

# World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate

Bulletin

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verbum*

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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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Thank you for your  
subscription renewal  
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**EDITORIAL**

Barely 400 days remain until the Plenary Assembly. It is hardly necessary to repeat: the Plenary Assembly is an important event in the life of our Federation. Decisions are made there that will direct our efforts during the following six years. The Federation was founded after the Council to implement the pastoral recommendations of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation DEI VERBUM. Yet the Pope himself pointed out: these recommendations have been "too much neglected" during these years. There remains much work to be done by the Federation till the Bible takes the place it deserves in the pastoral life of the Church. It is up to us to coordinate our endeavors and to unite and give new impulses to the biblical apostolate in our countries. We must not neglect the preparations for the Plenary Assembly. Let us be conscious of what we can contribute to this Assembly to do justice to our responsibility. Still almost 400 days: still time to move.

In view of the theme of the Plenary Assembly, Fr. Ludger Feldkämper has put together several references from official documents and other literature on "evangelization" and "new evangelization". On *pages 9-12*, we publish the first part of his investigation; the second part will be printed in the next edition of the Bulletin.

It is satisfying that the number of Bible translations done in common by Christians of different denominations is rising. Yet even today, there is only one Bible translation which is, strictly speaking, ecumenical; that is to say, which was worked out jointly under the authority of three great churches: the French T.O.B. (*Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible*). It is rewarding to account its adventurous history for it is exemplary in many ways. Fr. Refoulé, OP, one of the driving promoters of the T.O.B. recounts this history for us. One cannot but congratulate the men and women who labored so diligently without fear (and with much patience) for the success of this unique enterprise.

On the occasion of the 500 year celebration of the evangelization of their continent, the Conference of Latin American Religious (CLAR) has initiated a great project spanning over five years whose goal is to deepen the influence of the Bible in the life of the people in Latin America. The brochure edited by CLAR presumes fundamental reflections about access to the Bible and proposes methods for approaching it. We have selected some pages from it concerning the characteristics of the Christian Bible reading (*pages 6-8*).

A leaflet presenting the Federation (*pages 13-14*) is laid out in such manner that it can be extracted and reproduced for distribution.

After the general information section with news from different countries (*pages 15-17*), you find reviews and brief references to publications which have been received in our Stuttgart office. In this section, we limit ourselves to publications dealing directly with the biblical-pastoral work of the Federation.

Sincere thanks to those who sent greetings to us on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Federation. In honor of this event, Bishop Ablondi wrote a letter to the Federation which stimulates reflection: "History becomes prophecy" (*page 20*)...

Marc Sevin

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## Venturing the Ecumenical Bible Translation

### *Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible (TOB) into French*

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*The history of the French TOB is interesting to all engaged in Bible translation work. In a certain sense, it may serve as an example for the difficulties one can encounter in interconfessional translation work which, however, can be resolved. Fr. Refoulé, one of the initiators of the TOB, recalled the great moments of this venture on the occasion of the presentation of the revised TOB in October last year at the Palais of the Unesco in Paris. The complete text of this essay has been reprinted in the Bulletin d'Information Biblique (BIB). In the following, you find some principle extracts:*

In 1973, when the New Testament of the TOB appeared, we had chosen as our advertisement slogan: "Unique in history, without comparison in the world". One must be careful in choosing advertising slogans because they are often misleading. Our slogan, however, corresponded with the truth: we really were the first ones, for the previous two attempts by Richard Simon in the 17th century and by the "Société nationale pour une traduction nouvelle des Livres Saints en langue française" (National Society for a New Translation of the Holy Scriptures into French), founded in 1866 by Pastor Emmanuel Petlavel, Abbé Etienne Blanc, and the Jewish scholar Levy Bing, failed lamentably. The time was not yet mature.

It was different in the 1960's. The election of John XXIII as Pope and the II Vatican Council soon afterwards created a climate which was especially favorable for ecumenism. Was the idea of an ecumenical Bible translation altogether thinkable without this "springtime" in the Church? I am not sure. Whatever the case be, the TOB was a premier and decisive ecumenical event. Dr. Visser't Hooft, the first Secretary of the Ecumenical Council of Churches, remarked in this context: "About 40 years ago, Christians in different Churches in France had the courage and the imagination to start a true pioneer work in the ecumenical domain."

