


Bible Editions and their Use in the Churches of the Reformation Heritage (1990–2020)

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UDK: 27-23:655.4:277(497.5)"1990/2020"

Category: Review paper

<https://doi.org/10.32862/k.20.1.1>

Received: February, 2026

Abstract

This article analyses the Croatian-language Bible editions that were actively used in the churches of the Reformation Heritage in Croatia between 1990 and 2020. It aims to identify those translations that exerted genuine influence on liturgical, pastoral, and personal practices within these communities, while also exploring the criteria by which they were selected and applied. Rather than offering a general survey of all Croatian Bible translations, the study focuses on editions with documented use in church life, including complete translations of the Bible and the New Testament, while excluding occasional and sporadic publications. The article begins with a brief overview of the Reformation foundations of Bible translation, with particular emphasis on the principle of sola scriptura and the importance of making the Holy Scriptures accessible to believers in their own language. The central section explores the selected editions from the 1990–2020 period, evaluating their linguistic characteristics, translation strategies, and reception in church practice. Special attention is given to contemporary trends, such as the plurality of translations, the rise of digital and audio formats, and the specialized editions tailored to different age groups and social contexts. The results reveal that, despite the increasing diversity of available editions, a stable and recognizable core of biblical texts has continued to shape church practice in these communities. The study also underscores the Bible's ongoing role in forming the religious and



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cultural identity of believers and affirms that modern publishing and digital developments are advancing the accessibility of Scripture in continuity with the Reformation tradition.

Keywords: *Bible editions; churches of the Reformation Heritage; reception; Croatian language; publishing*

Introduction

For centuries, the Bible has been the foundation of the religious, cultural, and linguistic identity of Christian communities, and in the churches of the Reformation Heritage, it occupies a special place as the primary source of spiritual teaching and liturgical practice. The term “churches of the Reformation heritage” is here used in accordance with the classification stated by Stanko Jambrek in his article “Churches of the Reformation Heritage in Croatia (1990–2020): Their Legal Status, Restructuring and Overall State in 2021,” published in *Kairos* journal on January 19, 2025. The principle of *sola scriptura*, one of the key mottos of the Reformation, emphasizes the importance of the Holy Scriptures as the only authoritative tenets for faith and practice. In the Croatian context, the history of Bible translations and publications reflects not only the religious life, but also broader cultural, linguistic, and educational processes, including the development of publishing, standardization of the Croatian language, and education of believers.

However, the subject of Bible translations in Croatia is exceptionally broad and multifaceted. It encompasses translations stemming from various confessional traditions, as well as partial editions and occasional or sporadic publications. The present article, therefore, concentrates on a clearly delimited research focus: Bible editions that were used in churches of the Reformation heritage in Croatia between 1990 and 2020. Particular attention is given to those editions that were actually employed in liturgical, pastoral, or personal practice, rather than to the entire history of biblical translation in the country. This deliberate narrowing of scope enables systematic and methodologically rigorous analysis, avoids arbitrary selection of material, and clearly delineates the temporal and confessional boundaries of the research. The topic of reviewing Bible editions has previously been addressed by several scholars, most notably Stanko Jambrek and Ruben Knežević¹, Karlo Višaticki, Tihonija Zovko,² and Nada Babić³.

- 1 Jambrek, Stanko, and Ruben Knežević. 2007. “Kronološki pregled objavljenih potpunih i djelomičnih prijevoda Biblije na hrvatski jezik.” *Kairos: Evanđeoski teološki časopis* 1, no. 1: 137–156.
- 2 Višaticki, Karlo, and Tihonija Zovko. 2022. “Biblijska bibliografija (2019.–2020.).” *Crkva u svijetu* 57, no. 1: 151–172.
- 3 Babić, Nada. 2018. *Hrvatski prijevodi Novoga zavjeta od 20. stoljeća*. Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost.

For this analysis, only complete editions of the Bible and the New Testament were selected, while occasional and sporadic publications that did not achieve broader reception within church practice were excluded. This selection criterion allows for a meaningful examination of the actual use and reception of biblical editions within Reformation heritage communities, including their influence on liturgy, education, and personal spiritual life.

