

World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate

N° 6

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Bulletin

*Sei
verbum*

*** * * The Month of the Bible / Bible
Week in Latin America (page 4) * * ***

**New Version of the "Guiding Prin-
ciples" : Guidelines for Interconfes-**

**sional Cooperation in Translating
the Bible (pages 8-12) * * ***

**The Pilot
Course 1987 of the Biblical Center
in Nemi (pages 13-15) * * ***

**Reading
Gospel Texts : a Simple Method
(page 15) * * ***

**Books and Documents
(pages 16-20) * * ***

English Edition

The World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate (WCFBA) is an international fellowship of Catholic organizations involved in biblical pastoral work. The members foster mutual service among all local churches.

Translation and distribution of Catholic and inter-confessional editions of the Bible in simple language, in cooperation with bible societies throughout the world, is part of this service.

Furthermore, it is the intention of the WCFBA to promote biblical studies, support the production of pedagogical aids for a better understanding of biblical texts, and assist in the formation of ministers of the Word, such as biblical animators, lecturers and catechists, suggesting ways to form bible groups and recommending the use of both mass and group media to facilitate their encounter with the Word.

The Federation also wishes to promote a dialogue with people who believe only in human values, as well as to encourage an encounter with the sacred writings of other religions. Through such encounters, the revealed Word of God can offer a more profound understanding of God and of human life.

The Federation appeals to everyone to add their personal and community support to those great tasks.

*+ Alberto Ablondi, Bishop of Livorno
Président of the WCFBA*

"Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful"
(Dei Verbum, 22).

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CONTENT

* The Month of the Bible/ Bible Week in Latin America	4
* The Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible	
- Introduction	8
- Official English Translation of the "Guidelines..."	9
* Center DEI VERBUM in Nemi	
- Programm of the 1987 Pilot Course	13
- A Participant's Testimony	14
* Reading Gospel Texts: a simple method	15
* Books and Documents	16

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BULLETIN DEI VERBUM
for 1988**

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are given on page 2)*

EDITORIAL

"Bible Week": Here is an excellent opportunity to promote the biblical apostolate and the biblical pastorate! The Executive Committee of our Federation would be very happy indeed if, thanks to our members, the practice of an annual Bible Week would be instituted world-wide.

In some countries, Bible Week has become a long standing tradition and has proven to be a valuable help for the biblical apostolate or the biblical pastorate. It encourages the faithful to read the Bible and thus implement the recommendations of the II Vatican Council's Constitution DEI VERBUM. Additionally, Bible Week fosters the biblical movement within the Catholic Church and is an excellent means to arm the faithful against the propaganda of sects and rising fundamentalism. Msgr. Ablondi, Bishop of Livorno and President of our Federation, has reported to the Executive Committee about his audience with the Pope on the topic "Bible Week". The Holy Father is very much in favor of this enterprise on a world wide scale.

But how can such a Bible Week be organized? There is no standard method. Every country is invited to mold its Bible Week according to local needs and to the biblical-pastoral plan as formulated by responsible local church leaders. In order to profit from the experiences of others, however, BULLETIN DEI VERBUM would like to publish suggestions for the execution of present or future Bible Weeks. Thus in this issue, a model submitted by our Federation members in Latin America is rendered in part, giving detailed information on the implementation of a Bible Week or Bible Month.

On 16 Nov. 1987, the revision of the "Guidelines Concerning Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible" was published. It is important to us to reprint this valuable document which provides practical guidelines in the collaboration between the Catholic Church and the United Bible Societies concerning Bible translations. This text might be of great interest even to those of our members who themselves are not involved in Bible translation work (see pgs. 9-12).

From mid-Aug. through mid-Dec. 1988, the Second Biblical-Pastoral Course for biblical animators is scheduled in Nemi. In 1987, some 28 people attended the first program. On page 13, you will find the schedule of the 1987 pilot course and on pages 14 and 15, a participant reports on her personal experience. If you know people who are interested in the course, please pass on this information. This year the course will be given again in English, but plans are under consideration to offer the program in French and Spanish.

To be able to continue our section entitled "Books and Documents" and give it a more international flavor, we depend on your help. Therefore, we request you send your publications to our Stuttgart office. The BULLETIN pools from the information you provide. Thank you very much in advance! Best wishes for a successful biblical year.

Marc Sevin

* * * * *

The Month of the Bible/ Bible Week in Latin America

* * * * *

In some parts of Latin America as for example in Brazil, "Month of the Bible" has become a tradition. Those responsible for the biblical apostolate in Latin America intend to expand this tradition to all parts of the Latin American continent because they see in it a means of evangelization. "The month of the Bible is an evangelization and renewal campaign of the Christian community."

Many dioceses, parishes, and basic communities, hesitate to celebrate Bible Week or Bible Month for lack of adequate pastoral means or capable personnel.

Because of these difficulties those responsible for the biblical apostolate called a meeting to propose a theme and find adequate means. The last issue of LA PALABRA HOY (Vol. XII, 1987, No. 46-47) reported on the results of their work with a proposal on how to organize a Bible Week or a Bible Month based on Genesis 1-12 with the theme "Man and Woman, Images of God. We Want to Stand Up for Human Life".

During its last meeting in May 1987 in Königstein, the Executive Committee encouraged all member countries of the Federation who do not yet know this practice, to institute a "Bible Sunday" or even a "Bible Week". The endeavors of our Latin American friends meet the concern of the Executive Committee and may be helpful for others in searching for new ways in the biblical apostolate.

In the following, we render a broad outline on the Latin American proposal concerning the organization of a Bible Sunday or a Bible Week. The original Spanish text may be requested from César Herrera, Transv. 29 No. 35 A-39, Bogotá, D.E., Colombia.

Four different aids are proposed to organize a "Bible Month" or a "Bible Week":

1. Guidelines for those active in the biblical pastoral aimed at easing access to the biblical text.
2. Concrete structures for bible groups working on this theme.
3. Proposals for the celebration of the Word.
4. Suggestions for a catechesis to be adapted according to the of community.

1. THE GUIDING TEXT (Genesis 1-12)

The biblical foundation for human rights is the statement that man is the image of God; therefore, everybody has the right to

respect for his/her life and no one can appoint him/herself as master over the life of anyone else.

The Bible places this reality of man as an image of God, before our eyes in the creation account which in turn forms part of the biblical pre-history as written down in Gen 1-11.

After an introduction, treating the literary form of the first chapters of Genesis, the main text dwells in particular on the following points:

1. Creation according to the priestly writer (Gen 1,1-2,4a).
2. Paradise and Fall (Gen 2-3).
3. Cain and Abel (Gen 4,1-16).
4. The Flood (Gen 6,1-9,17).
5. The Tower of Babel (Gen 11,1-9).
6. The History of the Beginnings and Salvation History.

2. "BIBLE GROUPS" OR "WORD-OF-GOD GROUPS"

Some very practical advice for biblical animators introduces this second part of the brochure. First, the concept "Bible Group" is more precisely defined and explained. There follows a series of proposals on how to guide such a bible group. The goals are defined as follows:

1. Renewal of the people of God who compose the Church.
2. Revitalization of Christian communities through encounter, with the goal of establishing a genuine community in which everybody truly participates.
3. Establishment of new offices for lay people by training biblical animators for the practice of communal life.
4. Support for communities to reflect their respective situation in the light of the Bible.

There then follow seven proposals for bible groups, all of them structured in the same manner: 1. He saw that it was good (Gen 1); 2. Man's/Woman's life in Paradise (Gen 2); 3. Why evil? (Gen 3); 4. Am I my brother's keeper? (Gen 4); 5. God takes everybody seriously (Gen 6); 6. Pride is the cause of sin (Gen 11); 7. Those called by God (Gen 12).

Each proposal follows the same structure:

1. *A look at our life.* A very concrete situation from daily life is described which clarifies the chosen theme.
2. *Conscience awareness.* With the help of a questionnaire, everyone tries to describe his/her reaction to the situation in his/her own words and to make comparisons with similar situations known to him/her.
3. *The reflection of the people of God.* A simple explanation of the biblical text and of the testimony of faith expressed therein in relation to the given task.
4. *Deepening of the message.* An explanation treating the biblical text almost verse by verse.
5. *Transforming our lives.* An actualization through given questions.
6. *Our answer.* In relation to the text, some broad suggestions for life.
7. *Face to face with God.* Each participant is given an opportunity for personal prayer.

BIBLE GROUPS: an example.

(As an example, the third of the seven proposals follows.)

Why evil?*1. A look at our life.*

Description of a situation. The Rios family lives in the neighborhood of a big town. Their life moves in peace and harmony. They enjoy the climate and the work and rejoice in the deep security of the family as well as in a strong faith in God. George, the only son, is the center of the affection and joy of the family. One day, he goes into the city to study at the university. There he is acquainted with drugs and becomes addicted.

His father tries to liberate him from this satanic circle; however, it is too late. The damage done to George cannot be remedied. George is lost. In spite of this misfortune, the Rios family does not tire, but continues to fight and in the end they have to close their house to George - a decision which hurts them very much.

2. Conscience awareness.

Try to recount this report you just heard in your own words. Which aspect has drawn your attention? Why is there so much suffering in the world? How are Christians to behave in the same situation? How can our hope founded upon Christ express itself in the face of suffering? Are we in a position to offer a solution for our daily problems? Is Christ a support for us in our suffering?

*3. What did the people of God think.**- introduction*

Now we read Gen 3. We keep the following points present in our mind. This chapter continues the Yahwistic report which explains to us in a dramatic manner the roots of evil. We ask ourselves time and again: Why does evil exist? From where comes the suffering which torments human-kind? Adam and Eve represent all of mankind in rebellion against God. They are linked to the soil (*Adama* in Hebrew). Adam and Adama against the plan of God. We are the protagonists in the rebellion against God.

