to the Bible in a digital age will lead to the enlightenment of an adage that was promoted in one of my earliest research articles: *sola scriptura in koinonia*.[21]

2 The text out of the book: a turning-point for the entire humanities

In 1998, the philosopher Jacques Derrida described in a radio interview the depth of the epistemological change he saw coming: "What is in the making, at a rhythm still not calculable, in a way at the same time very slow and very fast, is of course a new human, a new human body, a new relationship between

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17 I fully developed this topic in Claire Clivaz, "Categories of Ancient Christian Texts and Writing Materials: 'Taking Once Again a Fresh Starting Point'," in *Ancient Worlds in Digital Culture*, ed. Claire Clivaz, Paul Dilley, and David Hamidović, in coll. with Apolline Thromas, Digital Biblical Studies 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 35–58.
18 PAVONe: Platform of the Arabic Versions of the New Testament, University of Balamand – Digital Humanities Center, http://pavone.uob-dh.org/.
19 YouVersion, https://www.youversion.com.
20 "Pain de ce jour," Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/paindecejour/.
21 Claire Clivaz, "La troisième quête du Jésus historique et le canon: le défi de la réception communautaire. Un essai de relecture historique," in *Jésus de Nazareth: Nouvelles approches d'une énigme* (*MBo* 38), ed. Daniel Marguerat, Enrico Norelli, and Jean-Michel Poffet (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1998), 558.

the human body and the machines, and we can already perceive this transformation."[22] Within this transformation he considers the future of the book, recognizing at the same time the attachment to this writing form without hindering the development of the numerous means of communication depending on it.

The transformation of writing via digital support must consequently be understood against this general hermeneutical background: it is a deeply ambiguous phenomenon, in the face of which we have the full right to feel uncertain. This feeling is clearly illustrated by the translation gap between the German word *Emanzipation* and the French word chosen in the translated SEK document, "dissociation." "Die Emanzipation der Schrift vom Buch" – "the emancipation of the writing from the Book"– is indeed translated by "la dissociation entre l'écrit et le livre," "the dissociation between the written text and the book," in the French version.[23] "Emancipation" contains a potential liberating and positive element that is not included in the term "dissociation." This discrepancy reflects the mixed feelings of the entire humanities community in the face of the departure – exodus? – of the written text from the book. Scholars have diverse reactions when confronting the digital turn: I often emphasize the fear expressed by Robert Darnton himself, as well as his great enthusiasm with digital culture,[24] or the complete disapprobation of Umberto Eco before the "Mother of all Lists," the World Wide Web, that blurs "any distinction between truth and error."[25]

Recognizing with Jacques Derrida that the exodus from paper media is nothing less than a seism,[26] I stay nevertheless convinced that humanities beyond the book – or unbound humanities[27] – can find fresh developments in the digital adventure. Not bound by covers, pages, and paper, the humanities must explore new digital boundaries that promise not a "better world," but instead new research and thinking conditions, established under the sign of the "capture." Digital humanist scholar Johanna Drucker cleverly proposed in 2011 a switch from the notion of "data" to "capta":

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22 Radio interview in December 1998, and published in Jacques Derrida, *Sur parole. Instantanés philosophiques* (Paris: Editions de l'Aube, 2000), 484.

23 FEPS, *Sola lectura? Enjeux actuels de la lecture dans une perspective protestante* (Bern: Stämpfli AG, 2016), 10, http://www.kirchenbund.ch/fr/publications/tudes/sola-lectura.

24 Robert Darnton, *The Case for Books: Past, Present, Future* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009), 53 and XIII.

25 Umberto Eco, *The Infinity of Lists*, trans. Alastair McEwen (New York: Rizzoli, 2009), 327.

26 Jacques Derrida, "Paper or Myself, You Know... (New Speculations on a Luxury of the Poor)," in *Paper Machine*, trans. Board of Trustees (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 42.

27 Claire Clivaz and Dominique Vinck, eds., "Les humanités délivrées," *Les Cahiers du Numériques* 10, no. 3 (2014): 9 – 16; Dominique Vinck and Claire Clivaz, eds., "Les humanités délivrées," *La Revue d'Anthropologie des Connaissances* 8, no. 4 (2014): 681 – 704.

> Differences in the etymological roots of the terms data and capta make the distinction between constructivist and realist approaches clear. Capta is "taken" actively while data is assumed to be a "given" able to be recorded and observed. From this distinction, a world of differences arises. Humanistic inquiry acknowledges the situated, partial, and constitutive character of knowledge production, the recognition that knowledge is constructed, taken, not simply given as a natural representation of pre-existing fact.[28]

To understand the vastness of the unbound humanities, one must consider the epistemological conditions of the 17th century, according to the French theologian Olivier Abel:

> The time of the buccaneers was particularly flourishing in the Caribbean between 1630 and 1670. In the new worlds, everything is offered with profusion by the divine Providence. [...] We are not in a gift and exchange economy anymore, but in an economy of the "capture", that stands even in the title of the Dutch philosopher Grotius *On the Right of Capture*.[29] This "capture culture" implies that "the right to depart is the condition of the capacity to be bound. The political question will thus gradually become: 'How can we stay together?' when we can always become unbound?"[30]