The article is organized into three sections. The first section offers a brief overview of the historical and Reformation foundations of biblical translation, which are relevant for understanding contemporary editions. The central section provides an analysis of the selected corpus of Bible editions and their use, with particular attention to linguistic features, translation strategies, and their application in church practice. The final section explores contemporary trends in the period 1990–2020, including the pluralization of translations, digitalization, audio editions, and specialized publications, and assesses their contribution to enhancing the accessibility of the Bible.

Beyond offering an overview of the relevant editions, this article also proposes a methodological framework for the systematic tracking of the reception of biblical editions within churches of the Reformation heritage, by underscoring how the interplay between established tradition and contemporary innovations in biblical publishing shapes the religious life and cultural identity of Croatian believers.

1. Historical Foundations of Bible Translation in the Croatian Context

The Reformation strongly promoted the translation of the Holy Scriptures into vernacular languages, with reformers frequently assuming the role of translator and printer. In Croatia, this process began in the 16th century under the influence of the broader European Reformation movement, which gave rise to a pressing need for the Bible to be accessible to the general public. The first completed New Testament translation into Croatian, *Novi testament*, prepared by Stephanus Consul and Antun Dalmatin, appeared in 1562/1563 in both Glagolitic and Cyrillic scripts. This translation served a dual purpose: to spread the gospel among Croats and to evangelize the wider Slavic region to the east. Its linguistic foundation, rooted in the Croatian literary language of the Glagolitic tradition, exerted a significant influence on subsequent Protestant writers and translators, thereby preserving continuity between medieval and modern Croatian literature (Knežević 2019, 67–82).⁴

4 A reprint and Latin transcription of the Glagolitic original of the New Testament from 1562 was published in 2013 by the Adventist Theological College, the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb, and Školska knjiga, while a reprint and Latin transcription of the Glagolitic original of the New Testament from 1563 was published in 2015 by the Adventist Theological College, the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb, and Školska knjiga.

For more than four centuries, there has been a persistent demand for more accessible and contemporary Bible translations. During the Counter-Reformation, attempts by Croatian authors to publish vernacular translations frequently failed to gain the approval of ecclesiastical authorities. Bartol Kašić, the author of the first Croatian grammar, *Institutiones linguae Illyricae* (1604), began translating the New Testament in 1625, completed it in 1631, and finished the Old Testament in 1636 (Horvat 2011, 70–76). Despite the thoroughness and high quality of these translations, their use was prohibited, illustrating the complex interplay between church policy and linguistic practice. The translation was eventually published in Paderborn in 1999–2000 (Brozović 2000). A similar fate befell Stjepan Rusić's New Testament translation in 1753, which remained in manuscript form – a fate that was by no means exceptional.

The first complete Bible translation into Croatian was produced by Matija Petar Katančić and completed in 1815/1816. It was printed in Buda in 1831 in six volumes as a parallel bilingual edition (Croatian and Latin) (Farkaš 1998, 20–34). Katančić employed the so-called “language of the Franciscans” – the Ikavian Štokavian dialect of Slavonia, thereby connecting his work with both the liturgical language and the vernacular idiom. Although of great scholarly importance, the translation met with only limited public response, partly due to the literary and social conditions of the time.

The evangelistic zeal of the Pietist movement in the 18th and 19th centuries further influenced the practice of Bible translations and distribution. The British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) played an active role in distributing Bibles in villages and towns through colporteurs, who witnessed their faith and preached the Gospel (Kuzmič 1983). The New Testament translation by Vuk Karadžić, published by the author himself in Vienna in 1847, was acquired by the BFBS in 1851. Together with Đuro Daničić's translation of the Old Testament, the Bible was printed in Serbian in both Cyrillic and Latin script in 1868 (Jambrek 2007, 69–73). A Croatinized version of the New Testament and Psalms was prepared by the evangelical scholar Bogoslav Šulek and published in 1877 (Knežević 2019, 85–98). A Croatinized edition of the complete Vuk and Daničić Bible translation, edited by Milan Rešetar, appeared in Budapest in 1895 under the title “Pregledno izdanje” (understandable, clear edition) (Knežević 2019, 98–105). This translation became the most widely used Bible in Croatian churches of the Reformation and Reformation heritage for many decades until the appearance of the so-called Zagreb Bible and helped establish a lasting continuity in the translation, printing, and reception of the Scriptures that would shape subsequent publishing practices.