*- reading: Gen 3,3-24.**- a moment of silence to absorb the Word of God.**4. Deepening of the message.*

The serpent is the symbol of the power of evil. The Bible does not present the serpent as a creature independent from God, rather it belongs among the animals created by God. In the old myths, the cause of evil was attributed to a god who separated from the others, rebelled against them and gave his advice to man/woman. In the Bible, the serpent symbolizes the enemy of man/woman because it tries to exclude him/her from God's plan.

Gen 3 gives no explanation whatsoever about the origin of the serpent. The text says that it is one of the creatures God made in Paradise and that it distinguished itself from all other animals because of its superb cleverness. At the end of the Old Testa-

ment we read: "It was on account of the deceitfulness of Satan that sin has come into the world".

The serpent may also be taken as the symbol of the most clever animal, namely of man himself. Relying exclusively on his intelligence and on his abilities, man rebels against God and considers himself like God. He wants to have power over everything. He turns away from God and thinks he can take his place (cf Ezk 28).

The Egyptian Pharaoh wore as his head gear, a tiara adorned with a snake. The snake here symbolizes the power of Pharaoh which does not bend under the power of the God of Israel, the Lord.

The serpent also appears in all nature religions; due to its relation with water, vegetation and sexual fertility, it is the symbol for the constant renewal of nature. The history of Israel is formed by a contest between God and Baal, one of the nature gods, who betrays the Jews by making them believe the fertility represented in the symbol of the serpent would originate from him and not from God.

Thus the serpent is brought into connection with the enemies of the God of Israel, the Lord: the power of Pharaoh, the slavery in Egypt, the nature powers venerated in the Baal cult in Canaan.

In order to sow evil into the hearts of Adam and Eve, the serpent distorts God. The alliance between God and man/woman was based on love. But the serpent arouses distrust against God: he does not allow man/woman to eat from the fruit of the tree, he therefore is not as good as he pretends to be. He is an enemy of humankind. God betrays man/woman by demanding his/her unconditional trust. The serpent touches on the most secret desire of man/woman: to be totally lord over him/herself, to live according to his/her own laws: "You will be like God".

Man/woman can decide in favor of friendship with God, for reconciliation and divine benevolence. This is the claim made by the Word of God spoken to us in love. Humans can, however, also live according to their own values and goals made by themselves independent of God. In this way, men and women withdraw themselves from the redeeming Word of God.

Nakedness. Adam and Eve feel naked and deprived of their clothes. Their eyes are opened and they recognize themselves. Clothes are a protection of oneself against another person by whom one feels threatened. This mutual distrust however, does not come from God. Rather men and women have to accredit this to themselves. Adam and Eve are ashamed and recognize they are deprived of dignity before each other and consequently of grace before God.

God calls man/woman. (3,9-12). We expect rightly that God awaits them with merciless punishment. God however, calls man/woman as his creature whom he continues to shower with his love.

Questions to Adam and Eve. Both man and woman accuse each other.

5. Transformation of our lives.

- Which counterpart does the serpent of Paradise have in our society?
- What does the serpent represent for me personally?
- How does the reality of sin express itself in our group?
- How do we have part in original sin?

6. Our answer (Gen3,15-24).

First God punishes. Sin must not go unpunished. But God continues to love man/woman and invites them to communicate with him.

To describe the sorrow which befalls Adam and Eve, the author depicts their daily lives with all their troubles and pain. Subsequently he asks the question: Why does our life look like that? His answer is formulated from a conviction of faith: Because we have broken our alliance with God.

The author here makes a comparison and does not express the absolute will of God. Humans must endeavor to overcome sorrow. It is not the will of God that man lords over woman. Work is not a curse, for man/woman was created to work and thus acquire what he/she needs to sustain life. In their conversion to God, humans experience harmony with his /her fellow humans and all of creation and discover the value of work.

Adam begins a new life together with his wife Eve. God does not leave man/woman alone in his/her misery and humility. He makes him/her a tunic because he loves them. One day he will dress him/her with his glory.

Death. A Jewish explanation (midrash) says: "Before the fall, death was beautiful". It opened access to heaven. Since the fall, however, death has become a torture. Man/woman does not attain immortality or eternal life for which he/she has a claim. But if they project their life towards God, then they experience life as a gift from God and not as the success of their own human pride.

Expulsion from Paradise. God does not want the death of man/woman. With sin, they have destroyed their friendship with God, the complete harmony and innocence. He/she lives far away from Paradise.

Without doubt, the Paradise of joy and the Word of God are somehow a task, a search and a hope of man/woman for the mercy of God. Here lies the meaning of Paradise for us today and not in some nostalgic emotion.

7. Face to face with the Lord.

Lord, your Word enters into my innermost being. I place my situation before my eyes. I am united with Adam - far from Paradise and far from you. I am Adam. You called me through the work of your Son in a Paradise of mercy and love in your Church. However, instead of following your Word, I followed my own selfishness which awoke within me like the serpent: the desire to be my own god. Send your Spirit upon me so that I find the Paradise of harmony with God and with all of creation.

3. CELEBRATION OF THE WORD

Several proposals are given for the celebration of the Word:

1. Opening of the Bible Month.
2. Celebration along the lines of themes (Creation/The Fall/Cain and Abel/The Flood/The Tower of Babel/The Calling).
3. Solemn conclusion of Bible Month.

CELEBRATIONS: an example

(the following outlines the third of the seven proposals)

1. Invitation.

We start the Bible Month (Bible Week) with the celebration of the Word. The people of Israel and the Church have never stopped to celebrate their own history interpreted in the light of the revealed Word.

2. The song: "Your Word is Life to Me".

3. Procession: Some symbols of our history and our reality are taken along: the Bible, a candle and a cross as symbols of the Word of God which illuminates our reality.

4. Readings:

- the power that springs forth from the Word of God has created everything that lives: Gen 1,1-13, Ps 23,4-6.9).
- through the power of the Word, the history of salvation became a reality: Gen 12,1-3 and Ex 19,3-7.
- Jesus Christ is the Word of God: Mt 13,1-23.

5. Homily.

God speaks to man/woman: this fact is the point of departure for salvation history and it outlives the entire history of mankind. God is always speaking to men/women.

The living and life-giving Word of God was entrusted to the Church which in turn guards it as a precious treasure.

Therefore the dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum*, (DV) of the II Vatican Council states: "The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord since from the table of both the Word of God and the body of Christ she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life, especially in the sacred liturgy... Therefore, like the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church must be ruled by sacred Scripture. For in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets His children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power of the Word of God is so great that it remains the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and perennial source of spiritual life. Consequently, these words are perfectly applicable to sacred Scripture: "For the Word of God is living and efficient" (Heb 4,12) and is "able to build up and give the inheritance among all the sanctified" (Acts 20,32; cf. 1 Th 2,13)." (DV 21).

"This sacred Synod earnestly and specifically urges all the Christian faithful, to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the "excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Phil 3,8). "For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" (DV 25).

They should make complete use of all means available to become acquainted with the sacred texts whether through the liturgy, rich in the divine Word, or devotional reading. Furthermore they are advised to make use of all other institutions and aids which are nowadays offered by various ecclesiastical biblical organizations. It should be noted "that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture, so that God and man may talk together; for "we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine sayings" (DV 25).

It devolves on Bishops, "who have the apostolic teaching" to give the faithful entrusted to them suitable instruction in the right use of the divine books, especially the New Testament, through translations of these sacred texts with fully adequate explanations. Therefore, the children of the Church can profitably grow familiar with the sacred Scriptures and be penetrated with their spirit.

"In this way, therefore, through the reading and study of the sacred books, let "the Word of the Lord run and be glorified" (2 Th 3,1) and let the treasure of revelation entrusted to the Church increasingly fill the hearts of men. Just as the light of the Church grows through persistent participation in the Eucharistic mystery, so we may hope for a new surge of spiritual vitality from intensified veneration of God's Word, which "lasts forever" (Is 40,8)" (DV 26).

The Word of God in the Church invites us:

a) *To hear his message.* If God in his goodness has spoken to man then he has to listen to him. If the Church invites us to study the Bible, she intends to help us attain a better understanding of the Word of God.

We are to listen to the Word of God in devotion and reverence and in the community of the entire Church. Because the Bible has been entrusted to the Church and to us, we can understand it in its entirety and fullness only through the teaching office of the Church and in complete unity with the Church.

b) *To live the Word of God.* If we strive to assimilate the Word of God within us then we do this in order to make it come true in our everyday life. We assimilate the Word of God only if we truly strive to put the Word of God into practice. The Scriptures contain a concept of life rather than a doctrine which we are called to make our own.

c) *To proclaim the Word of God.* As members of the Church, we hear the Word of God and try to understand it in order to be able to proclaim it with conviction and trust in God just as the apostles did (Acts 4,29;9,28;19,8). Thus the Word of God becomes a testimony.

Through this process, we are not so concerned with achieving knowledge through the Word of God, but rather to have access to a communal life which is shaped by an innermost unity with the Triune God and for which we try to gain others. We have access to this living community because it has been opened to us through Jesus Christ the Word of God made man, who has revealed to us the entire truth of the Father and has opened for us access to this life (1 Jn 1,2-3). We share this testimony in the Christian community.

d) *To struggle for justice.* The Word of God is a power of reconciliation between men/women. This reconciliation presupposes the fight against injustice and exploitation of man/woman. We must not read the Bible only as a book which helps us to bring order into our relationship with God. We must rather understand it as an instruction for changing the relationships among men/women. Therefore, a Bible reading which detracts us from the strife for justice and leads us to shy away from the responsibility of everyday living, should not be called a Christian way of Bible reading. Bible reading must generate a force leading to a change in human history and society through the spirit of love.

e) *To be evangelized and become evangelizers.* Thanks to the Word of the Bible, the salvation message inspires our communities. Therefore, we want to pass on this Good News to our brothers and sisters so that the love of God may fill them too with joy. For service in the community, we as lay people are to assume that office which corresponds to our abilities and helps build up the Church. We all share in the ministry of the Church as a service to man as pertains to the Word of God.