Today, when ecumenical translations everywhere in the world become more and more numerous (there are already more than 100), when they have become almost common, nearly self-understood, it is perhaps not useless to remember the difficulties which we encountered during our common work at this translation. Even when the climate of the 1960's allowed us to overcome these difficulties more easily, they were nonetheless significant and revealing.

#### I. The Failure of the First Project

The idea of this project did not come from official institutions nor from publishing houses, but, as it were, from the commu-

nity level. Pastor Morel from Mulhouse and Pastor Starcky, a specialist in Bible and the Qumrân manuscripts met because they knew about the plan of French Protestants to edit a new French Bible for themselves. They had the idea that this work could be performed in common by those Protestant biblical scholars entrusted with this project and by the team working on the Jerusalem Bible.

On 19 Dec. 1961, they contacted Prof. Michaëli, professor at the Protestant theological faculty of Paris and member of the Alliance Biblique Française and Fr. Chiffot, responsible for the Jerusalem Bible at the publishing house Cerf (Paris). Together they reflected upon the possibilities of future collaboration. According to Fr. Chiffot, four problems existed for Pastor Morel and Prof. Michaëli:

- "1) The Alliance Biblique Française (Protestant French Bible Society) might hesitate for lack of means and personnel to come forth with a new translation.
- 2) Some people wanted to adhere to the principle of having a Bible without notes and comments.
- 3) The Protestants do not accept the "Deuterocanonical Books" or "Apocrypha" as part of the canon of Scripture. The solution to publish a Catholic Bible edition with these books and a Protestant one without them, however, made it possible to settle other questions, too.
- 4) The greatest difficulty: the theological interpretation. Today, an agreement can be imagined concerning the direct interpretation even of those texts which previously created many difficulties."

Then, four possibilities for future cooperation between Protestant and Catholic biblical scholars were envisioned. I would like to mention here the fourth one only: "Protestants and Catholics agree upon the upcoming revision of the Jerusalem Bible as a joint enterprise for which the directors committee of the Jerusalem Bible as well as the French Bible Society are responsible and which is the common work of a mixed revision committee."

Fr. Chiffot ended his report on the meeting with the following two reflections:

"We underlined:

- (1) the duty imposed on us as well as upon the others to be completely loyal to our Church not because of our position as men of the Church, but because of the truth of our faith;
- (2) the duty imposed on us to promote unity as far as possible by the manner in which we receive the Word and how we pass it on to the world. For the Word of God does not belong to us, we belong to the Word."

Some days later the French Bible Society gave notice it was too deeply engaged in the revision of the Second Bible and could not pursue this project any further.

In May 1964, the prospects for an ecumenical Bible translation, yes even for the revision of a translation in ecumenical collaboration, were very poor. But then everything developed very quickly probably thanks to the initiative and the enthusiasm with which Dr. Olivier Béguin pursued the ecumenical revision of the Jerusalem Bible. On 22 July 1964, the decision was

made. However, before this project was publicly presented and the work begun in earnest, they wanted a trial run with two books: the book of Exodus for the Old Testament and the Letter to the Romans for the New Testament. Finally, in a meeting on 16 Oct., the Lutheran and the Reformed biblical scholars agreed to this common venture although, it seemed to me, with great hesitation.

Everything was to be decided on 23 Jan. 1965. On this day, for the first time, the Catholic and Protestant biblical scholars met who worked on the revision of the book of Exodus and the Letter to the Romans. Professor Bonnard explained his revisional work on the first chapter of the Letter to the Romans. With some surprise, I realized: *nothing, literally nothing* was left either from the text or from the annotations of Fr. Lyonnet who had been responsible for the Letter to the Romans in the Jerusalem Bible. Thus, unfortunately, I had to declare that the École Biblique de Jérusalem would never accept such a drastic "revision". The project of an ecumenical revision of the Jerusalem Bible was therefore declared a failure on 23 Jan. 1965 at 10:30 a.m.

However, when we realized that a revision of the Jerusalem Bible was not possible, we aimed at the project of an ecumenical translation. This time we wanted to start exclusively from the Hebrew and Greek text and to collaborate with equal rights. This project was to become the ecumenical Bible translation *Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible*. On this day, it became clear to me that on the ecumenical level nothing could be achieved without complete reciprocity.

## II. The Difficulties of the New Project

The new project was accepted with enthusiasm. The former caution disappeared and everything developed in an exceptionally warm atmosphere. Nonetheless, there were some difficulties. I confine myself to the three most important ones.