The humanities are facing this same question today in the expanse of the data age: how will scholars make links and define boundaries, how will they record information, sailing over the unbound humanities? To be bound/unbound exposes the topic of communities as particularly important in digital culture. In her precursor 2009 text, digital humanist scholar – or "DHer" – Kathleen Fitzpatrick pointed to the importance of building a community and developing a new kind of peer-review in the digital academic circles: "[to build a community] is key to the scholarly publishing network of the future, and in particular to its implementation of peer-to-peer review," a peer-review process that she envisioned becoming filtered post-publication and on a community basis.[31] Twelve years later, the peer-review process has not substantively changed, but the (re)configuration of academic communities remains a strategy point that is beginning to impact the production of edition(s) of the New Testament, as we will see in section 2.

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28 Johanna Drucker, "Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (2011): 3, http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/5/1/000091/000091.html.

29 Olivier Abel, "L'océan, le puritain, le pirate," *Esprit* 356 (2009): 107.

30 Olivier Abel, "Essai sur la prise. Anthropologie de la flibuste et théologie radicale protestante," *Esprit* 356 (2009): 115.

31 Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* (Norfolk: MediaCommons Press, 2009), 16, http://mcpress.media-commons.org/plannedobsolescence/.

The dialogue between humanities and the so-called hard sciences is also at stake in this time of community reconfiguration.[32] If humanist scholars are able to leave old boundaries and to test new ones, their centuries-old knowledge will be as useful as ever. As DHer Domenico Fiormonte underlines, "each act of encoding, or rather each act of representation of the specific 'object' via a formal language involves a selection from a set of possibilities and is therefore an interpretative act."[33] Computing languages – such as Unix[34] – remain languages, and will continue to require interpretation, a core task of humanities.[35]

In such a context, several humanist scholars, including Jean-Claude Carrière, Umberto Eco,[36] and more recently Maurice Olender, have considered our relationship to the symbolism of the book, or even the Book, often speaking explicitly of the Bible's symbolic impact. Whereas the SEK report underlines that the relationship between Christianity and the book is not essential,[37] Olender, coming from a Jewish cultural background, belongs to a strand of humanist scholars who continue to emphasize strongly both archives and Christianity as fundamental to Western civilization.[38] His fear is that digital writing material prevents forgetting, preserving all our traces in a hyperbolic way.[39] His monograph concludes with a kind of parable, with a man performing an "analphabetic reading," a reading devoid of cultural information and context:[40] readers can consider if an automated computer reading would also produce such an analphabetic reading.

Whereas writers, philosophers, and thinkers from diverse fields continue to meditate on the exodus out of the book in diverse ways, exegetes are quite ab-

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32 For further developments on this topic, see Claire Clivaz, "Lost in Translation? The Odyssey of the 'Digital Humanities' in French," *Studia UBB Digitalia* 62, no. 1 (2017): 26–41, http://digihubb.centre.ubbcluj.ro/journal/index.php/digitalia/article/view/4/18.

33 Fiormonte, Domenico. "The Digital Humanities from Father Busa to Edward Snowden." *Media Development* 64, no. 2 (2017): 30. Fiormonte refers here notably to the work of the Italian scholars Tito Orlandi, Raul Mordenti, and Giuseppe Gigliozzi.

34 "Unix," Wikipedia, last updated 24 Feb 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unix.

35 See Yves Citton, *L'Avenir des Humanités. Économie de la connaissance ou culture de l'interprétation?* (Paris: La Découverte, 2010), 21.

36 Jean-Claude Carrière and Umberto Eco, *N'espérez pas vous débarrasser des livres* (Paris: Seuil, 2009), 294: "with the religions of the Book, the book has served not just as a container, as a receptacle, but also as a 'wide angle' from which it has been possible for everything to be observed, everything related, maybe even for everything to be decided" (quotation translated for this chapter).

37 SEK, *Sola lectura*, 7.

38 Maurice Olender, *Un fantôme dans la bibliothèque* (Paris: Seuil, 2017), 78–80.

39 Ibid., 65.

40 Ibid., 190–2.

sent from this general debate: their preferred object of study, the Bible, is thus at the center of the issue, as well as their core skills of reading and interpreting. I consider it an urgent task to see our field involved in this general cultural debate, and to take part in at least the two following issues. First, a religious vocabulary often haunts digital culture and should be questioned, beginning with the French word "ordinateur" (computer). In 1953, the IBM president requested that Sorbonne professor Jacques Perret choose a French word to translate the English "computer." Perret explains in a letter why he chose to translate "computer" with the French word "ordinateur," referring to the order of creation and even to the Catholic priestly ceremony of "ordination" to justify his choice.[41] Another example is the choice of the word "cloud,"[42] used to designate digital material moving "in the air," and remembering – *nolens, volens* – the cloud symbolizing the presence of God in the desert. Such a vocabulary should be analyzed and probably demystified: we might stop wrongly assimilating the digital world to something that is "dematerialized."[43]