6. *The answer to the Word of God:*

- personal prayer
- homily
- "Our Father".

7. *A fraternal gesture.*

8. *Concluding words and blessing.*

4. INSTRUCTION FOR SCHOOL CATECHESIS

The goal is to make use of the Bible Month or the Bible Week in order to perform a biblical catechesis in the schools. These themes are offered for selection:

- 1/ "The Story of Creation" (Gen 1,1-2,4a) along three texts: a. "And God saw that it was good"; b. "Let us create man according to our image and likeness"; c. "Go and multiply and subdue the earth".
- 2/ "Paradise and the Fall" (Gen 2-3) along three texts: a. "Work"; b. "And man will leave father and mother in order to join his wife and the two will become one flesh"; c. "The fall".
- 3/ "Cain and Abel: where is your brother?"
- 4/ "The Flood".
- 5/ "The Tower of Babel: and we shall be famous".
- 6/ "Abraham".

Catechesis: an example

(the second biblical text of the second theme, see 2b above)

"Man will leave father and mother to join his wife and the two will become one flesh".

1. *Objectives.*

At the end, the students should be able to:

- read the text from the viewpoint of the author's intention and not as a mere historical narrative;
- recognize the dignity of the body and of sexuality as created by God;
- recognize the equality of men and women and bring it into focus taking into consideration the physiological and characteristic differences.

2. *Content.*

The creation of man as described in Gen 2 is a beautiful story in picturesque language. It tells of a God who formed man from clay and breathed life into him (2,7).

Man/woman is unique in their person; each one is the fruit of a decision of God and God knows each one since his/her birth by his/her proper name. This is the manner in which God's people have understood their relationship with God and this is the way it is expressed in the aforementioned story of creation.

The physical differences between men and women are also subject matter for reflection. Starting point is the creation of woman: God takes Adam's rib so that man may have "a helpmate of equal dignity as he himself because she is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone" (Gen 2,23). Thus they are also to share equal responsibility.

In the entire chapter, man/woman is described as a social being; they are to live in community, solidarity and dialogue: "It is not good that man lives by himself" (2:18); here the social dimension of humankind is underlined. This community is reflected in its complete and perfect form in the family. Sexual attraction between men and women is willed by God and it is blessed (2: 24). Human sexuality is put in relation to the act of creation and ever since its very beginning, the family appears as the ideal community.

3. Methodology.

The reading of the text from Gen 2 in small groups may serve as the basis for a discussion which according to the interest of the group may take on different perspectives.

In the discussion it is important to stress:

- the relation of man/woman to nature and their superiority over all other creatures based on the fact that God has breathed his spirit into them.
- the superiority of man/woman over the animals to which they give names.
- equality in dignity between men and women in spite of the physical and psychological differences.
- the social dimension of mankind.
- sexuality is good and since the beginning of creation it belongs to God's plan.
- the second creation story complements the report of Gen 1 in that it brings forth other intentions of the author.

Also the meaning of the picturesque language in this story should be pointed out: man/woman is a creature created by God; they live in complete harmony with all of creation and nevertheless, they are superior to all other creatures because they have the ability to enter into a relationship with God.

4. Application to life.

5. Resolutions.

We are to show reverence for our own body and the bodies of others because they are the work of God. We are to make the fundamental equality between men and women our own and we are to help man lead a life of harmony with others: Only in this way can individuals become whole.

6. Evaluation.

Everybody may explain in his own words two of the following statements:

- "It is not good for man to be alone".
- Sexual attraction between men and women is willed by God.
- Men and women are equal in their dignity.

* * * * *

The "Guiding Principles..."

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In the last issue of the BULLETIN (BDV No. 5, page 19) we announced the publication of the new version of the document agreed upon by the United Bible Societies and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity called the "Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible". You will find the official English translation of this document on the following pages in the middle of the BULLETIN. These pages can be easily removed in order to preserve this important document.

Here you find an introduction to these directives:

The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the United Bible Societies are pleased to present to all concerned a revised version of the 1968 "Guiding Principles for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible".

The document, now entitled "Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible", affirming the spirit and following the principles set forth in the historic agreement first published in 1968, reflects the experience gained in producing scores of Bible translations since then. These interconfessional Bible translation projects have largely been made possible by those "Guiding Principles"; as a result of reports received from the users minor modifications have now been introduced into this new edition.

The basic understanding, however, remains unchanged: as in the past, interconfessional translations will continue to be based on a Hebrew text of the Old Testament and a Greek text of the New Testament which have been agreed on by scholars from various church traditions. Drafting and reviewing of the translations will be carried out in close cooperation, with the aim that the new text will be acceptable to, and be used by all Christians and Christian communities who speak the language into which the translation is being made.

The clear goal of this interconfessional effort is to produce editions of the Holy Scriptures which provide all speakers of the language with a common text. This will in turn make possible, often for the first time, a common witness to the Word of God in the world of today. To all who are interested in obtaining faithful and understandable translations of the Bible, this updated version of the "Guidelines" will, we pray, be an effective instrument for reaching this goal.

May God bless those who work to make His Word more widely known and lived, and through them bless all who will receive and read these new interconfessional translations.

Vatican City, November 16th, 1987.

Johannes Cardinal Willebrands
President of the Secretariat
for Promoting Christian Unity

Lord Donald Coggan
Honorary President,
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Pierre Duprey
Secretary

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General Secretary

GUIDELINES FOR INTERCONFESSIONAL COOPERATION IN TRANSLATING THE BIBLE

1. TECHNICAL FEATURES

1.1. TEXTUAL

1.1.1. Common texts

1.1.1.1. *New Testament*: For joint translation programs, teams should base their work on the critical edition of the Greek New Testament published by the United Bible Societies, which is itself a joint effort of scholars representing Roman Catholic and other Christian constituencies. Translators should normally follow this text for readings rated as A or B in *The Greek New Testament* but may choose other well attested readings when the text has a C rating.¹

Though a critical text must form the basis of any adequate translation, it is recognized that in some situations certain constituencies may require that some of the passages of the New Testament found in the Byzantine tradition (as largely represented by the *Textus Receptus*) should be noted in the translation. When this is the case, such material may appear in footnotes with an appropriate marker in the text. The extent of textual adjustment will depend, of course, upon the local situation, and will need to be covered carefully by clear and detailed principles (see section 2).

1.1.1.2. *Old Testament*: The *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, published by the German Bible Society, is recommended for use by joint translation committees.

In general the Masoretic text is to be retained as the basis for translation. Where, however, there are special difficulties in the traditional form of the text, scholars should make use of the evidence provided by recent textual discoveries and by ancient versions for other forms of the Hebrew text. New insights provided by related Semitic languages should be given due consideration though they may conflict with traditional renderings. In dealing with textual problems, the volumes of the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project, prepared under the auspices of the United Bible Societies, should be considered.

1.1.2. Canon

In many situations where there is a direct request from the churches, Bible Societies publish editions of the Bible which

contain what some call the deuterocanonical books and others call the Apocrypha. It is the aim of the Bible Societies to provide the Scriptures in the canon desired by the churches.²

It is recognized that on the one hand an edition of the complete Bible bearing the imprimatur of Roman Catholic authorities must contain the deuterocanonical texts and that, on the other hand, while many groups within Protestantism have employed the Apocrypha, a great majority find it impossible to accept an arrangement of the Old Testament which does not clearly distinguish between these texts and the traditional Hebrew canon. It is suggested that these two positions are in practice generally reconcilable if in editions of the Bible published by the Bible Societies and bearing the imprimatur of Roman Catholic authorities the deuterocanonical texts are included normally as a separate section before the New Testament. In the case of the book of Esther the translation of the complete Greek text will be printed in the deuterocanonical section while the translation of the Hebrew text will be printed among the books of the Hebrew canon. The deuterocanonical parts of the book of Daniel will be presented as items in the separate section.

For Ben Sirach, it would be advisable to print the shorter text, as found in the main Greek manuscripts, while taking into account the Hebrew and Syriac texts. The longer texts, from other Greek and Latin manuscripts and eventually other Hebrew readings, could be printed, if necessary, in the notes.

1.2. EXEGETICAL

1.2.1 Exegesis

In view of the growing agreement between scholars of different Christian constituencies a common exegetical base should be established by the adoption of mutually acceptable commentaries and scholarly works.

1.2.2. Helps for readers

Both the needs of the reader and traditional requirements of the churches can be satisfied with the following types of helps:

¹ *The Greek New Testament* text employs the rating A for those texts in which the reading printed in the Greek text is quite secure. B indicates there is some minor doubt and C indicates that there is considerable doubt. For further explanation of this rating see the Introduction to *The Greek New Testament*.

² It should be noted that Roman Catholics generally refer to certain books of the Greek canon not found in the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament as the "deuterocanonical books", while Protestants generally refer to these (and certain other additional books) as the "Apocrypha". This leads to confusion since in Roman Catholic circles the terms "Apocrypha" and "Apocryphal books" refer to those books which were never received into the canon. Protestants refer to these books as the "Pseudepigrapha" or "pseudepigraphical books". A common terminology is clearly desirable, but the terminological traditions are deeply rooted and will probably need to be respected for some time to come.

1.2.2.1. *Alternative readings*: those texts which represent a significant possibility of being original or which reflect a long tradition in existing translation.

1.2.2.2. *Alternative renderings*: different interpretations based either on ambiguities in the original languages or alternative means of expression in the receptor language.