1) The *notes* would cause difficulties in any case. Article 1 of the Constitution of the Bible Society founded in 1806 in London says: "The name of the society is British & Foreign Bible Society. Its only goal is to further the distribution of Holy Scripture without note and comment". Article 1 of the Constitution of the Bible Society in Paris from 4 Nov. 1818 formulates similarly: "This society has as its goal to spread the Scriptures among Protestant Christians, without note and comment in the traditional versions for use in their Churches." According to Dr. Béguin, however, a development emerged in the Bible Societies which made the technical (philological, geographical, historical) annotations appear more and more necessary. In any case, Dr. Olivier Béguin and Dr. Eugene Nida, one of the main responsible representatives of the American Bible Society and world renowned philologist who participated actively in the 10 day workshop in Giettes (Switzerland), did not dampen our zeal to elaborate on extensive, comprising annotations comparable to those of the Jerusalem Bible.

The volume published first, the Letter to the Romans which was presented to the public in the auditorium of the Sorbonne

on 16 Jan. 1967, was not stingy with annotations; page 30, only two lines of text; page 31, not a single line of text, but instead an annotation, which began on page 30, of the word *sarx* (flesh); page 34, five lines of text! I can, however, no longer remember why there were negative reactions on the Protestant side in France. It is true, though, that we had announced an edition of the TOB with reduced annotations according to the principles of the United Bible Societies.

Nevertheless, a year later a vehement reaction came not from France, but from the United States. Some Churches, members of the American Bible Society which supported the project of the TOB, threatened separation if the United Bible Societies continued to accept the annotations of the TOB. Thanks to the intervention of Pastor Morel, Secretary of the French Bible Society and also Secretary of the Protestant publishing house *Les Bergers et les Mages* (The Shepherds and the Magi), a compromise was reached: The publishing house accepted the responsibility for the introductions and the annotations while the United Bible Societies were content with the copyright for the biblical text.

But also on the Catholic side, the introductions and annotations became a problem. Cardinal Bea judged them inopportune. "Above all, one must state, so he wrote, that the introductions as well as the envisioned annotations bring with them numerous difficulties of a theological kind. These difficulties refer, first of all, to the introductions - especially when introductions to entire books are treated as, for example, to the Pentateuch or to the Synoptic gospels. As is well known, in all these cases there are statements no longer disputable which have been laid down in recent years by the magisterium of the Church and to which a Catholic biblical scholar is bound. Frequently, however, the non-Catholic biblical scholars have another viewpoint."

We on our part kept exactly to the consistent apparatus of annotations. In France, there is no lack of excellent Bible translations: Segond, Crampon, Bible de Jerusalem, Osty, Maredsous - Bibles which in the end show only insignificant differences. We wanted, however, to go one step further. We hoped the annotations of the TOB would help the Christians to not only clear up their misconceptions, but also to reach an understanding of Holy Scripture acceptable to all. In the foreword, *Esprit et Méthode* (Spirit and Method), we later wrote: "Undertaken with the knowledge of the sole sovereign authority of God and in the hope that all Christians one day would reach the common understanding of Scripture, the ecumenical Bible translation is for all who worked on it an act of faith in the power of the Spirit."

Our project furthermore was supported by Pope Paul VI. When we handed over a copy of the New Testament of the TOB to him, he said: "The ecumenical translation which you presented to us occupies a prominent place. For it is not only a modern translation with the usual geographical, historical and linguistic annotations; it furthermore offers the reader extensive exegetical and theological annotations. ... Your commentary is such that it almost always offers one and the same interpretation which can honestly be accepted by the representatives of all denominations engaged in this work."

Earlier we mentioned our publicity slogan: "Unique in history, without comparison in the world." We were convinced that the second part, "...without comparison in the world", would soon lose its validity.

Yet 15 years later, it is still true! For, all of the 150 ecumenical translations which have been published since or are still in the preparatory stages, are in keeping with the "Guidelines" published on 1 June 1968 jointly by the Executive Committee of the United Bible Societies and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. (The revised edition of these "Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible" from 16 Nov. 1987 contains minor modifications). These "Guidelines", however, exclude introductions and exegetical as well as theological annotations as they are found in the TOB.

Presumably, the TOB, though a breakthrough, will not have a direct successor. It will stay unique in its kind which to some extent we regret.