Second, theologians and exegetes should participate in the debate regarding the early history of the digital humanities, so often placed under the patronage of Jesuit Father Roberto Busa, as Julianne Nyhan and Andrew Flinn remind us.[44] Busa's visit in 1949 to the IBM president is often seen as emblematic, and for Fiormonte, there is no doubt that "Busa's undertaking founded the discipline of the humanities computing (although years later it was renamed digital humanities), but above all it laid the groundwork for a profound epistemological and cultural transformation."[45]

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41 Jacques Perret, Lettre du 16 avril 1955 de J. Perret, professeur à l'université de Paris, à C. de Waldner, président d'IBM France. Archives IBM France. The letter has been digitalized by Alain Pesson (CIGREF) and made available in this blog post: Loïc Depecker, "Que diriez-vous d' 'ordinateur' ?", *Bibnum, Calcul et informatique*, published on the 1st June 2015; consulted on the 1st June 2021. http://journals.openedition.org/bibnum/534.
42 Sydney J. Shep, "Digital Materiality," in *A New Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens and, John Unsworth (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2016): 322–30.
43 Claire Clivaz, "Vous avez dit 'dématérialisation'? Diagnostic d'une panne culturelle," *Le Temps* (blog), 2 July 2016, https://blogs.letemps.ch/claire-clivaz/2016/07/02/vous-avez-dit-dematerialisation-diagnostic-dune-panne-culturelle/.
44 Julianne Nyhan and Andrew Flinn, *Computation and the Humanities: Towards an Oral History of Digital Humanities*, Springer Series on Cultural Computing (Washington, DC: Springer, 2016), 1.
45 Fiormonte, "Digital Humanities," 30.

I fully agree with Milad Doueihi that such a foundational historical reading must also include other major figures such as Alan Turing.[46] Steven E. Jones' clever monograph about Busa has instigated a useful inquiry that allows us to better understand what is at stake around this Jesuit figure. Jones does not pretend to have achieved a religious or theological analysis of Busa,[47] but he enlightens several points that invite theologians and exegetes from the diverse Christian confessions to think also from their own position on these facts. Jones underlines that "IBM's interests in 1949 – 1952 surely included shoring up post-war diplomatic relations with the Vatican, Italy, and Europe as a whole just at the advent of its World Trade Corporation."[48] Conscious of this commercial context, Busa asks in a private 1960 letter if this cooperation between a businessman and a priest is blessed by God. He concludes affirmatively, referring to an unidentified biblical verse.[49] His spiritual enthusiasm for humanities computing can even be read in his 2004 introduction to the first edition of the *Companion to Digital Humanities:* "*Digitus Dei est hic!* The finger of God is here!"[50]

Busa never applied his computational philology to the Bible, but rather to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Thomas Aquinas,[51] the latter of which is a text sixteen times longer than the Bible.[52] In fact, the first scholar to cross the Bible and a computational approach is an Episcopalian minister, Reverend John W. Ellison, who prepared an index of the English Revised Standard Version of the Bible in parallel to Busa's Thomas Aquinas Index.[53] Nobody remembers his name today, whereas the name of Roberto Busa is honored by a regular award in the digital humanities milieu.[54] Regarding the theological, political, economic, and confessional implications of this story, it would be interesting to include the competences of biblical scholars in the inquiry. Whether one rejoices or deplores it, *sola*

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46 Milad Doueihi, "Préface. Quête et enquête," in *Le temps des humanités digitales*, ed. Olivier Le Deuff (Limoges: FyP editions, 2014): 8 – 9. For an application of this suggestion, see chapter 2 in Clivaz, *Ecritures digitales*.

47 Steven E. Jones, *Roberto Busa, S.J., and the Emergence of Humanities Computing: The Priest and the Punched Cards* (London: Routledge, 2016), 14.

48 Ibid., 97.

49 Ibid., 97.

50 Roberto Busa, "Foreword: Perspectives on the Digital Humanities," in *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens and, John Unsworth (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2004): xvi – xi, http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companion/.

51 Jones, *Roberto Busa*, 13.

52 Ibid., 126.

53 Ibid., 100 – 10.

54 "Roberto Busa Prize," ADHO, http://adho.org/awards/roberto-busa-prize.

scriptura became part of the digital scenes with the work of John W. Ellison in the 1950s, and the biblical research milieu must engage in the analysis of this new writing support, the most important since the transition from the scrolls to the codices, according to Roger Chartier and Christian Vandendorpe.[55] Let's now turn to see how this new medium has impacted the production of editions of the Greek New Testament.