1.2.2.3. *Explanation of proper names*: literal renderings of proper names when the meaning of the text depends on an identification of the so-called popular etymologies, e.g., Isaac, Israel, Jesus (at certain crucial points in the text).

1.2.2.4. *Plays on words*: the identification of related meanings of forms of words in the original language, e.g., *pneuma* meaning both "spirit" and "wind" (John 3).

1.2.2.5. *Historical backgrounds*: brief identification of historical individuals, places and events which are related to so-called "secular history". Much of this information may be given in the form of maps (with ancient and modern nomenclature) and short explanations provided in a glossary and an index.

1.2.2.6. *Cultural differences*: explanations of social, religious, or cultural terms:

a. individuals or groups, for example Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, etc.

b. objects of radically different form and function, e.g., weights and measures (weights, measures and coins must be explained if a text is to be meaningful, and if this is not done in the text of the translation itself, the information must be supplied in footnotes or glossary)

c. biblical customs, e.g., "being seated on the right hand" must be explained as implying distinction and honor when in certain societies the "left hand" is the preferred location. Notes (of type 1.2.2.1. through 1.2.2.6.) created during the translation process to aid the correct understanding of the published text are to be reproduced in all editions of the text.

1.2.2.7. *Introductions*: short objective guides for the reader's help in grasping the significance of the Bible, testaments, grouping of books, individual books, and sections. Outlines, aids for understanding the discourse structure, and brief presentations of major themes may be included.

1.2.2.8. *Cross references*: the listing of other passages involving parallel content, similar historical events, quotations, clear cases of allusion, and parallel treatment of subject matter.

1.2.2.9. *Section headings*: the placing of identificational phrases as titles for significant sections. Readers are increasingly requesting the use of section headings in the text to facilitate location of passages, to indicate where a particular narrative or discourse begins, and where to break up the otherwise heavy page of type. Such headings must be set off from the text by location and contrastive type face, should, in so far as possible, consist of words or phrases from the text, and should be identificational rather than interpretative.

Some committees have considered the possibility of explaining different sets of beliefs by noting that certain interpretations are held by Roman Catholics and others by other Christian constituencies. Such a procedure does not seem wise, for it tends to accentuate differences; nor is it necessary, since most diversities of interpretation can be covered more objectively by marginal helps on alternative renderings if the issue in question is more important. Furthermore, most of the real differences of interpretation are rarely to be understood from a simplistic view of their being distinctively of one tradition or another since the differences in exegetical approach vary as much within one particular constituency as across confessional lines. Accordingly, it seems far wiser to identify various positions within the history of interpretation without labeling them as belonging to one or another Christian constituency. Where the differences are not of great consequence, it is better to simply omit reference in the interest of joint undertakings.

Most helps for readers considered above are located on the specific page in the text where the difficulty arises; but if such a note would occur frequently, it is often more satisfactory to summarize the data in tables of weights and measures or glossaries of difficult terms.

Restrictions on the types of annotations in no way preclude different constituencies from employing the text in publishing commentaries as separate volumes to help the reader to understand and appreciate more fully the nature and significance of the Holy Scriptures in the light of their own traditions. The publisher or publishers must do everything possible to insure that annotations are not offensive to any of the constituencies for which the text has been prepared.

1.2.3. Supplementary features

The addition of certain other features, such as glossaries, indexes, concordances, maps, illustrations, etc., should be considered for certain types of publications. It is particularly important that complete Bibles have adequate helps of this kind if the reader is to understand the text.

Illustrations pose more complex problems than any other supplementary feature, for there are many different concepts of what is artistic, and there are diverse views as to what is appropriate for the Bible. Furthermore, what is aesthetically pleasing and historically meaningful in one culture, may be grossly misunderstood in another. Rather than employ merely "decorative pictures" (often of dubious artistic merit and of only passing relevance) publishers should provide background information or promote a measure of psychological identification and involvement by means of the symbolic and dramatic character of the illustrations.

When illustrations are to be included, it is extremely important that translators and translation consultant personnel have the opportunity of reviewing the illustrations, in order to insure that they do correctly relate to the text.

To serve the purpose of joint editions, a preface, if desirable, should be restricted to a commendation of the Holy Scriptures to the reader.

It is not the practice of the United Bible Societies to associate the names of translators or revisers with translations of the Scriptures.

1.3 Linguistic

1.3.1. Orthography

Where different constituencies employ different systems of spelling, these differences should be resolved by the employment of carefully developed scientific principles before any significant steps toward a common translation of the Scriptures can be realized. It is important to recognize, however, that orthographic changes can be made at any time prior to publication, and it is possible for the translation program to move forward rapidly even when orthographic decisions are still pending.

Orthographic differences in newly literate areas are relatively widespread. They have often resulted from different language backgrounds and linguistic orientations of early missionaries. Changes in such systems cannot be easily made, but given a significant measure of good will and a concern for Christian cooperation and educational efficiency, it is usually possible to work out practical solutions. At the same time, it is recognized that the problems of orthography are not merely linguistic but are largely sociolinguistic. Cultural factors, such as conformity to a prestige language, and the psychological elements of efficiency and rapid reading are often more important than purely linguistic considerations.

1.3.2. Proper Names

Agreement must be reached on the forms of proper names before any joint text can be adopted or any joint translation presented for publication. Factors which complicate such agreement are:

- a. the traditional use by Roman Catholics of Latin forms as a basis for transliteration, even including certain inflected forms of Latin words;
- b. Protestant use of European languages as a basis for transliteration, most commonly, English;
- c. the dominance of local, national, or trade languages, e.g., French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swahili, in contrast to systems employed by Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries;

- d. the attachment to particular forms of proper names as symbols of religious difference.

In the case of major languages with relatively long traditions, differences of usage can usually be resolved by following more closely the Greek and Hebrew forms with two major exceptions:

- a. Old Testament persons referred to in the New Testament should have the Old Testament form of names;
- b. certain widely known forms of names may be so deeply embedded in popular or local usage that they cannot be readily changed.

1.3.3. Borrowings

Borrowing is of two major types:

- a. terms borrowed in the past by normal linguistic processes and often completely absorbed into the local language, in which case they are really a part of the vocabulary of that language.

- b. terms expressly introduced for the first time in Bible translations.

Roman Catholic and Protestants have exhibited two rather distinct tendencies in borrowing. For the most part, Roman Catholics have borrowed largely from Latin, while Protestants have borrowed from Greek, Hebrew, or modern European languages, with theological terms coming from Greek and Hebrew and cultural terms from European languages.

Borrowing of terms (other than proper names), e.g., words for "grace", should be kept at a minimum, since words not already used in the receptor language are empty terms. But if borrowing is regarded as necessary, it should generally be from living languages rather than from ancient ones. All languages have a sufficiently large vocabulary or sets of phrasal equivalents to make borrowing relatively unnecessary. For minor languages borrowing should be made from those major living languages from which the languages in question normally appropriate such terms as may be required by expanding technology, commerce, and social contact.

1.3.4. Style of Language

Any joint translation should aim at a style of language which would be both meaningful and readable in public. It must make sense to those both within and outside the church and be in a language which is appropriate for the importance of the message and which reflects current usage.

In language situations which have a lengthy history of Bible translation, the problem of "traditional" language has to be faced realistically, for such language is often of real value in pastoral care in view of its profound spiritual and theological connotations. Accordingly, insofar as is practicable, attempts should be made to incorporate such terminology, particularly in liturgical contexts, providing the resulting expressions are functional equivalents of the source-language text.

It is wrong to assume that only one legitimate type of translation in major world languages is required. Although it is increasingly

less necessary to prepare different translations for diverse geographical dialects, many languages include significant sociolinguistic dialects. Such diversity of language and corresponding differences of purpose in translation suggest that more than one style of language may not only be desirable but necessary in many situations.

2. PROCEDURES

Procedures will differ radically, depending upon the nature of the project (a new translation or revision), upon the level of training and education of the constituency, upon whether the psychological climate is conducive to cooperation, and upon the adherence of one or another constituency to its distinctive traditions. In all tasks at least certain of the following procedural factors figure significantly in the development of a translation program.

2.1. CLIMATE FOR COOPERATION

Whether a revision or new translation can be undertaken jointly in a particular area depends largely upon the attitudes with regard to translation held by the respective constituencies.

These attitudes significantly affect the policy and procedures of the Bible Societies, which generally hold the publishing rights for Scriptures on behalf of the churches. Therefore, any cooperative undertaking requires as wide an agreement as possible.

2.2. REVISION VERSUS TRANSLATION

In general, it is preferable to undertake a new translation rather than attempt a revision of an existing text. This makes possible the avoidance of undue traditional attachments, provides freedom to adopt new forms of language and a more relevant style, demonstrates a real interconfessional undertaking, and provides both psychological and scholarly bases for creative decision.

2.3. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

For the most adequate development of a translation program, there is a need for three groups:

- a. a translation team,
- b. a review panel,
- c. a consultative group.

2.3.1. Translation Team

Consisting of not more than six persons of high competence from the Roman Catholic and other constituencies and possessing four essential characteristics:

- a. comparable qualifications,
- b. complementary abilities,
- c. mutual respect, and
- d. capacity to work together.

Moreover, it is essential that these persons have the opportunity to give sufficient time to the work, for their goodwill must be matched by the opportunity afforded to carry out the program. Members of translation teams have been sometimes assigned tasks without adequate provision being made for their being able to carry through such projects.

2.3.2. Review Panel

Consisting of not more than ten persons specially qualified to make a scholarly study of the text, exegesis and style. Roman Catholic and other Christian constituencies should be adequately represented on such a panel, keeping in mind that technical ability is one of the most important considerations for

choosing members of the panel. The members should make their suggestions largely by correspondence, though for certain key issues they may be invited to sit with the translation team.