2) *The introductions* were the reason for another painful crisis. The readers of the TOB may find this out when they read in the foreword to the Bible the statement by the orthodox theological commission from 24 May 1971. Some orthodox theologians were indeed alarmed about some critical concepts of the TOB which they considered too liberal and too rationalistic.

The drop that made the barrel overflow, was a passage in the introduction to the gospel according to Matthew: "Since one does not know the name of the author for sure, it is appropriate to confine oneself to some features in the gospel itself; the author can be recognized from his work...The description of a Jewish scribe who turned Christian could apply to him: 'the head of the house who brings out things both new and old' ". The translators dated the first gospel to the years 80-90, "perhaps a little bit later". To understand the opinion of the translators, one has to remember that the gospel itself does not say anything about its author and that only in the middle of the second century, Papias was the first witness who accredited this gospel to the apostle Matthew. Indeed for a long time, there was disagreement on the question about the authors of holy scripture...One estimated that the apostolic authority practically constituted the criterium of inspiration.

Today the discussion regarding this question is outdated in the Catholic Church; however, only recently. According to Lyonnet, the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* (18 Nov. 1965) is the first Church document that does not touch at all the question of the authors of the biblical books. For a biblical book to be recognized as apostolic by the Church, it suffices that she recognizes in it the faith of the apostles. In any case, because of the long duration of this debate in the Catholic Church, we should not be surprised if some theologians or even Churches maintain their traditional views.

3) *The last crisis* was less dramatic yet, perhaps, more significant. In any case, it makes us modest. A few months before the publication of the TOB, when a large portion of the manuscript was already in print, the authors of the translation

of the first gospel withdrew their introduction. It was too short. Although this gospel has 28 chapters and is perhaps the most important one - in any case, it is the most quoted - the introduction to this gospel was hardly any longer than that to the Letter to Philemon with only 24 verses! What had happened?

The two exegetes who had always found agreement on all points of dispute or difficulties in this gospel - and they were many - could not reach an agreement over a concise presentation of the first gospel, and above all about the Matthean ecclesiology...The crisis, however, could be overcome quickly: a commission of four biblical scholars revised the introduction. After some further modifications, it was then accepted by the authors. This crisis, as insignificant as it may have been, made us conscious of our limits in the endeavor to achieve understanding of the Bible acceptable to all.

In short, in the course of the years, many a crisis had to be overcome until our project became a reality. Nonetheless, none of these crises could endanger the project. We are, therefore, happy since at least in part we could face the challenge which Prof. Paul Evdokimov put forth with his remark in 1956: "The closed Bible unites us, the open Bible separates us." With the TOB, today it is the open Bible that unites and reconciles us.

Further Information: The text of the essay by Fr. Refoulé is published in: Bulletin d'Informations Bibliques (B.I.B.), Service Biblique Evangile et Vie, 6 avenue Vavin, F-75006 Paris.

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## Criteria for a Bible Reading - CLAR - Latin America

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*To celebrate the 5th centenary of the evangelization of Latin America (1992), the Conference of Latin American Religious (CLAR), has developed "Palabra Vida" (Word Life) a project whose goal is to mobilize the religious communities of Latin America in a common effort through "study-conversion-action". This project has as its basis, central themes of the Bible. The point of departure for reading and meditating on the Bible is the concrete reality of the people with whom these communities share their faith. The project stretches over five years and provides detailed directives for work and reflection. Further information is available at: Confederacion Latinoamericana de Religiosos, Calle 64 N°10-45, Piso 5°, Bogotá Colombia.*

*In the general orientation on the project, CLAR details the criteria for a Christian reading of the Bible. Here is a translation of this section made at the Secretariat in Stuttgart.*



## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BIBLE

### 1. A reading of the Bible which starts from reality.

a. The greatest assurance the Bible communicates to us is this: God listens to the cry of his oppressed people. He is present in the life and the history of his people and works for their liberation. Therefore, like the people of the Bible and like Jesus, we must bring reality to the heart of the Bible - a reality burdened with the conflicts in which we live and which makes the people cry out in sorrow. The situation of the people must always be before our eyes when we read the Bible. Jesus, before referring to the Scriptures, wanted to know the situation of the two disciples of Emmaus: "What matters are you discussing? Why are you downcast?" (Lk 24,13).

b. Therefore in the study of the Bible, the first preoccupation must be to discover through an attentive reading of the text, the concrete reality (which is one of conflict) of the people for whom the text was originally written.

c. In studying the situation of the people of biblical times, it is convenient to use the same criteria that are applied for an analysis of the economical, social and religious situations of the people of today. This allows one to confront the problems of yesterday with those of today. Pope Paul VI referred to this method in his discourse to the Italian exegetes in 1978, when he affirmed that it is absolutely necessary to "be faithful to the original text and at the same time faithful to humankind".