3 Textuality at stake: editing the New Testament in a digital culture

Teaching the New Testament in its original language can provoke surprises for the most attentive professor. Students are indeed more and more used to searching online for a Greek New Testament version, instead of opening a 28th Nestle Aland paper edition (NA28).[56] When the professor is listening to a student reading a Greek text other than the NA28, he/she is forced to interrupt the teaching, and to check with the students what kind of Greek New Testament they have found online. If one googles in French "Nouveau" + "Testament" + "Grec," the first ranked site is an anonymous homemade Greek New Testament edition,[57] published by the so-called TheoTeX edition.[58] Only after a patient search can one locate a statement about the principles of the TheoTeX edition: this edition wishes to "reedit books about protestant evangelical theology, in the PDF, ePUB formats, using LaTeX and Perl."[59] The anonymous Greek New Testament edition

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55 Roger Chartier, *Les métamorphoses du livre: Les rendez-vous de l'édition. Le livre et le numérique* (Paris: Bibliothèque du Centre Pompidou, 2001): 8; Christian Vandendorpe, *From Papyrus to Hypertext: Toward the Universal Digital Library*, trans. Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott, Topics in the Digital Humanities (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009): 127; for a comment, see Claire Clivaz, "The New Testament at the Time of the Egyptian Papyri: Reflections Based on P[12], P[75] and P[126] (P. Amh. 3b, P. Bod. XIV–XV and PSI 1497)," in *Reading New Testament Papyri in Context – Lire les papyrus du Nouveau Testament dans leur context*, ed. Claire Clivaz and Jean Zumstein, in coll. with Jenny Read–Heimerdinger and Julie Paik, BETL 242 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011): 20–3.

56 Barbara Aland, ed., *Nestle Aland 28th Edition of the Greek New Testament* (Münster: German Bible Society, 2013); Greek text without apparatus online: www.nestle-aland.com/en/read-na28-online/.

57 Last googled on 22 July 2021.

58 "Η ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ / Le Nouveau Testament," ThéoTeX, https://theotex.org/ntgf/cover.html.

59 "About Éditions ThéoTeX," Lulu (Lulu Press, 2020), http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/TheoTeX.

TheoTeX explains in its introduction,[60] signed simply "Phoenix, 12th September 2014," that it is an adaptation of the Robinson–Pierpont Byzantine Greek New Testament edition, with changes and modifications executed according to a personal system.[61] The anonymous author rejoices that the digital age has made it so easy to read the New Testament in its original language, but does not confirm if he/she has obtained the copyright to reuse the Robinson–Pierpont edition.[62] There is no word about the financial and/or institutional resources used to establish this homemade edition.

When a student in the classroom finds such a resource, the first reflex of the professor could be to complain, along with Umberto Eco, that the World Wide Web blurs "any distinction between truth and error" (section 1). But this homemade TheoTeX edition, even as a specific, awkward case, belongs to the seismic situation that has begun to be felt in the field of Greek New Testament editions and New Testament textual criticism (NTTC). David Parker qualified the NTTC digital turn as "dramatic change" in 2008,[63] in an area in which the Institute for the New Testament Textual Research (INTF) and the International Greek New Testament Project (IGNTP) were charged to maintain and develop Greek NT editions for many decades. In 2012, I drafted the general outlines of this "dramatic change" by describing notably the "bombshell" that occurred in 2010:

> At the *Society of Biblical Literature* (SBL) annual meeting in November 2010 in Atlanta – a new, independent edition of the Greek NT was presented and offered to all participants, published by a respected scholar in the field, Michael Holmes, with the support of *Logos Software* and the *Society of Biblical Literature:*[64] neither the INTF nor the IGNTP had been informed of the project. This edition came as a shock for scholars working in the field.[65]

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60 "Notice ThéoTeX," ThéoTeX, https://theotex.org/ntgf/notice_theotex.html.
61 Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, eds., *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform 2005* (Washington, DC: Chilton Book Publishing, 2005).
62 "Notice ThéoTeX": "Jamais acquérir les ouvrages nécessaires pour pouvoir lire le Nouveau Testament dans sa langue originale n'aura été aussi aisé qu'à notre époque du numérique" (anonymous author).
63 David C. Parker, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 1.
64 Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The SBL Greek New Testament* (Atlanta: SBL/Logos Bible Software, 2010), http://www.sblgnt.com.
65 Clivaz, "Homer," 2.

Even if this SBL edition is based on the 19th edition of Westcott and Hort[66] and omits all of the information provided by the papyri, it has generated enthusiasm, notably because of its apparatus in open access (OA), whereas the NA28 presents in OA only the Greek text, without apparatus.[67] The auto-didact chemist Wieland Willker, moderator of the NTTC Yahoo forum,[68] wished in 2010 to see textual critics produce more new Greek NT texts like Michael Holmes.[69] This call has been heeded in places, for example the Tyndale House Edition of the Greek New Testament (THGNT) edited by Dirk Jongkind, Peter Head, and Peter Williams. Their edition is based on the 19th century Tregelles edition,[70] with the collaboration of Dan Wallace and his team at the Center for the Study of the New Testament Manuscripts in Texas.[71] Apparently, the phenomenon I referred to in 2012 as "institutional deregulation" in the scholarly Greek edition of the NT[72] has been expanded even further in the intervening years. I would be inclined today to speak rather about an institutional diversification or transformation: a more neutral word is required here, since, on the one hand, it has become evident that we will not come back to the institutionalized situation, and, on the other hand, NTTC as a field needs to analyze the entire picture of this quite complex evolution to understand what is at stake. What follows are some remarks that will surely continue to evolve in coming years.