2.3.3. Consultative Group

Consisting of up to fifty persons, depending upon the language and circumstances, selected for their position as church leaders and for being representative of different constituencies, ecclesiastical, political, and geographical. The members provide their assistance entirely through correspondence.

Often a project coordinator is needed to receive and circulate drafts, arrange for the meetings of the translation team and the review panel, and to coordinate the work in general. In most circumstances a secretary is essential if the work is to be properly presented and decisions adequately recorded.

2.4. TRAINING AND APPOINTMENT OF PERSONNEL

Members of the translation team and review panel should be selected very carefully after full consultation with all leaders involved, while the members of the consultative group may be named by their respective constituencies.

To find the most qualified persons to constitute the translation team and the review panel, it is important to use informal decision-making procedures. That is to say, an extensive investigation is made by translation consultants so as to assess the technical capacities of such persons and the probability of such persons being able to work together effectively. After determining the availability of such individuals in consultation with church leaders, they may be formally nominated by their respective churches and appointed by the Bible Societies. It has often proved extremely valuable to arrange for an initial training program for prospective translators and members of the review panel as part of the extensive investigation leading to appointment. Such a training program should be conducted by translation consultants, who are then able to observe the work of each person while actively engaged in translation. The consultants' recommendations regarding members of the translation team review panel can then be made more objectively.

Translators are normally employed by their churches and not directly by the Bible Societies. This is necessary because after the completion of the translation project the translators will generally return to the work they had done previously. All conditions of service should, however, be established in consultation with the national Bible Society and the translation consultant involved, as the supervision of the overall program requires that a balance be maintained between members of the translation team, who come from different churches. In most cases also the translation consultant will be the person most directly involved in training translators and proposing the approval of the final text of the translation for publication.

2.5. FORMULATION OF PRINCIPLES

To provide proper guidance to a translation program, to ensure consistency of the results, and to make possible creative collective efforts, detailed principles, must be worked out covering the entire range of technical features, e.g., text to be used, exegetical base, system of transliteration, level of style, etc.

An adequate formulation of principles provides the best guarantee of success of a translation or revision project. In the first place, adhering to such principles provides a high measure of assurance that the work of the translators will be accepted by the constituencies whose leaders have agreed on and ac-

cepted these principles. In the second place, formulation of such principles makes possible a more rapid solution of translation problems, since the persons concerned may argue for or against the principles rather than for or against each other. Furthermore, principles are a significant aid in the production of greater consistency in the translation, for even in instances where some principle needs to be changed as a result of later experience in the work, all previous materials can be adjusted in keeping with such an alteration of principles, so that the resulting work may be basically uniform. The translation consultant should assist the translation team in designing a set of principles that are applicable to the particular translation being considered.

2.6. EDITORIAL SUPERVISION

The translation consultant should take the responsibility for editorial supervision. Such supervision, however, does not necessarily entail constant "watching" over the work, but rather provides a means by which the translators may have guidance as to ways of solving those problems which arise during the course of the work.

2.7 COPYRIGHT, INTEGRITY AND USE OF THE TEXT

If joint translation programs are to lead to meaningful cooperation in the preparation of editions of the Holy Scriptures, it is important to avoid the production of different texts by different publishing houses.

If the result of joint effort is merely to produce different texts to be put out by different publishers, it is almost inevitable that within five to ten years the texts will be further changed and ultimately there will be different Bibles rather than a joint production. Even when the same text is put out by different publishers, it can become the object of very considerable pressure for a series of minor modifications which within a short time can add up to major changes. This does not mean, of course, that there should be only one edition of the Scriptures containing precisely the same supplementary or marginal helps, for a variety of formats and types of supplementary material can be useful in reaching diverse parts of a constituency. Nevertheless, once an agreement has been made as to a united approach to a translation or revision, it is wise to foresee the need of implementing this unity by continued procedures in publication.

The copyright of the translation and the published text is normally held by a national Bible Society or the United Bible Societies, but in the case of joint publication the text will be jointly copyrighted. If any constituency which has participated directly in the translation of a text has a concern as to the future integrity or use of the text, the publisher or publishers may deal with this concern by a contractual arrangement.

2.8. IMPRINT AND IMPRIMATUR

An interconfessional edition of the Scriptures normally bears the imprint of the Bible Society and the imprimatur of the appropriate Roman Catholic ecclesiastical authority. The most appropriate form for such an edition published by the Bible Societies would be for the Bible Society imprint to occur on the back of the title page, this being the normal procedure for books properly authorized by the Roman Catholic Church. In some circumstances it may be wise to consider a preface including a joint recommendation by ecclesiastical authorities instead of a formal *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur*.

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Center DEI VERBUM in Nemi

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Addressing the Executive Committee of the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate on the 7th of April 1986, Pope John Paul II pointedly stressed the necessity of solid formation of ministers of the Word of God. Aware of this need, the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) made this concern their own. From 8 Aug. to 12 Dec. 1987, they offered for the first time a training course of four and a half months duration to 28 animators in the biblical apostolate.

The course has a two-fold aim:

1. to further the formation of those who have been involved in the biblical apostolate or in biblical-pastoral work on the local, diocesan, national or regional level;
2. to bring about an exchange of experiences in bible reading "in context" of the local Church for the benefit of the entire Church.

In the last edition of the BULLETIN DEI VERBUM, (No. 5, page 15) a brief synopsis was given of the 1987 Nemi course. On page 14 in this issue, you will find a participant's personal testimony.

Two evaluations of the course were made by the participants: once at the mid-point and again at the end. It was the consensus of the participants that their expectations for the most part corresponded with the aims of the course. The program can certainly be improved and the participants made several proposals in this regard. Unanimously, though, the participants were of the opinion that in the future similar courses be offered to other biblical animators.

In the following find for your information, the 18 week schedule of the course as well as the names of the resource persons:

8 August	Arrival Day.	28 Sept.-3 Oct.	Communicating the Word of God (I). (Fr. Hans Wijngaards, mhm, India/England)
9 August	Opening of the Course.	5-10 Oct.	The Kingdom of God, the Central Message of Jesus for today. (Fr. Füllenbach)
10-15 Aug.	General Orientation, Group interaction, Day of Prayer and Reflection (Fr. Ludger Feldkämper svd; Fr. John Füllenbach, svd; Miss Teresita Nitorreda, Manila, Philippines)	7 October	Day of Reflection and Prayer. (Fr. Füllenbach)
17 Aug.-12 Sept.	Bible in Community. African Experience (Fr. Oswald Hirmer and Fr. Silvester Pheku, omi, both from Delmenville, South Africa)	12-14 Oct.	A New Way of reading the Bible: The Theology of Liberation and its Biblical Foundations. (Fr. Füllenbach)
9 September	Day of Prayer and Reflection. (Teresita Nitorreda)	16-24 Oct.	Bible and Liturgy, Indian Experience. (Fr. Paul Puthanangady, sdb, Bangalore, India)
14-19 Sept.	Bible in Catechesis, Latin American Experience. (Bro. Enrique Garcia, fsc, Medellin, Colombia)	26-31 Oct.	Communicating the Word of God (II), European Experience. (Fr. Gerd Birk, svd, Munich, FRG)
21-26 Sept.	Interiorization of the Word of God, Central American Experience. (Fr. Michael de Verteuil, cssp, Trinidad, West Indies)	2-7 Nov.	Experiments with Bible Studies, Ecumenical Experience. (Dr. Hans Ruedi Weber, WCC, Geneva, Switzerland)
		9 November	Method of Prayer: Centering Prayer. (Fr. Martin Nolan, osa, Rome, Italy)
		10 November	Day of Reflection and Prayer.
		12-14 Nov.	Methods for Understanding and Communicating the Word of God. (Fr. Carlo Buzzetti sdb, Rome, Italy)
		16-21 Nov.	God's Word in the Life of his People: Nature and Power of the Word in different backgrounds, Old Testament and Africa. (Dr. Serapion Kabazzi-Kisirinya, Nairobi, Kenya)
		23-29 Nov.	Adult Learning Practice, Interdependence in Community and Leadership Training. (Dr. Eugene Trester, USA)
		30 Nov.-1 Dec.	Biblical Images of the Church. (Fr. Füllenbach)
		3-5 Dec.	Communicating the Word of God (III), Intercultural Communication. (Fr. Franz Josef Eilers, svd, St. Augustin, FRG)
		7-8 Dec.	The Monastic Way of Biblical Meditation and Contemplation: Lectio Divina. (Fr. Mark Buttin, osb, Rome, Italy)
		10 December	Day of Reflection.
		11-12 Dec.	Recapitulation and Evaluation.
		13 December	Departure Day.

A Testimony

Sr. Muriel T. Long S.C., participant of the Nemi course reports. "On This Mountain: A Biblical Pastoral Program" is the title of her testimony.

Isaiah paints a picture of the future Kingdom - the Lord preparing on his mountain a rich banquet:

"On this mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich foods and choice wines, juicy, rich foods and pure, choice wines." (Is 25,6)

Because of a recent experience, I am inclined to see this vision more as the Lord's Kingdom coming into my life in the here and now. The mountain envisioned is for me at Missionari Verbiti in Nemi (Roma), Italy, where the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate (WCFBA) and the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) jointly designed a rich menu of biblical offerings for an eighteen week Biblical Pastoral Course. This pilot course for biblical animators and formators in which I participated, probably the first of its kind, was held from 8 Aug. through 12 Dec. 1987. I would like to take you back in spirit to this mountain of the Lord, set amongst huge pine and cypress trees, overlooking a jewel of a lake - Lake Nemi.