The first half of the 20th century was characterized by the work of translators who continued the tradition of stylistically rich and hermeneutically clear translations. Ivan Matija Škarić translated the Holy Scriptures from the Latin Vulgate into Ikavian Štokavian with a noticeable Čakavian influence. His work was printed in

Vienna between 1858 and 1861 in twelve volumes. A distinctive feature of Škarić's translation was the detailed analysis of each line of the text, rendering it not only a translation but also an exegetical work deeply rooted in both Protestant and Catholic traditions.

This was followed by translations that sought to bring the Bible closer to a wider readership: the translation of the Gospels and Acts by Josip Stadler (published between 1835 and 1907) in five books (14x20 cm format), while between 1911 and 1913, Valentin Čubešnik translated a large portion of the Old Testament. Furthermore, Franjo Zagoda translated the New Testament from its Greek original (1925/1939). The 1939 translation of the Old Testament by Antun Sović has survived only in manuscript form (Rebić 2013, 136–141). Written in a mixture of Serbo-Croatian Štokavian dialects, this translation served as one of the principal sources for the creation of the Zagreb Bible (Baraban and Džinić 2018, 315–329).

The translation entitled *Sveto pismo Staroga i Novoga zavjeta* by Ivan Evandelist Šarić constitutes the third complete Croatian Bible translation (Jambrek 2007, 74–75). It was published in Sarajevo between 1941 and 1942, with the final edition appearing in 1943 (Zovkić 2013, 174–175). Šarić's rendering is distinguished by its emphasis on the purity of the Croatian language, literary stylization, and faithfulness to the original texts (Knežević, 2007, 23–60), making it a landmark in the history of Croatian biblical reception. After the Second World War, Šarić emigrated to Madrid, where his translation was reprinted and became more readily available to the Croatian diaspora. His secretary, Luka Brajnović, further refined his work by eliminating Turkish and Bosnian loanwords (Letica 2018) and improving its stylistic quality. This revised version was printed in Madrid in 1960 and subsequently introduced to Yugoslavia, where it was adopted by members of different religious communities. Between 2006 and 2010, the Croatian Bible Society and the Archdiocese of Vrhbosna undertook a thorough revision and correction of the edition. This revitalized the translation, enabling its renewed use in liturgical and personal contexts, including among members of churches of the Reformation heritage.

Ljudevit Rupčić translated the New Testament in 1961, and in 1968, this translation was integrated into the Zagreb Bible on the basis of the Sarajevo publication from 1967. Rupčić's version was quickly accepted in the Catholic Church, Protestant communities, and churches of the Reformation heritage, which opened a solid base for a systematic use of the Bible in Croatia in the second half of the 20th century. Raspuđić's manuscript translation, which appeared in print only in 1987 – two years before the translator's death – served as a consulted model and was subsequently incorporated into the Franciscan Bible published in 2010. The same edition also contains an eight-volume translation of the Old Testament by Silvije Grubišić, originally published in Chicago between 1975 and 1984.

This phase of biblical translation is distinguished not only by its linguistic clarity and literary excellence but also by a pronounced emphasis on rendering the Scriptures accessible to a broad readership. Such an approach reflects the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*, according to which the Holy Scriptures constitute the foundational authority for religious life and spiritual practice.