First, I strongly underline that the INTF and the IGNTP have to continue their patient work with tenacity to maintain a critical reference edition of the Greek New Testament, to which all New Testament students should look in the first instance. In particular, I hope that public academic funds will continue to support this work intensively. The emergence of non-academic initiatives such as the TheoTeX Greek NT edition is an ambiguous fact: only a detailed sociological inquiry

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66 Brooke F. Westcott and Fenton J. A. Hort, eds., *The Greek New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007 [1881]).

67 See note 57.

68 For an analysis of the NTTC evolution in the social networks, see Claire Clivaz, "Internet Networks and Academic Research: The Example of the New Testament Textual Criticism," in *Digital Humanities in Biblical, Early Jewish and Early Christian Studies*, ed. Claire Clivaz, Andrew Gregory, and David Hamidović, in coll. with Sara Schulthess, Scholarly Communication 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 151–73.

69 Wieland Willker, "Analysis of the SBL GNT in the Gospels," unpublished manuscript, November 2010, PDF file, https://tinyurl.com/y2loqydp.

70 "Greek New Testament," Tyndale House, http://www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/thegnt; Samuel P. Tregelles, *Hē kainē diathēkē = The Greek New Testament* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1887).

71 "Home," Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, http://www.csntm.org.

72 Clivaz, "Homer," 3.

could make the author team or group public and show what strategic intentions lie behind such a project. We simply have no answer to these questions. Ancient NT manuscripts are able today to spark interest in the most unexpected circles, even in some Salafist circles, with the production of an entire Arabic transliteration of the Codex Vaticanus in OA.[73] A sociological inquiry would also help to understand all the implications of such an initiative. Last but not least, the INTF and IGNTP are also securing an etic, rather than emic, approach to the study and edition of Greek New Testament manuscripts. For example, when Robinson and Pierpont invoke God and explicitly pray for their work in the introduction of their Greek NT Byzantine edition,[74] it represents a clear barrier for secularized students and scholars.

Second, the digital turn is rapidly transforming the NTTC field, creating huge challenges for the NA28 – and the next NA29 edition. The German *Bibelgesellschaft* should urgently consider putting in OA the apparatus criticus of the NA28. As long as this is not the case, some will use a more approximate critical apparatus simply because it is in OA. Another urgent question for the NA editing team to consider is the question raised by Olivier Abel, commenting on the new freedom of the 17th century (section 1): "the political question will thus gradually become: 'How can we stay together?' when we can always become unbound?"[75] The innovation of the New Testament Virtual Room of Manuscripts (NTVMR) has created potential new habits for direct collaboration between scholars in the transcription of the manuscripts.[76] But at the same time, it is illusory to think, if we follow Fitzpatrick's analysis regarding the importance of communities in digital culture, that one day all concerned scholars will work in the same virtual research environment (VRE) in editing the Greek New Testament.[77]

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73 The address of the webpage was http://ww38.sheekh-3arb.net/vb/showthread.php?t=2127; the website has now been archived on https://web.archive.org/web/20140703080949/http://www.sheekh-3arb.net/vb/showthread.php?t=2127&page=3. A screenshot of a page of the transliterated Codex Vaticanus in Arabic can be found in Sara Schulthess, "The Role of the Internet in New Testament Textual Criticism: The Example of the Arabic Manuscripts of the New Testament," in *Digital Humanities in Biblical, Early Jewish and Early Christian Studies*, ed. Claire Clivaz, Andrew Gregory, and David Hamidović, in coll. with Sara Schulthess, Scholarly Communication 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 76.

74 See, for example, Robinson–Pierpont, *New Testament*, ii: "Our prayer and fervent hope is that the Lord Jesus Christ will prosper the work of our hands and use our labors for the benefit of his kingdom."

75 Abel, "Essai sur la prise," 115.

76 "New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room," Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung, WWU Münster, http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/.

77 See Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence*.

The importance of specific, close, and diverse research communities – or research community social networks – becomes more evident every day. An impressive example is the recent OA project PAVONe[78] at the University of Balamand, Lebanon, designed to be a Platform for the Arabic Versions of the New Testament, including manuscript images. It is clear that such a project is rightly located in a Middle Eastern country, and is surely of highest interest and importance for Arabic-speaking scholars in these countries. The linguistic aspect seems to naturally distinguish PAVONe from the NTVMR, but the question of PAVONe's interaction with and relationship to the German tool should be raised.

Other online New Testament manuscript editing projects are in preparation or currently running, such as HumaReC, a Swiss National Foundation project on which Sara Schulthess, Anastasia Chasapi, and Martial Sankar have been working under my direction.[79] Its object of study is the only trilingual Arabic–Greek–Latin NT manuscript we know, the Marc. Gr. Z. 11 (379), GA 460. In scrutinizing its content, this project also has another purpose, to test new models of data publication in a continuous way,[80] and this VRE has just received an ISSN by the Swiss National Library. Thanks to the support of the Marciana Library, all of the concerned folios are progressively posted online.[81] In dialogue with the publisher Brill, our team is also preparing a new model of hyperlinked monograph, the web book.[82] A collaboration with an Austrian team allows us to test *Transkribus* on this manuscript, a handwritten text recognition tool.[83] Such a project requires the development of a specific VRE, and the question of interaction with the Münster NTVMR has been established in the next SNSF project, MARK16.[84]

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78 PAVONe, http://pavone.uob-dh.org/.