WORLD-WIDE PARTICIPANTS

First, allow me to introduce you to the participants themselves. Chief among the treasures of the program is a group of 28 persons: four laymen and two lay women, three religious sisters and one religious brother, seventeen priests and one bishop. All are engaged in biblical pastoral apostolates in twelve different countries on the continents of Asia, Africa, North and South America. The cultural exchange as you may well imagine, is invaluable. Experiences of the biblical apostolate in all parts of the world were shared on a regular basis. We also tried to immerse ourselves in one another's cultures. Although the common language spoken was English, it was spoken with a variety of accents, pronunciations and intonations. Learning to decode what was said rated high on our list of accomplishments!

We were taught liturgical songs in the African dialect to the accompaniment of drum and "kayamba", a simple instrument consisting of seeds enclosed in a small box-like structure made of short grass stalks joined together. In addition, we danced the "jumbo", a lively African welcome dance. Sitting on pillows yoga fashion in an unbroken circle, we occasionally entered into the solemn Indian celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy. The "bhajan", a repetitive hymn which gradually dies to a mere whisper, led us to the center of worship. We were welcomed with an arati - a blessing with fire, with flowers and with incense. Greeting one another with hands folded in the form of prayer and a bow became quite natural. In addition we sang catechetical songs in many languages.

WORKSHOPS

Of course, the heart of the course was the workshops. More than a dozen experts in the use of the Bible in various pastoral fields such as liturgy, catechesis, community building, leadership formation, spirituality and communication, and coming from different cultural backgrounds on all five continents, were the resource persons for this biblical program in Nemi. Since the learning process accentuated in the Nemi program makes use of the inductive method, the group imbibed a great deal through participation.

Various methods for interiorizing the Word of God became our own through continual practice. It is common parlance to speak of doing our "Lectio Divina", an early monastic way of interiorizing a passage of Scripture, which has gained popularity in recent times. Then too, the Bible has truly come alive in creative ways: composing poetry, photo narratives and songs as well as by miming and dramatic confrontation. How can we who mimed ever forget the experience of witnessing Ezekiel's "dry bones" taking flesh and coming to new life through the wind of the Spirit, or the woman who had been crippled for eighteen years gradually becoming aware that she was unbelievably cured, could now straighten up and walk with dignity and joy? The cry to the blind man of Jerico will long ring in our ears - "Cheer up! Get up! The Lord is calling you; your faith has saved you!"

It is impossible to record all of the experiments we made with the Bible or even to convey how they affected each person - it is something that has to be experienced to be understood. Various content courses were offered as well. To name a few, these included subjects such as "The Kingdom of God", "The Theology of Liberation and Its Biblical Foundations", "Biblical Images of the Church", "Nature and Power of the Word in the Old Testament", and "Bible and Liturgy". I could not begin to pay tribute to the resource persons. As experts in their field, they brought with them a wealth of experience, besides the witness of their own dedication to the Word of God.

GROUP WORK

Another important component of this Biblical Pastoral Program, was group work. As participants, we were put together in four basic groups of seven persons on an international basis with lay persons and religious sisters and brothers divided equally among the four groups. During some of the workshops, we met once or even twice a day to work on various aspects of the course. At other times, we met an average of three times a week for approximately an hour to share learnings, reflect on Scripture and celebrate the Liturgy.

Since group work is one of the most effective means of social communication, we quickly came to appreciate how indispensable it would be for our future pastoral biblical apostolates. In many instances, this sharing in our basic groups led to a genuine experience of community. It goes without saying that after having experienced for ourselves the indispensable value of this method for sharing and communicating our Christian

faith, we shall be able to use it more effectively in our future ministry.

COMMUNITY PRAYER

The last but certainly not least, essential element of our Biblical Pastoral program was community prayer. We came together daily for morning prayer-frequently lauds, sometimes centering prayer, at other times an Indian experience. Our daily Eucharistic Liturgy was also a really prayer-filled experience, one of which started in the pine scented woods of Nemi where we walked together by two's sharing as had the disciples of Emmaus some of our concerns. As we wound our way toward the crypt, the burdens seemed lighter.

Another highlight of the program which occurred the very first week, was the concelebration of the Eucharist in John Paul II's private chapel. How awe inspiring to kneel for some quiet moments of prayer with the head of Christendom prior to this Liturgy and then to be in communion with him during it.

As a result of some of our workshops, we learned to deliver an interesting homily. Each month too, we had a day of prayer, a time to reflect on what we had learned and on ways of integrating it into our lives and work.

SIDE TRIPS

A non-academic but essential aspect of the program was the various social activities which contributed to the overall enjoyment of our four and a half month stay at Nemi, and helped build us into a warm Christian community. Each week on the two free days there were opportunities for those interested to go to Rome (and during hot weather to the Mediterranean). In addition, there were pilgrimages to Assisi, the home of the humble Saint Francis, and to Subiaco, the cradle of the Benedictine Order. At least twice a month we found a reason to have parties-birthdays, anniversaries, etc. Sharing of talents, good music and fine humor characterized these gatherings. And let me not forget the "E" room theologians-a group who gathered nightly around the crackling open fireplace in the E room to chat informally about the learnings of the day. These plus the daily walks-two or three together-around the spacious grounds of Nemi have done much to help us grow into a loving community. Nor can we neglect to mention the Divine Word Community at Nemi who "bent over backwards" to make our stay here a pleasant and memorable one: their warmth and graciousness will never be forgotten.

During this period I heard the Lord saying to me as he once did to Jeremiah, "For I know the plans I have for you...plans for your welfare...to give you a future full of hope" (Jer 29,11). And I know it was the Lord who led me to this mountain, who planned this for me, which in so many ways was a time of rich spiritual and pastoral renewal. Today I can truly respond: "I exult and rejoice...For the hand of the Lord rests on this mountain" (Is 25,9-10).

After an evaluation of this pilot course, the organizers plan to conduct two such courses every year. For further information please write to:

Fr. John Füllenbach, SVD
Director
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Reading gospel texts: a simple method

The simple methods on how to deal with a biblical text increase more and more. One can only rejoice over this. BULLETIN DEI VERBUM (No. 2 page 15) has already published a simple reading method originating in Oceania. Here now follows a "simple method" which during a biblical seminar in Kigali/Rwanda (summer 1987) could gain a certain success. We shall be grateful to you if you could send to the secretariat in Stuttgart similar aids which you yourselves have worked out. We would like to collect all of these in a booklet which we could then pass on to biblical animators.

1. Contact with the text.

- read aloud the chosen passage.
- write your impressions immediately following the reading (what is pleasing, what is less pleasant, what surprises me, what do I not like, etc). A few minutes should suffice.

2. Study of the text: exact analysis of the text.

A text is like a creature of the good God. One must know how to receive it and to accept it at face value. A biblical text is not a mirror in which I can recognize my face. It is his face I am to search for.

Some means to facilitate this observation:

- consider the beginning and the end of the narrative. Examine what has changed, what has transformed in the course of the text.
- note down the places mentioned.

- note down the persons of the text. Count them and examine their relationship to one another:
 - . who stands in the middle? What does he say, what does he do?
 - . who is with him? Who is against him? Who assists him?
 - . who is active and who is passive?
- order the words of the text according to word families (for example, the words with a religious bent or the words that deal with "journey", "commerce", "agriculture", "life", "death", "action", etc.). Every text often uses very definite word families.

3. Gathering information from outside the text.

The meaning of a text may be better understood in conjunction with the commentaries experts have prepared. One should therefore consult these as often as possible:

- by reading the footnotes in your Bible,
- by using, if possible, a dictionary or a biblical vocabulary.

4. Questioning the text.

Since the gospels have been written down after Easter by believing disciples and for the faithful, one may try to discover the following aspects:

- the faith in the risen Christ: is it expressed clearly or abstractly.
- the life of the early Church: in view of which needs did the early Christians write this text?
- direct or indirect allusions to the Old Testament.
- which event from Jesus' life or from that of his disciples might be the basis of this text?
- the hope that finds expression in this text.

5. Appropriation of the text in our life today.

According to the observations made so far, we try to grasp the testimony of faith that is hidden in this text (the Good News).

How can this testimony of faith (the Good News) enlighten our own faith in this time in which we live and in this place where we are put?

How can this old text be translated into other words enabling those around us to understand?

Do we have to complement or correct or perhaps even give up impressions we have had so far?

Which prayer comes to mind now that we read the text?

Books and documents

Bibel und Christologie, A Document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1987, Stuttgart, FRG.

The director of the Catholic Biblical Association (Katholisches Bibelwerk), Paul-Gerhard Müller makes this important document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission from 1984 on Bible and Christology accessible to German-speaking readers. The original text was published in French and Latin. Müller gives the translation and an introduction to this document and he adds the translation of an English commentary by Joseph Fitzmyer. The document of the Commission makes every effort to treat the christological question by borrowing from the work of biblical scholars in order to give support to the theological reflection, preaching and catechesis. In an interesting contribution on the "timeliness of the christological question", Müller deals very closely with the different attempts of handling the christological question today (for example, in Jewish research, in philosophical and Marxist research, or starting from depth psychology as it finds expression in modern literature).

Enjeux d'un fondamentalisme catholique (Employment of a Catholic Fundamentalism), Bulletin of the Secretariat of the French Episcopal Conference, Paris, No. 17, Nov. 1987, 10 pages.

