

**LATEST NEWS # 449, October 30, 2007**

**The following news concerns Albania.**

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## Albanian Interconfessional New Testament aims to boost personal Bible reading

ALBANIA – A country where religion was officially banned until 1990 now has its first interconfessional translation of the New Testament. The launch took place yesterday in the Albanian capital, Tirana.

Altin Hysi, General Secretary of the Interconfessional Bible Society of Albania, said that the seven-year project had been undertaken with the participation of the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches.

“This has been a testimony that the Bible Society does what it believes,” he said. “The three translators and all the people participating in it belong in a balanced way to the three churches – the Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants.” \*

Orthodox and Roman Catholic believers already have their own translations for liturgical use and it is not the purpose of the new translation to replace them. The Bible Society believes, however, that the new translation will be particularly suitable for *personal* reading. It may also prompt those who do not already do so to make personal reading of the Bible a habit.

The New Testament is being published in two formats: a pocket-sized and a standard-sized edition. Furthermore the standard-sized edition will have three different covers designed to appeal to three different audiences.

Other publications related to the new translation that are in the pipeline are a dictionary of biblical Greek and Albanian, a study edition of the New Testament and a concordance

Meanwhile, two of the same scholars who worked on the New Testament are now preparing to turn their attention to the Old Testament, a project which is due to begin within the next two years.

“After 50 years of Communism, we have inherited a very difficult situation,” Mr Hysi explained. “We *don't have* the biblical scholars; we have to start from scratch and help the translators to get the skills. In the case of the New Testament, it took a year of training the translators, using a tailor-made training programme, before they started translating.”

Thus, in anticipation of the Old Testament work, one member of the team is currently engaged on a Master's degree in Hebrew.

Mr Hysi thinks that translating the Old Testament will take up to 10 years.

*\*Albania's population is 3.5 million, and although official statistics in Albania are not especially reliable, Mr Hysi estimates the proportion of Orthodox as not more than 20 per cent, the Catholics at not more than 15 per cent and the Evangelical-Protestants at around one per cent. “The rest would be Muslims or atheists,” he adds.*

For further information please contact [comms@ubs-wsc.org](mailto:comms@ubs-wsc.org)