79 HumaReC, DH+, SIB | Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics 2016 – 2019, https://humarec.org; "HumaReC – Humanities Research and Continuous Publishing: A Digital New Testament Test-Case," P³, http://p3.snf.ch/project-169869.

80 "Launching HumaReC: The Project," HumaReC Blog, 20 January 2017, https://humarec.org/index.php/continuous-publications-blog/12-announcements/18-launching.

81 "Humarec Manuscript Viewer," HumaReC, 2016 – 2017, http://humarec-viewer.vital-it.ch.

82 Claire Clivaz, "Web Book," HumaReC Blog, 20 January 2017, https://humarec.org/index.php/continuous-publications-blog/11-articles/15-webbook.

83 Sara Schulthess, "Collaboration with Transkribus," HumaRec Blog, 1 February 2017, https://humarec.org/index.php/continuous-publications-blog/19-transkribus; Claire Clivaz, "HumaReC mentioned by the H2020 project READ (Transkribus)," HumaRec Blog, 7 April 2017, https://humarec.org/index.php/continuous-publications-blog/24-humarec-mentioned-by-the-h2020-project-red-transkribus.

84 MARK16 (2020), ISSN 2673-9836, https://mark16.sib.swiss.

These two examples show how much the question "how can we stay together, when we can always become unbound" matters in the digital NTTC research field. New ideas should be developed to foster the most efficient interactions between the NTVMR and other online platforms with NT manuscripts. This overview fits exactly with the shift from the text to the document announced in 2010 by van Peursen,[85] a shift also assumed by the project Homer Multitext, which works on each specific manuscript, instead of proposing a critical edition.[86] This shift from text to document explains a certain fear among NT scholars: the SBL and Tyndale House Greek New Testament editions, going back to 19th-century printed editions, are understandable reactions to a situation that threatens the idea of having a common Greek NT. Consequently, the need for a "majority text" or a *textus receptus* has returned. At the same time, the simple fact that the Tyndale House team produced its own edition shows that a certain Pandora's box has been too far opened to be closed again. We now see the majority of NT manuscripts online, and more are added every day: to see the manuscripts so easily is progressively transforming the depth of scholarly text critical practices. Will the digital Bible therefore become "less canonical," following the reasoning of the SEK document (section 1)?

Looking at this situation, it is striking for me to read again what I was writing in 1998 – at a pre-digital age period of my career.[87] I was pleading for the *sola scriptura in koinonia*, afraid to see the canon lose its meaning in the framework of the third quest for the historical Jesus, asking if the cover of the book would not be lost.[88] Twenty-two years later, it is the Scripture itself that has been emancipated from the book, and *sola scriptura* is now looking for new expressions, either as *sola lectura* (SEK document), or as *sola scriptura in koinonia*, as I have proposed. But I absolutely missed in 1998 the link between material writing and our perception of the texts themselves. By including the digital turn on the

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85 See van Peursen, "Text Comparison and Digital Creativity."

86 Casey Dué and Mary Ebbott, eds., *The Homer Multitext Project*, 2014, http://www.homer multitext.org/about.html: "Unlike printed editions, which offer a reconstruction of an original text as it supposedly existed at the time and place of its origin, the Homer Multitext offers the tools for reconstructing a variety of texts as they existed in a variety of times and places."

87 Clivaz, "Categories": 35–9.

88 Clivaz, "La troisième quête," 557: "On peut se demander si la recomposition canonique à laquelle conduisent certaines retombées de la troisième quête, ne révèle pas l'apothéose de l'autonomisation du *sola scriptura:* l'adage ne va-t-il pas ici éclater du fait même de son isolement? La couverture du livre ne va-t-elle pas sauter, laissant s'en aller au vent les feuillets qui composaient l'ouvrage?"

issue, it becomes possible to demonstrate the ways in which categories of ancient Christian texts are shaped at different times by the writing material itself.[89]

At a time where we can see so many NT manuscripts and evaluate them as they are, the need to keep not only one but multiple types of critical NT editions seems highly related to the question of community, whether it is the larger academic community (for the NA28) or more specific communities (for the SBL or Tyndale House NT editions). In other words, we face issues with some common points in the "important codices period" (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, etc.) of the 4th–5th century: the Codex Sinaiticus presents a Greek New Testament *according to* the people who produced Sinaiticus; in a similar way, the Tyndale House Greek NT edition presents a Greek NT *according to* Tregelles and the Tyndale House scholars. Consequently, it is useful to listen to Karl Barth's short and striking video, in which he explains, in his own voice and accent, that his writing is related to people, to an "invisible community."[90] It is surely a different experience to listen to Barth, instead of reading his sentences (section 1). Let's think in the last section about the emergence of a multimodal digital culture...and Scripture.