### 2. A reading of the Bible in Community.

a. The Bible is the book of the people, of the community, of the Church. Therefore, the place for Bible reading is the community and the norm for its interpretation is the faith of the community, of the Church. Even when I read the Bible alone, I read the book of the community, of the Church. The sought-after meaning is that treasured by the community which I as an individual must accept in order to be a member of that community. The interpretation is above all, a communitarian enterprise in which all can participate. It is not only the task of those who have studied more than others. The scholars, the exegetes for their part do collaborate and place themselves at the service of the others, as does everyone else.

b. Discovering the meaning of the Bible is for us not only the fruit of study but also the action of the Holy Spirit. This demands an atmosphere of participation, faith, prayer and celebration that allows room for the action of the Holy Spirit. It is he who was present at the origin of the Bible and who, according to the promise of Jesus, will reveal to us the meaning of his Words. Prayer helps to create this necessary atmosphere enabling us to listen to the call of the Spirit.

c. Reading and interpreting the Bible cannot be activities apart from the rest of the life of the community. They involve, animate and dynamize all the activities and struggles of its members. This necessarily has repercussions on the means and methods one adopts.

d. In studying the text, it must not be our sole concern to discover the situation of the people of those times, we must also find out how the Bible answered and reacted to this concrete reality - one of conflict - in which the people found themselves.

### 3. A reading of the Bible which respects the text.

a. Bible reading is one of the instances of our dialogue with God. The first requirement of a dialogue is to listen to others and not to reduce them to what I want them to be. Listening demands silence, to divest oneself of prejudices so that others may reveal themselves for what they are. A listening attitude allows the text to "speak" in its "otherness", as a human word transmitting to us the Word of God.

b. The text is like the poor people: it cannot defend itself against the aggressions of those who oppress and manipulate. It is easily subdued yet hardly convinced. It knows to resist. In a certain sense, the need to respect and listen to the text is one side of the coin; on the other side, to respect and to listen to the people.

c. This demands transposing the text back to its original context. The reading and study of the text must, in a certain sense, create it anew so that its concrete significance to the situation of the people of biblical times surfaces, as well as the response of orientation and critique it offered to those for whom it was intended.

d. This further calls for taking into account the results of scientific exegesis. For discovering the meaning of the text, it is very important to realize the study should help us to understand the economical, social, political and ideological situation of the people of those times.

e. A reading which has this respect for the biblical text will take every possible precaution not to utilize or manipulate it (neither to conserve nor transform it) and thus not project our own ideas and desires into the text.

### 4. A reading which relates to Faith and Life.

The articulation of these three criteria coming from the poor people, permits the axis of interpretation in this kind of reading to shift. By doing this, one again finds some of the fundamental characteristics of the most ancient tradition of the people of God:

a. The principal preoccupation is not the discovery of the meaning which the Bible had in the past, but the meaning which the Spirit conveys to his Church today through the channel of the biblical text. This type of reading is called "Lectio Divina". It searches to discover the "spiritual sense". It is a reading of faith which endeavors to discover with the help of the Bible the action of the Word of God in life.

b. The Bible is read not as a book which relates past history, but rather as a mirror ("symbol" Heb 11,19) of the history which develops today in the life of the persons, the communi-

ties, and the peoples in Latin America. Former generations termed this "the symbolical sense". The search for this meaning expresses the conviction of faith that God continues to speak to us through the events of life. In the course of this reading of faith, the Spirit helps to live the present as part of the manifestation of God in history.

c. The principal preoccupation is, therefore, not to interpret the text, but to interpret life, our history, through the text. The axis of interpretation is shifted from text to life. This is none other than what St. Augustine's comparison of the "two books" illustrates: the Bible as "the second book" helps us to interpret life which is indeed "the first book".