2. The Zagreb Bible as the Starting Point

The Zagreb Bible, published in 1968, represents an important milestone in the modern reception of the Bible in Croatia. It was issued by the Stvarnost publishing house in cooperation with the Literary Society of Saints Cyril and Methodius. The Old Testament translation was based on Antun Sović's manuscript, while the books of the Pentateuch were taken from the rendering of Silvije Grubišić. The Books of Psalms came from Filibert Gass's translation, and Ljudevit Rupčić's translation was used for the New Testament. Jure Kaštelan, a renowned Croatian author, served as the chief editor of the edition (Jambrek 2007, 75–79). This version quickly became the most widely used and accepted Croatian translation of the Bible. It was printed in more than 400,000 copies and played a major role in preserving and developing the standard Croatian literary language.

Another important New Testament translation appeared in Zagreb in 1973, produced by two biblical scholars, Bonaventura Duda⁵ and Jerko Fučak. This expert translation was warmly received and widely used both in the liturgy and in the everyday life of the church among Catholics, as well as Protestants in communities and churches of the Reformation heritage. Its ninth revised edition was later incorporated into the New Testament, with introductions and notes of the Ecumenical Bible Translation published by Kršćanska sadašnjost in 1992. The introductions and notes were produced through exemplary collaboration between Catholics and Protestants in the French language sphere. The same New Testament translation was included in the Jerusalem Bible, published in 1994 to mark the 900th anniversary of the Zagreb bishopric. In addition to the biblical text, this edition featured introductions to Bible books, as well as commentaries and notes drawn from the “La Bible de Jerusalem,” from which it took its name. Several experts contributed to the literary refinement of the text. One of them, Tomislav Ladan, who was responsible for the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom, and Sirach, also published his own translations of several biblical books. He began with the Gospel of John in 1998 and concluded with the Book of Revelation (Apocalypse) in 1992, while parts of his translation remained in manuscript form.

Over time, the Zagreb Bible gradually replaced the older Vuk–Daničić translation. Its popularity increased significantly with the so-called Swedish edition

5 Bonaventura Duda consulted an earlier edition of the Gospel from 1961 for his translation.

of 1977, which was printed in 20,000 copies. In 1999, Kršćanska sadašnjost collaborated with the Croatian Baptist Union to produce an edition of the Zagreb Bible without the deuterocanonical books, intended specifically for the churches of the Reformation Heritage. This edition was printed in 5,000 copies in 1999 and another 2,000 in 2006. The Church of Christ in the Republic of Croatia further contributed to the wider distribution of God's word by printing 10,000⁶ copies of the Zagreb Bible in 2017 for its own needs, making the translation even more accessible to a wider readership.

Alongside these standard translations, a paraphrased version of the New Testament called *Knjiga o Kristu – Novi zavjet živim riječima* (*The Book of Christ – New Testament in Living Words*) was published in 1982. Based on the “thought-for-thought” principle, it was translated by Branko and Mirjana Lovrec and Željko Grujić. This edition became especially popular among younger members of the Reformation heritage churches, thanks to its simple and accessible language as well as its affordable price (Jambrek 2007, 81). The second half of the 20th century saw an increase in the evangelistic activities in the Croatian churches of the Reformation heritage. For example, Billy Graham held an evangelistic campaign at the Archdiocesan Seminary in Zagreb in 1967 – the first initiative of such kind to be held in a communist country. Support from foreign organizations further increased the demand for affordable, readable, and readily available Bibles.

Overall, this phase marks the consolidation of Bible publishing in Croatia, with a strong emphasis on literary quality, availability, and the translation's functionality. These efforts prepared the ground for the development of modern digital and multimedia editions at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries.

3. Bible Editions Between 1990 and 2020 in the Context of CRH in Croatia

The period between 1990 and 2000 was marked by intensive Bible translation and publishing activity in Croatia. These were characterized by some new approaches to translation, intended for specific church communities of the Reformation heritage and their particular target audiences. At the beginning of that period, in late 1989, Branko Đaković translated and published the first edition of the New Testament through the Brethren Church of Christ “Bratski vjesnik” in Zagreb (Knežević 2019, 135–156). Đaković's translation follows a strictly literal “word-for-word” principle, aiming to preserve maximum fidelity to the original texts and to allow readers without knowledge of Greek to understand directly what the Biblical text is saying. The language prioritizes precision of expression and structural

6 Information provided to the author of the article on 27. 3. 2026 by the writer of the preface, Mladen Dominić.

fidelity to the source, with minimal editorial interventions, keeping the theological and intellectual purity of the text. Over the following decades, the translation was gradually expanded. In 1993, the Book of Psalms was added to the New Testament. The third edition appeared in 1994, and the fourth edition was published in 2000, at which point the Old Testament was included for the first time. In practice, Đaković's translation gained partial acceptance within the Brethren Church of Christ but saw only limited use in other Reformation communities, largely due to its linguistically and stylistically conservative character.