4 A digital multimodal Scripture in communities

In a way typical of the present conditions of digital culture, the Barth video is accessible online in open access, downloadable from the Center for Barth Studies, but without mention of its place, date, and circumstances of production. Humanist scholars working at this Barth center have surely been trained in the proper way to quote texts and make references with great exactitude. Textual scholars are not used to considering 60 seconds of oral discourse in the same way that they regard a nicely written text; the latter has greater gravitas. This anecdote points to the substantial digital wave that is deeply transforming the humanities: the possibility to create multimodal knowledge and multimodal expressions, integrating text, images, and sounds. For two generations (1945–2000), humanities considered computational resources essentially as a way to "list" knowledge, to create every kind of catalogue and classification according to a logic of association. The "humanities" AND "computing" were essentially based on texts and textuality.

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89 Clivaz, "Categories": 48–55.
90 The Center for Barth Studies, "Karl Barth & the Epistle to the Romans," Vimeo, uploaded 28 March 2014, https://vimeo.com/90346827; no year or place are indicated for the video itself on Vimeo.

At the end of the Second World War, the ingenious Vannevar Bush described a hypothetical proto-hypertext system called the "memex" (memory extender), "in which an individual stores all these books, records and communications" and could create "wholly new forms of encyclopedia."[91] A list of "Literary Works in Machine-Readable Form" was published in 1966.[92] The period from the 1960s to the 1980s saw the extensive development of document markup systems, and the Text Encoding Initiative consortium was created in 1987 to coordinate the efforts of electronic editions in the humanities. Dozens of scholars collaborated in creating common guidelines, which were fully published for the first time in 2002.[93] This central relationship between the humanities, computing, and textuality cannot be underestimated: in 2004, when Busa wrote his foreword to the first edition of the *Companion to Digital Humanities*, he affirmed that "humanities computing is precisely the automation of every possible analysis of human expression (therefore, it is exquisitely a 'humanistic' activity), in the widest sense of the word, from music to the theater, from design and painting to phonetics, but whose nucleus remains the discourse of written texts."[94] But a quick look at the projections of the kind of data present on the internet in the intervening years shows that the humanities digitized "out of the paper" are becoming multimodal in digital formats that *are not printable any more:* in the 2020s, three-fourths of the data will be composed of audiovisual material (videos, images, and audio material), according to IBM projections.[95]

Humanist scholars do not have much time to adapt themselves and their specialized skills to this dominant new material. In 2009, Fitzpatrick said that "if we have the ability to respond to video with video, if we can move seamlessly from audio files to images to text as means of representing music, it may behove us to think about exactly what it is we're producing when we write, how it is that these different modes of communication come together in complex document forms."[96] Interesting projects are now emerging at the crossroad of texts and

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91 Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think," *Atlantic Magazine*, 9 July 1945, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/print/1945/07/as-we-may-think/303881/.

92 Gary Carlson, "Literary Works in Machine-Readable Form: Computers and the Humanities 1," *Computer and the Humanities* 1, no. 3 (1967): 75–102.

93 Claire Clivaz and David Hamidović, "Critical Editions in the Digital Age," in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media and Textuality*, ed. Marie-Laure Ryan, Lori Emerson, and Benjamin J. Robertson (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2014): 94–8.

94 Busa, "Foreword."

95 Representation of expected waves of data showing the growth of audiovisual data (video, images, audio), in IBM Market Insights 2013, ("Background," AVinDH SIG, https://avindhsig.wordpress.com/background/).

96 Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence*, 27.

sounds, such as the Baudelaire Song project.[97] Multimodal editing tools such as Scalar or the Etalks are in development,[98] and the topic of data visualization is crucial in DH.[99] The revolution of a multimodal knowledge is arriving even in biblical exegesis with the emergence of performance criticism[100] and in Vernon K. Robbins and Walter S. Melion's 2017 *Art Visual Exegesis: Rhetoric, Texts, Images.*[101]

It is still very hard to predict, of course, how the New Testament exegesis will evolve in a multimodal culture, but uses of the Bible are already in transformation, as one can observe with the first biblical applications on the market. As Tim Hutchings observes, "in many churches and Bible study groups, at least in Britain and the United States, it is now common to see mobile phones and tablets used during services instead of printed Bibles. [...] Publishers have begun to augment the Bible with multi-media resources, promising to help the user achieve a deeper and more frequent engagement with the text."[102] In two articles, Hutchings analyzes two of the most successful biblical applications, YouVersion and GloBible.[103] promoted by evangelical Christian movements.[104] YouVersion was founded by Life.Church, which is not "an independent online community but the online ministry of a single large church founded in the United States in 1996," with 13 different physical locations as of 2009.[105]

Hutchings' main point is to demonstrate that, contrary to the opinion of several evangelical theologians, the Bible is not "vanishing" or becoming "liquid" in these applications. They maintain a strong evangelical interpretation framework, using all the multi-media possibilities; Hutchings concludes that

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97 The Baudelaire Song Project, https://www.baudelairesong.org/.

