# THE POPE ON THE BIBLE

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**Categories:** Bible Translation, Theology

I discovered the following quote from an interview on Pub Philospher (what a great name for a Blog). It comes from an interview given by Father Joseph Fessio, a friend of Pope Benedict's. In the interview, Father Fessio remembered a conversation with the Pope concerning Islam's ability to adapt to modern culture. The Pope gives a very clear picture of the different approach of Islam and Christianity to our founding Scriptures.

> *Well, the thesis that was proposed by this scholar was that Islam can enter into the modern world if the Koran is reinterpreted by taking the specific legislation, and going back to the principles, and then adapting it to our times, especially with the dignity that we ascribe to women, which has come through Christianity, of course. And immediately, the Holy Father, in his beautiful calm but clear way, said well, there's a fundamental problem with that, because he said in the Islamic tradition, God has given His word to Mohammed, but it's an eternal word. It's not Mohammed's word. It's there for eternity the way it is. There's no possibility of adapting it or interpreting it, whereas in Christianity, and Judaism, the dynamism's completely different, that God has worked through His creatures. And so, it is not just the word of God, it's the word of Isaiah, not just the word of God, but the word of Mark. He's used His human creatures, and inspired them to speak His word to the world, and therefore by establishing a Church in which he gives authority to His followers to carry on the tradition and interpret it, there's an inner logic to the Christian Bible, which permits it and requires it to be adapted and applied to new situations. I was...I mean, Hugh, I wish I could say it as clearly and as beautifully as he did, but that's why he's Pope and I'm not, okay?*

I guess that some might be uneasy with his use of 'adapted', but the concept of a living communication from God which can be translated and interpreted in different cultural situations is central to the ministry of Bible translation. It's nice to get confirmation from unexpected sources!

By the way, I'm neither endorsing nor refuting the political conclusions that Pub Philospher draws from this interview - I'll leave that stuff to other blogs.