The term "fundamentalism" is at the same time precise and vague. It designates *"a phenomenon that is more confused than organized. It is however wide-spread, and everybody who tries to bring the Bible close to the faithful will encounter very definite reactions and spiritual attitudes if he has not already done so"*, which one may summarize under this concept. The Secretariat of the French Episcopal Conference has asked the well-known exegete Fr. Pierre Gibert, sj, to describe clearly the "Catholic fundamentalism in France" in order to assess its roots, its causes and its background. Much to the contentment of everybody, Fr. Gibert fulfilled this task on some very well documented pages. He starts out with the description of fundamentalistic attitudes which could be considered as *"prudent"* or *"naïve"* in order to point out along these lines the underlying mechanism. These attitudes had their roots in the ignorance regarding the essence and the place of Sacred Scripture within the Christian, especially the Catholic, faith; they forget what history really is and they leave no room for the Holy Spirit who was involved in the writing and documentation of the Christian faith experience in the biblical text. Even if fundamentalism must be taken seriously, it must at the same time be pointed out that it *"leads to an impoverishment of the content of faith itself and to a reducing of its dimension which includes the activity"*

and the interaction of the Holy Spirit and of the Church". Therefore, the source of Scripture and Scripture itself must coincide. Fr. Gibert concludes with some suggestions: *"It seems necessary to us to make a synthesis between the results of modern biblical science and the needs of the Christian life in the area of doctrine as well as in the area of piety...More than ever before, Christians must become conscious that they cannot do without solid knowledge of the Bible. The essence of the Bible itself demands this...Certainly, one does not proclaim exegesis but Jesus Christ. It is in this sense then, that different tiers of Bible reading receive genuine justification. A reading of the first tier which is meant for personal meditation or even for proclamation is always appropriate. But usually this reading itself meets one day with certain difficulties in understanding of the text. It is therefore a question of honesty that the community of the faithful instruct those who deal with the sacred writings in regard to its essence and place within the faith...Finally, a re-reading of the encyclical letter of Pope Pius XII, Divino Afflante Spiritu, and of the Dogmatic Constitution of the II Vatican Council, Dei Verbum, seems to us unavoidable. These two extremely important texts are in our opinion the best guarantees to avoid any and every fundamentalistic temptation..."*

Further information: Secrétariat Général de l'Épiscopat, 106 rue du Bac, F-75341 Paris Cédex 07.

Richard Bergeron, Les fondamentalistes et la Bible-Quand la lettre se fait prison (When the Letter Becomes Shackles), Fides, Montreal, Canada, 1987, 86 pages.

Richard Bergeron, ofm, President of the "Centre d'Information sur les Nouvelles Religions" deplors in this little book the fundamentalism which is spreading in some Protestant churches, above all among the evangelicals, on the American continent. *"The concept of fundamentalism designates first of all, a theological attitude as well as a series of behavioral patterns which distinguish themselves by an exclusive concentration on the Bible, an outspoken animosity against secular modernization and biblical criticism, and finally by the claim of a uniquely true christianity"*.

After a survey on the history of the fundamentalistic movement in America from the beginning of the last century until today, Bergeron tries to examine the particular world vision of this movement which adheres to some crude fundamental tenets. As for example, biblicism (*"the Bible is the sole guideline with the claim of absolute authority"*), millenarism (*"an exaggerated expectation of the second coming of Christ" at the expense of aspects of the present*), the principle of unanimity (*"the truth does not tolerate any complementary or contrary significations"*), which practically amounts to a negation of the historical future), dualism (*"the factioning between the history of mankind and the kingdom of God which finds its expression in antitheses like faith/reason, Bible/tradition, tradition/modernization"*), and radicalism (*hardening of the radicality of the Good News; conformity to the letter of the prescriptions and admonitions of the New Testament without taking into account Salvation history*).

Since the Bible takes a privileged position in fundamentalism, one chapter is dedicated to the Bible and the Word of God. Here the relationship between the biblical text and the Word of God is explained. Fundamentalism spreads a false notion of what is meant by inerrancy of the biblical text. Under these conditions the fundamentalist exegesis can only contain a literal, harmonizing, anti-critical, private, selective, and concordistic Bible reading.

"The Bible does not exist by itself: it can only be the book of a living community which has brought it into being and remains its interpreting and determining authority." Concluding, Bergeron calls to mind the fact that *"Scripture and tradition are not in competition or rivalry with one another. Rather there exists a very close connection between these two components"*. Now it remains to uncover the attitudes and tendencies within the Catholic Church which are evidently close to the fundamentalism denounced here.

Werner Bach - Monique George - Bambi Dinanga, Lettres du Seigneur à son Eglise, CAB, B.P. 246, Bandundu/ville, Zaire, 1987, 120 pages.

This *"Brochure of Bible Sharing"* wants to make the first three chapters of the Revelation of John accessible for work in Bible groups. The first part of the book consists of a short general introduction to the Revelation of John (annotations on the author, his time, his literary style, as well as on the apocalyptic genre and the symbolism of numbers). The second part contains a commentary on the text subdivided into nine sections. In each of these sections, the text is analytically reviewed. As a supplemental aid at the end of the commentary, three rubriques are added:

1. a questionnaire aimed at drawing attention to the text itself (*"We discover the text"*).
2. an explanation of the *"peculiarities of the text"*.
3. an attempt to transfer the text into the present: *"This is meant for us"*.

Werner Bach - Monique George - Lire la Bible en famille...mais comment?, CAB, B.P. 246 Bandundu/ville, Zaire, 1987, 44 pages.

This brochure, in a small format, is meant to be distributed to families in order to help them read the Bible at home. After an introduction, in which the parents are reminded of their role as based in the Bible, the brochure deals with the reasons why it is so important to read the bible in the family. Some testimonies and experiences follow which could help disperse with possible hindrances. On the last pages some suggestions and practical guidelines for Bible sharing are given as well as some suggestions for Bible reading.

Pierre Marie Beaude, Jesus de Nazaret, Estella, Spain, 1987, 230 pages.

With this translation, the Spanish speaking readers now have direct access to an excellent handbook which has put as its goal the collection of historical material on the person of Jesus and

his time. Here one finds old Jewish and pagan documents in which Jesus is mentioned. They shed light on the life of Jesus and give an impression of the milieu in which Jesus lived (the history of his time, ancient Galilee, the different institutions and religious factions). Finally, the book offers a clear, precise summary of the great themes in the gospels: the kingdom of God, the teaching of Jesus, miracles, his attitude toward Jewish law and towards pagans, the titles "Son of Man" and "Son of God", death and resurrection. An annex contains a summary of the more recent research on the person of Jesus.

Carlo Buzzetti, *La bibbia e la sua comunicazione*, Editrice LDC, Torino, Italy, 1987, 160 pages.

How can we bring the Bible to the present day reader in a manner which parallels closely the text of sacred Scripture and is at the same time pedagogically effective? This is perhaps the question which poses itself to everybody engaged in the biblical apostolate. Buzzetti here gives some initiatives, new thoughts and practical hints to this theme. The first four chapters of his book introduce the theory of linguistic transmission of the Bible. Chapters five and six deal with different possibilities of access into the text and thereby the variety of possible translations. In chapters seven and eight, practical examples for catechesis are described. The last chapter gives information about different world-wide organizations in the service of the biblical apostolate - information so far little known in Italy. Thus on the last pages (pages 152-157) our World Catholic Federation is introduced.

Jean-Pierre Charlier, *Signes et prodiges - les miracles dans l'Évangile*, coll. lire la Bible, Cerf, Paris, France, 1987, 190 pages.

How can we understand the miracles in the life of Jesus and explain their meaning and their significance? The first prerequisite for this is to establish the difference between the people of Bible times and ourselves. In the Bible, a miracle is a sign which points to the secret of an almighty and merciful God, whereas for modern man it is first of all an event which surpasses the usual because it transcends the laws of nature. In his book, Charlier tries to sharpen our view once again for what a miracle in reality means: a sign for faith.

Jean Paul Heil, *Paul's Letter to the Romans - A Reader-Response Commentary*, Paulist Press, New York/Mahwah, USA, 1987, 196 pages.

This complete commentary on the letter of the apostle Paul to the Romans intends above all to point out how Paul used the rhetorical means of diatribe which is a method that applies dialogue, question and answer. For Heil, this "answer to the reader" is one of the most important approaches the apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans makes use of. At the same time, this commentary provides information on the historical background of the Pauline world of thought and investigates his message in the light of his missionary activity. The central role of hope for Paul is especially highlighted: hope for his own time, hope for our present age.

Bernard Favrel et Emmanuelle Germain, *Voyages a travers l'Évangile*, 10 planches dessinées pour découvrir l'Évangile, A.C.N.A.V., Paris, France, 1988.

This aid was developed to make 10 to 13 year old children familiar with the gospel. The folder contains ten pastel colored illustrations on which, as in fresco paintings, the most important events of the gospels are presented in a simple manner and in chronological order according to each of the gospel reports (except for the tables number 8 and 10, which refer globally to all four gospels):

Picture table No.1: The infancy of Jesus (9 drawings according to the infancy gospel in Luke and 8 drawings according to the infancy gospel in Matthew)

Picture table No. 2: Activity in Galilee and Judea (53 drawings with reference to the gospel according to Luke)

Picture table No. 3: Activity in Galilee and Judea (35 drawings based on the gospel of Mark)

Picture table No. 4: Activity in Galilee and Judea (50 drawings from the gospel according to Matthew)

Picture table No. 5: On the way to Jerusalem (11 drawings in accordance with the gospel of Luke)

Picture table No. 6: On the way to Jerusalem (12 drawings with reference to the gospel according to Mark)

Picture table No. 7: On the way to Jerusalem (14 drawings based on the gospel according to Matthew)

Picture table no. 8: The passion narrative (27 drawings in reference to the four gospels)