98 The Alliance for Networking Visual Culture, 2020, http://scalar.usc.edu/; Claire Clivaz, The eTalks, SIB | Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics, https://etalk.sib.swiss/. See Claire Clivaz, Marion Rivoal, and Martial Sankar, "A New Platform for Editing Digital Multimedia: The eTalks," in *New Avenues for Electronic Publishing*, ed. Birgit Schmidt and Milena Dobreva (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2015): 156–9.

99 See for example Taylor Arnold and Emily Tilton, *Humanities Data in R. Exploring Networks, Geospatial Data, Images, and Text* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2015).

100 Bernhard Oestreich and Glenn S. Holland, *Performance Criticism of the Pauline Letters* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016).

101 Vernon K. Robbins and Walter S. Melion, *The Art of Visual Exegesis: Rhetoric, Texts, Images*, Emory Studies in Early Christianity 19 (Atlanta: SLB Press, 2017).

102 Tim Hutchings, "Design and the Digital Bible: Persuasive Technology and Religious Reading," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 32, no. 2 (2017): 205–19.

103 YouVersion, https://www.youversion.com; gloBIBLE, 2020, https://globible.com/.

104 See Tim Hutchings, "E-reading and the Christian Bible", *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 44, no. 4 (2015): 423–40.

105 Tim Hutchings, *Creating Church Online* (London/NY: Routledge, 2017).

these products offer extensive libraries, with audio and multi-media options and thousands of texts to choose from, but their portfolios are not infinite. Contents are carefully chosen, as are the user's options for navigation through the library. At times, as indicated above, the digital product can even go against the user's independence, offering advice, reprimanding the wayward, and using the techniques of persuasive technology to form new habits of textual engagement. [...] My evidence demonstrates that the funders, designers, and marketers of some digital Bibles are trying hard to promote a traditional Evangelical attitude to the Bible, but further research will be needed to evaluate the consequences of widespread adoption of digital text within religious communities.[106]

Common research projects with interdisciplinary teams of theologians should examine the topic. These applications are in any case a rich laboratory for observing the diverse uses of multimodality to represent biblical content. Notably, orality has made a comeback. On 15 April 2017, YouVersion users shared 166 written verses in India; in Egypt, 3,525 audio chapters were listened to, and 94 in Ukraine. On the same day, in Sweden, 25 written biblical verses were shared, but 2,532 Bible chapters have been listened in this same country. These observations are joining more general observations about the comeback of orality generally in Western culture, with the emergence of cinemas for the ears, festivals of literary performances, or sound studies as an academic field.[107] "Word" and "Scripture," the old theological words facing one another, have begun again to claim our close attention.

In such a context, the quotation in the introduction to this article, claiming that "Scripture *fills the place of the origin*," even if considered as a "*historically secondary* phenomenon,"[108] becomes less obvious. By stating that "das Christentum ist keine Buchreligion,"[109] the SEK document seems to be more in line with our present cultural situation. "Die Emanzipation der Schrift vom Buch" clearly points to a question that has remained unsolved since the 17th century: "How can we stay together when we can always become unbound?" The issue of community is raised when the *sola lectura* is defined as a core Protestant skill.[110] Are the diverse Protestant churches ready to consider that *sola scriptura* as a *lectura* be done in *koinonia?* In digital culture, it is not so much a theological or conceptual question: it is very concrete, since the words of Scripture itself are now emancipated from the book. Unbound digital humanities will create new boundaries for the 500-year-old doctrine of *sola scriptura*.

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106 Hutchings, "Design," 215–6.
107 Clivaz et al., "A New Platform," 156–7.
108 Gisel, "Apocryphes et canon," 230.
109 SEK, *Sola lectura*, 7.
110 Ibid., 31.

With such conclusive remarks, one can rightly orient[111] this discussion towards the following question: in which specific ways does the digital transformation influence the discussion regarding *sola scriptura?* After all, Barth's video, claiming that he desired to reach a community rather than to write a book, is expressed entirely in the midst of a culture totally embedded in printed material. The diversification of Greek NT editions, as striking as it is, has already happened in previous times, and the shift from text to document underlined by Wido van Peursen can be considered as a shift back towards previous aspects.

But in 1998, by scrutinizing the issue of the canon and the *sola scriptura*, I missed at that time the importance of writing support in the development of ideas and concepts. Here we are: when we interrogate the digital turn in theology or Christian studies, we are not speaking particularly about a transformation per se in this field. We are analyzing something that happens to all fields in the humanities, to the entire Western epistemology: the impact of a totally new material of writing, and consequently of thinking, with words embedded in images and sounds, in cultural productions no longer printable. To the contrary of theological disputes about canonicity or Christology or other internal topics, emerging digital culture offers an incredibly powerful opportunity for scholars in Christian studies to be involved in an epistemological discussion currently occurring in all fields in the humanities. They have only to consider lucidly that *sola scriptura* must now be considered in relationship to digital writing in general, and not only as evolving towards digital Scriptures.

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[111] Thank you to the reviewer of the English translation of this article for having pointed out this question.

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