A similar commitment to consistent, literal translation based on traditional source texts is evident in the work of Ivan Vrtarić. In 1998, the publishing house Riječi iskrene from Pušćine released its New Testament, translated according to the *Textus Receptus* in cooperation with a team of linguistic and theological experts (Knežević 2019, 191–207). Vrtarić also adhered to the literal translation principle, emphasizing the precision of Hebrew and Greek terms. With a print run of 33,000 copies, the edition achieved wide distribution. The innovative aspect of his project was its adaptation to audiovisual formats: in 2000, Aurora Ministries from Florida released an audio version of the Bible for the blind on twelve cassettes. Later editions (2005, 2012, 2016, 2020) further expanded the availability of the complete Bible and incorporated corrections in line with the contemporary reception and language norms. This established Vrtarić's translation as a relevant resource for liturgical and personal use in the churches of the Reformation heritage.

The bilingual English-Croatian translations done by Đuro Martinjak (*Novi zavjet, Psalmi i Mudre izreke*, published in 1993 and 1995) represent an especially noteworthy contribution. They combine elements of the New King James Version with Rupčić's Croatian translation. Martinjak employed various editorial interventions and adjusted the Croatian text to better suit the cultural and linguistic standards of the Croatian emigrant community. In practice, this edition functioned primarily as spiritual and evangelistic literature among Croatian and Bosniak emigrants in Canada, the United States, and Croatia (Knežević 2019, 159–176).

Martinjak also participated in the revision of Šarić's translation (1998–1999), which resulted in the 2005 publication titled *Biblija ili Sveto pismo – Stari i Novi zavjet. Kazalo riječi i redaka Biblije. Izdanje za iseljništvo naroda iz Hrvatske i Bosne*. This project was explicitly aimed at emigrant communities and was modeled on the King James Version. The last edition published by Martinjak in 2011 bears the title *Sveta Biblija – Stari i Novi zavjet / Biblija Sion / Božja riječ / Duhovna hrana*. In this edition, the translation was brought into full alignment with the King James Version. However, Martinjak's translations have not gained wide acceptance in Croatia due to their linguistic awkwardness, strong influence of the diaspora environment, and contact with Bosnian linguistic features. Despite their innovativeness in adapting the international standards and enhancing availabil-

ity, the linguistic clumsiness and various diaspora influences limited their wider reception in the homeland.

Another notable and innovative project during this period was the production of the Braille Bible for the blind and visually impaired (1994–1997), based on the Zagreb Bible. Initiated in 1994 by the Church of Christ in Zagreb, the project saw the New Testament completed by October 1995, with the full Bible finished in 1997. Consisting of 39 volumes and weighing approximately 63 kilograms, this edition is considered the heaviest Bible ever printed in the Croatian language. This translation demonstrates the practical application of translation as a means of inclusive liturgical and personal devotion across diverse church-practice contexts.

The period between 2000 and 2020 in Croatia was characterized by a proliferation of Bible translations, the rapid development of new formats and media, and an effort to broaden access to the Scriptures across generations and social groups. A prominent example is the 2001 New Testament translated by Ruben Knežević in collaboration with a team of specialists for the Bible Society at the International Center for Life in Rijeka. This translation adopted a classical approach, emphasizing linguistic and theological precision. It was based on the 27th edition of the Nestle–Aland Greek text and underwent a comprehensive biblical, linguistic, theological, and stylistic revision (Jambrek 2007, 84). Although widely regarded as high-quality and expert-based, its practical application in the churches of the Reformation heritage has remained limited. This confirms that the technical precision of the translation cannot serve as a guarantee of broad liturgical or pastoral adoption.