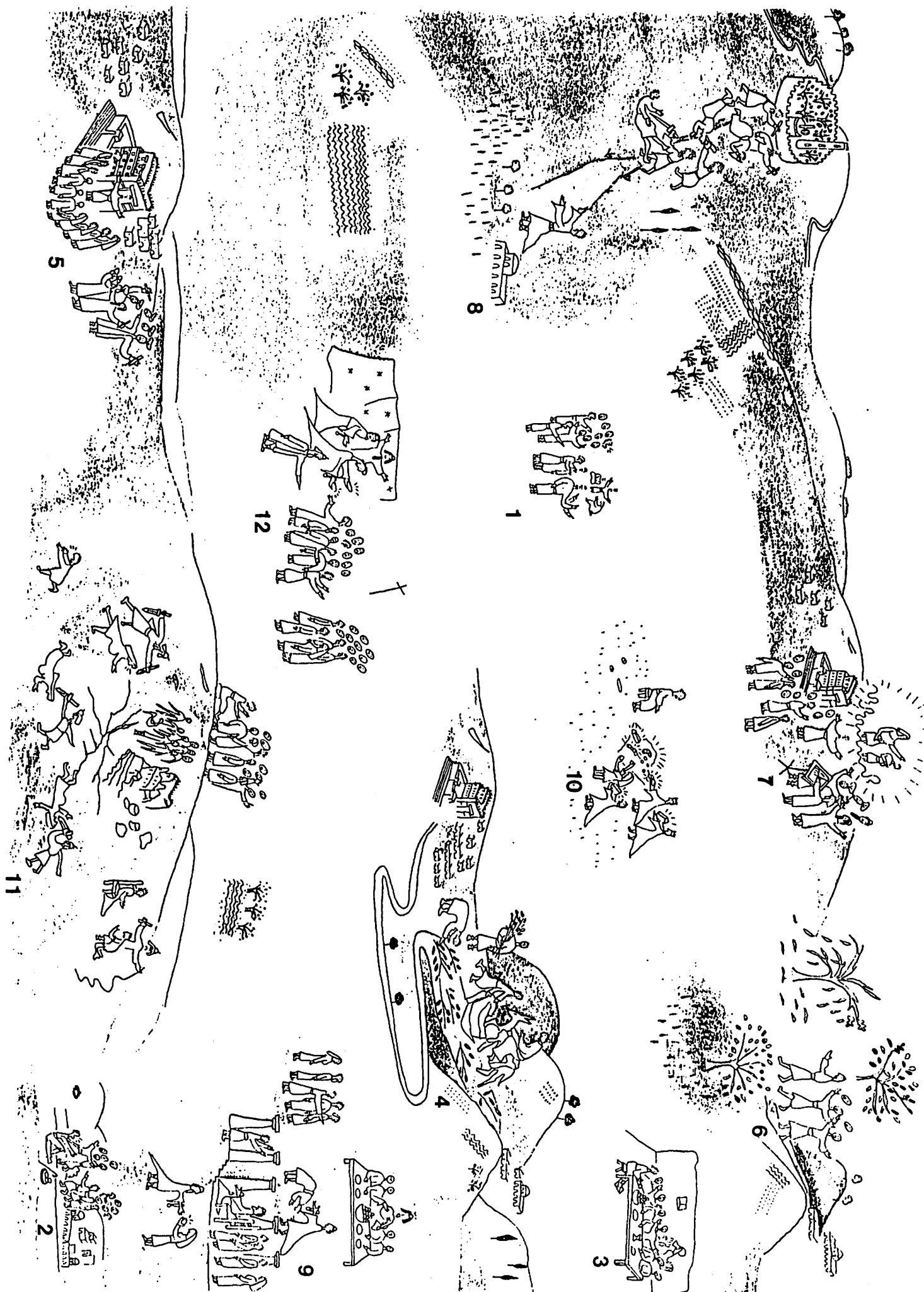
Picture table No. 9: Signs and encounters (25 drawings in taken from the gospel according to John)

Picture table No. 10: The Easter experiences (12 drawings in accordance with the four gospels).

The scenes depicted are numbered. Using the drawing and corresponding number the children can become acquainted with the gospel text itself. With the help of the numbers, one can establish specifically to which chapter the drawing pertains. Then the children are asked to describe the drawing in detail: the position of the feet, heads, the relationship between the persons depicted and the objects in the picture.

The drawings are intentionally kept very simple so that the children may find it easy to understand them. The work may be continued by play acting one of the events. Behavioral patterns, movements and gestures may be deduced from the drawings. Obviously, the picture tables can be employed also for other uses. One could encourage the children to color the drawings of the represented episodes or one could ask them to compare the picture tables with one another in which the same event occurs according to the accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In this way, it will be possible for the children to find out similarities and differences in the synoptic accounts. Thereby, a first introduction is given to them into the personal testimony of each of the individual evangelists.

As far as possible, the children should be allowed to pin-up in their rooms the picture tables on which they themselves worked. This first intensive encounter with Holy Scripture may very well arouse in the children the desire to continue regularly their exploration of the gospels.



As an example, you will find on page 19 of the BULLETIN the picture table "On the Way to Jerusalem", according to Mark albeit reduced by half and, unfortunately, in black and white.

1. The sons of Zebedee make their request (Mk 10,36-41)
2. Bartimaeus, the blind man of Jericho (Mk 10,46-52)
3. Bethany: in the house of Simon the leper (Mk 14,3-9)
4. The Messiah enters Jerusalem (Mk 11,1-10)
5. The plot against Jesus (Mk 11,1.5.8)
6. Cursing the fig tree (Mk 11,12-14.20-25)
7. In the temple: questioning Jesus' authority (Mk 11,27-33)
8. Parable of the wicked husbandmen (Mk 12,1-11)
9. Warning against the scribes (Mk 12,37-40)
10. The widow's mite (Mk 12,41-43)
11. Announcing the temple destruction (Mk 13,1-17)
12. Judas betrays Jesus (Mk 14,10-11)

Further information: Sonimages, 3 rue Amyot, F - 75005 Paris.

Fritz Kunkel, Creation continues - A Psychological Interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew, Paulist Press, New York/Mahwah, USA, 1987, 286 pages.

This reprint of a book which appeared in 1964, has been somewhat revised and updated. The approaches to the gospel are numerous. One of them is psychological. The author, an expert in psychology, makes use of his competency in this field in the book relying essentially on the work of C.G. Jung. For Kunkel the gospel according to Matthew can be a guideline for our spiritual life which is comparable to a journey. Leaving aside historical considerations, he tries to examine the personal charisma of Jesus and his disciples and through them upon Matthew and his addressees and, through Matthew, upon us ourselves.

Santiago Guijarro Oporto, La buena noticia de Jesús, Biblioteca Básica del Creyente, Sociedad de Educación Atenas, Madrid, Spain, 1987, 272 pages.

With the pedagogical treatise, the director of the Catholic Casa de la Biblia in Madrid, intends to point out new ways for a better understanding of the synoptic gospels and of the Acts of the Apostles and to thereby help towards a more efficient proclamation of the Good News. The first part gives an introduction into the world of the gospels and describes the transition from proclamation to the writing down of the gospels. Each of the following three parts is dedicated to one of the three synoptic gospels and the Acts. First he tries to place each of the gospels into the respective context where it originated. Then he gives suggestions for Bible reading followed each time by one of the individual gospels. Finally he presents a survey of the themes peculiar to the respective biblical author. A solid introduction which biblical animators may study and successfully use as a reference book.

Curso de iniciación a la Lectura de la Biblia, La Casa de la Biblia, Madrid, Spain, 1987.

There are not many simple aids for bible reading. On the other hand, one can observe that more and more faithful ask for such aids after their first encounter with the Bible. This introductory course to Bible reading tries to satisfy this desire. It is the fruit

of the work of a team of catechists and Bible experts whose intention it is to give straight and direct access to those who desire to read "*this long letter of God to man*". The first dossier of the course consists of five illustrated booklets of 20 pages each. Each booklet treats and explains a definite theme. On the last page, some few questions are listed to stimulate dialogue and give suggestions for further thought: a brief proposal for prayer follows. Here are the titles for the first booklets:

1. *What is the Bible and how can one read it?*
2. *The testimony of the first disciples* (Introduction to the New Testament).
3. *The first evangelization from a distance (I)* (the Epistles of the Apostles).
4. *The first evangelization from a distance (II)*.
5. *The Good News (I)* (the gospels).

Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible, sous la direction de J. Briand, H. Cazelles, E. Cothenet, A. Feuillet, lettre R et début de la lettre S, Letouzey et Ané, Paris, France, 1987.

The publication of this scientific dictionary especially for French speaking biblical scholars continues the work of experts in the field of biblical research in the following areas: Rachat, Ras Shamra, Kingdom of God, Religion of Israel, Resurrection, Revelation, Biblical Reviews, Book of the Kings, Letter to the Romans, Rome and the Bible, Sacred Kingship and the Bible, Sabbath, Priestly Office, Consecration, Sacrifice, Holy Spirit, Holy Sepulchre, Salomon. Further information: E. Cothenet, Institut Catholique de Paris, 22 rue d'Assas, F-75006 Paris

La lettre de Jacques - Lecture socio-linguistique, Cahier Evangile No. 61, Evangile et Vie/le Cerf, Paris, France, 1987, 76 pages.

The letter of James is addressed to Christians who are divided amongst themselves and who in their greed for riches have totally forgotten the poor. Their faith remains inefficient and void without these concrete "works of love of neighbor" which alone fulfill the command of love. A team of 11 biblical experts from France try to read this letter applying a method used in social sciences. The investigation of the text and of the social conditions makes it possible to locate the roots of this letter in the society of the Roman Empire of the 1st century. Thus the Bible reader is encouraged to confront his faith and his behavior within the context of present day society.

Equipe de Socabi, L'étranger, Parabole volume X No. 2, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 1987.
Equipe d'Evangile et Vie, L'étranger dans la Bible, Les dossiers de la Bible No. 21, Paris, France, 1987.

Without previous agreement, both the Canadian and French publications for the biblical apostolate ("Parabole" and "Les Dossiers de la Bible") dedicated their last issue to the same theme, "The Foreigner and the Bible". Obviously this theme is important to stimulate the thoughts of Christians in both nations concerning a problem with which they are confronted.