An example of the contemporary trend of integrating the biblical text with popular culture is the 2003 publication called *Kreni: Novi zavjet i svjedočanstva vjere vrhunskih sportaša*, issued by the Croatian Bible Society. Using Ljudevit Rupčić's New Testament translation, this volume includes sixteen life stories of prominent athletes. Such an editorial approach reveals a new strategy: by combining the biblical message and modern life experiences, the edition facilitates greater reader identification with the text and offers a practical application in evangelistic outreach, notably through organizations such as *Athletes in Action*.

At the same time, a new generation of dynamic translations emerged, placing particular emphasis on clarity and naturalness of expression. One such work is the *Novi zavjet – suvremeni prijevod* (2003), edited by Mladen Jovanović and published by the World Bible Translation Center in cooperation with the Institute for Biblical Studies (later renamed the Biblical Institute). This translation later served as the foundation for the *Suvremeni hrvatski prijevod* (Contemporary Croatian Translation) (SHP). The translation drew upon the English Easy-to-Read Version as well as the Greek text of the United Bible Societies (1993) and the Nestle–Aland 28th edition (2012). Rather than going for a literal, word-for-word translation, the translators adopted a dynamic conveying of meaning, adjusted to the everyday

communication of contemporary readers. The pocket-sized format additionally increased the translation's practicality and portability. Subsequent *City Bible* editions (2012–2013) were further localized for specific Croatian cities – including Zagreb, Sisak, Split, Petrinja, and Karlovac – and supplemented with guides such as *Five Steps to Peace in Your Heart*. These additions illustrate the integration of pastoral guidance directly into the biblical text.

Work on the Old Testament began in 2012, based primarily on the Hebrew Masoretic Text (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 1984), with additional consultation of the Qumran scrolls and the Septuagint (LXX). *Suvremeni hrvatski prijevod* (SHP) was finalized in 2018 and published in 2020 by Bible League International in two print runs of 10,000 copies each. Its contemporary language and readable style contributed to a broadly positive reception across different age groups and denominational backgrounds. The translators' guiding principle was to convey the original writers' message as effectively as possible in their own time. In addition to the main text, the edition includes introductions, explanations of key terms, cross-references to parallel biblical passages, and cartographic materials, all of which significantly enhance its didactic value. This is something they pointed out in the introduction: "The translators' main desire was to convey to the reader the message of the original Bible writer as effectively and as clearly as the original texts did for the readers in their time."⁷ Although it may not qualify as a standard scholarly translation, its widespread practical use in everyday life among members of diverse Christian communities remains undeniable.

One of the essential trends in this period was the specialization of editions tailored to specific target audiences. In 2012, the *Varaždinska Biblija* (VB) introduced its first comprehensive edition, which sought to emphasize neutrality, literalness, and readability. This was followed in 2014 by the development of specialized versions for motorcyclists⁸ (the *Biker Bible*) and truck drivers (the *Trucker Bible*), which incorporated materials such as guides, prayers, personal testimonies, and practical instructions, illustrating the adaptation of the biblical message to concrete life contexts. The second and third editions of *Varaždinska Biblija*, published in 2015 and 2021, further refined the textual accuracy and didactic elements.

The New Testament, translated using the King James Version as its primary template, was published in 2010 by the Stablo Života Association from Čakovec.⁹ In 2011, the first edition of the New Testament and Psalms appeared, followed by a second edition in 2016. A complete Bible translation was published in 2018 and 2020, also in Čakovec, and is commonly known as the *Čakovec Bible*. However,

7 From the foreword to *Biblija, Suvremeni hrvatski prijevod*, Crete: Bible League International, 2020.

8 In 2014, Bible for the Nations organization, in cooperation with the *Biker Church Europe*, published the *Biker Bible – Bajkerska Biblija* (first edition).

9 The translators were Jonny Leslie and Nikola Vukov, with Rajko Telebar as the editor.

this translation has not gained wider acceptance among members of other Christian communities.

Digitalization and audio formats have also played a dominant role in increasing the Bible's accessibility. The Bible 365 project, launched in 2017, offers a mobile application featuring interactive reading, guided reading plans, as well as public reading, including video materials created in collaboration with The Bible Project. The platform integrates the *Suvremeni hrvatski prijevod* (SHP), Šarić's translation, and the English Standard Version, enabling versatile use – ranging from personal daily reading to education and pastoral work. Audio editions of the New Testament and the full Bible, produced for the blind, have been continuously available since the earlier Vrtarić and Martinjak editions, thereby promoting greater inclusivity and access to the Holy Scriptures for people with visual impairments.

The pluralization of biblical translations is also visible in editions designed for children and youth. Notable examples include: *Moja mala Biblija* (1992)¹⁰, *Dječja Biblija u 365 priča*¹¹ (1995, 2003, 2013), *Biblijske priče i događaji*¹² (1997), and *Biblija za mlade*¹³ (2021), which is distributed free of charge. An especially successful children's edition of the Bible is Michael C. Armour's *Biblija za djecu* (2010–2022). It was published by the Bible Institute in Zagreb in over 1,200,000 copies, which makes it one of the most widely distributed children's Bibles in Croatia. The Bible Institute's ongoing commitment to the study of the Holy Scriptures was further demonstrated by the establishment of the Center for Biblical Research. In addition to collecting biblical materials and studying biblical languages, the Center organizes forums and republishes old, often forgotten editions of the Psalter.

In 2018, Life Publishers International released *Biblija Plus*, a modern study edition that reflects the growing trend of combining the biblical text with analytical and pedagogical tools. In addition to the biblical text, it includes a subject index, book introductions, concordances, notes, maps, and reading plans. This edition pairs the translational precision of Šarić's translation (specifically its 4th revised edition) with the needs of contemporary users, thereby encouraging a deeper understanding of the Holy Scriptures in theological, academic, and pastoral contexts. The first print run consisted of 3,000 copies.

10 *Moja mala Biblija*, by the author Penny Frank, was published in Zagreb in 1992 by a joint endeavor of Kršćanska sadašnjost and Duhovna stvarnost in 5,000 copies.

11 *Dječja Biblija u 365 priča*, by the author Mary Batcheler, was published in Zagreb by Kršćanska sadašnjost and Duhovna stvarnost in 1995, 2003 and 2013.

12 *Biblijske priče i događaji* by the author Kenneth N. Taylor, was published in 1997 by the publishing house Riječi iskrene from Pušćine. The first edition was printed in 1988, but, due to war time difficulties, there arose a need for a reprint and distribution among the refugees.

13 *Biblija za mlade* by Scott Hayes and Lynn R. Camp, was published in 2021 by Eastern European Mission from Vienna and is distributed free of charge.

Among the most recent translations, *Hrvatski standardni prijevod Biblije* (the Croatian Standard Translation of the Bible) stands out. It was officially presented on 12 December 2025 in Zagreb. The project, which began nearly two decades earlier, took 22 years to complete and involved 24 experts from various Christian denominations. The translation was published jointly by the Croatian Bible Society (HBD), Verbum, and Naša ognjišta. It employs contemporary linguistic expressions based directly on the original texts. According to HBD Secretary Damir Lipovšek (Pavičić 2025), the new translation deliberately avoids archaisms, aorist, and pluperfect tenses, based on the belief that no one uses those forms in contemporary language. Despite facing significant linguistic criticism, the first edition of 8,000 copies sold out in less than a month. The project benefited from the participation of members of different churches, with contributions from Danijel Berković from the Evangelical Pentecost Church and Davorin Peterlin from the Baptist Union of Croatia.

In summary, the period between 2000 and 2020 clearly shows a strong trend toward expanding the Bible's availability in Croatia. This has been achieved through the pluralization of translations, the development of different formats (digital, audio, specialized), adaptation to different age groups and social contexts, and the integration of supplementary educational and pastoral resources. These trends demonstrate that contemporary Bible projects not only strive to preserve the originality and theological accuracy of translations but also actively adapt to the needs of contemporary readers, turning the Bible into a practical, accessible, and interactive tool for spiritual instruction and daily life.

Conclusion

The analysis of Bible editions published between 1990 and 2020 reveals that, despite the growing plurality of offerings and increased accessibility, there is a relatively stable and clearly recognizable set of biblical texts that are in actual use in the churches of the Reformation heritage. Such focus enables systematic tracking of the selection criteria and the reception of those editions, including their liturgical, pastoral, and personal applications. By limiting the scope of the analysis to material that is genuinely relevant to practice, this article succeeded in avoiding a superficial or arbitrary overview of all Croatian Bible translations.

The results confirm the enduring importance of the Bible in shaping the religious and cultural identity of believers. They also demonstrate that the period from 1990 to 2020 is characterized by a marked increase in edition diversification. This includes new, complete, and revised translations, digital and audio formats, as well as specialized editions adapted to different age groups and social contexts. Such diversity contributes to the availability of the Holy Scriptures to a broader audience – children, youth, persons with disabilities, and the Croatian diaspora

– thereby continuing the mission of the churches of the Reformation heritage to bring God’s Word closer to every person in a language and form that is understandable to the contemporary reader.

The analysis also underscores the methodological importance of clearly defined criteria for selecting source material. This, in turn, allows for a systematic tracking of the reception and use of Bible editions within a specific confessional and temporal framework. Although focused on the period 1990–2020, the results provide a solid foundation for future research. Such studies could examine the reception of individual editions in greater depth, compare practices across churches of the Reformation heritage with other confessional contexts in Croatia and the region, and assess the influence of digital technologies and new media on the actual use of the Holy Scriptures.

In conclusion, the article confirms that the Bible remains the unavoidable center of religious, cultural, and social life in the churches of the Reformation heritage, while contemporary digital and publishing developments additionally bolster its role and availability in the 21st century.

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Danijel Časni

Biblijska izdanja i njihova uporaba u hrvatskim crkvama reformacijske baštine (1990. – 2020.)

Sažetak

Rad analizira biblijska izdanja na hrvatskom jeziku koja su bila u uporabi u crkvama reformacijske baštine u Hrvatskoj u razdoblju od 1990. do 2020. godine. Cilj rada jest identificirati izdanja koja su imala stvarni utjecaj na liturgijsku, pastoralnu i osobnu praksu unutar ovih zajednica te istražiti kriterije prema kojima su birana i primjenjivana. Umjesto općenitog pregleda svih hrvatskih biblijskih prijevoda, analiza se usredotočuje na izdanja koja su dokumentirano korištena u crkvenoj praksi, uključujući cjelovite prijevode Biblije i Novoga zavjeta, dok su prigodna i sporadična izdanja isključena. Rad započinje kratkim pregledom reformacijskih temelja biblijskog prevođenja, s naglaskom na načelo *sola scriptura* i važnost dostupnosti Svetoga pisma vjernicima na narodnom jeziku. Središnji dio posvećen je analizi odabranih izdanja u razdoblju 1990. – 2020., pri čemu se razmatraju njihova jezična obilježja, prevoditeljske strategije te recepcija u crkvenoj praksi. Posebna pozornost posvećena je suvremenim trendovima, uključujući pluralizaciju prijevoda, razvoj digitalnih i audioformata te specijalizirana izdanja prilagođena različitim dobnim i društvenim skupinama. Rezultati pokazuju da unatoč povećanoj raznolikosti izdanja, u crkvenoj praksi postoji stabilan i prepoznatljiv korpus biblijskih tekstova koji su uistinu zaživjeli u uporabi. Analiza također naglašava kontinuiranu važnost Biblije u oblikovanju vjerskog i kulturnog identiteta vjernika te potvrđuje da suvremeni izdavački i digitalni razvoj doprinosi širenju biblijske dostupnosti u skladu s reformacijskom tradicijom.