#### 5. A reading of the Bible in the service of life.

Such a reading which relates the Bible to life and life to the Bible resulting in one helping to understand the other, is necessarily LIBERATING and ECUMENICAL.

a. A reading in the service of life in the given situation where the people of Latin America find themselves, is inevitably liberating. The people's lives are threatened by the forces of death and are unjustly exploited. It is no longer a life in abundance nor do the present conditions allow it to be truly human. A reading of the Bible is liberating if it motivates the people to organize themselves with the goal to defend life and fight against the forces of death in order to free themselves from all that oppresses them. The various ways of building communities, of organizing the people, of participating in the fight against human rights violations, helps to make the desire for liberation very concrete, a desire which animates the hope of the people in Latin America.

b. The most ecumenical and universal element we have in common is life and the desire to live it to the full. This desire to live in dignity as men and women and to be able to lead a life of justice and fullness exists, above all, among the poor and oppressed. The poor people are ecumenical when they read the Bible. There they met as the faithful of different Christian denominations. The reading they undertake serves as a defense against their threatened and depressed lives. The Bible itself testifies to the validity of this ecumenical attitude. In the beginning God created life as the source of blessing. Then he called Abraham so that he and his people could regain for all the promise of life which had been lost on account of sin. The Bible came about and continues to exist in order to enlighten life and defend it that it may become life to the full.

c. This reading in defense of life realizes what St. Augustin said: transform the reality and life so that they become a new "theophany", a revelation of God.

#### 6. A committed reading.

This type of Bible reading, conducted faithfully, opens our eyes step by step to reality and leads us to an option for the poor and a firmer commitment to their cause.

a. This reading starts from a different social situation. It starts no longer from the place of the "learned and the educated", but

from the "little ones". *"Yes, Father, I thank you...for that is what it pleased you to do"* (Lk 10,21).

b. One does not only read the Bible to better comprehend its meaning, but also and above all, to put it into practice. *"Happy are those who hear the Word of God and put it into practice!"* (Lk 11, 28). The insight obtained through study aims at the transforming action so that the face of God be revealed anew.

c. A reading which is committed to the poor and done in community will assume a political dimension. Its consequences are not only a personal conversion but even more a change in community and social structures.

#### 7. A faithful reading.

In summary, this type of reading aims at nothing more than to be faithful to the objective of the Bible itself.

a. The objective of the Bible is one and only: to help people discover that God has come in order to listen to the cry of the poor, and to accompany them on their way. It is the same God who formerly walked with the people of Israel. And with them, one experiences today the presence of God, Yahwe, Emmanuel, the God with us, the God who liberates. The reading of the Bible must be "objective", that is to say, faithful to the objectives of the Word of God.

b. The main key to the Bible is Jesus - who died and is risen, and is alive in the midst of the community. The Bible has as its goal to help the people discover the greatness of the power with which God accompanies his people and sets them free. It is the same power he used to save Jesus from death. This is what St. Paul prayed for on behalf of the community in Ephesus (Eph 1,19-21).

We made this long and detailed enumeration of the characteristics of a Christian reading of the Bible in order to offer a frame of reference. From time to time, it is good to review our own practice and the type of Bible reading we are engaged in. In this sense, the seven characteristics mentioned above may serve as criteria for this revision and evaluation.

**The office of the General Secretariat  
in Stuttgart is linked into the  
TELEFAX system.**

**Our identification code is  
KBF/WCFBA/FEBICAM**

**Number (0711) 6 40 56 44**



## THE BIBLE IN THE NEW EVANGELIZATION (V)

*In view of the preparation for the next Plenary Assembly which will take place in 1990 in Latin America, the BULLETIN DEI VERBUM has regularly published on its central pages the contributions towards the adopted theme of this encounter: "The Bible in the New Evangelization".*

*Fr. Ludger Feldkämper, General Secretary of our Federation, presents a two-part study on the theme. The first part deals with the terms "evangelization and "new evangelization" in some recent ecclesiastical documents. The second offers some orientations for action within the actual situation of the various continents. In the following you find the text of the first part. The second will appear in the next issue of the BULLETIN DEI VERBUM.*

### PART ONE

#### THE PRESENCE OF THE THEME OF THE "NEW EVANGELIZATION" IN SOME CHURCH DOCUMENTS DURING THE LAST 25 YEARS

Since the theme is based on terminology used in recent Church documents, I begin with a brief analysis of the individual terms in some of these documents.

##### 1. The meaning of "evangelization".

1. Up to the II Vatican Council, the word "evangelization" was hardly a common term among Catholics; if at all, it was used for the propagation for the faith in the so-called "foreign missions". With Bishop (later Cardinal) Suenens' book, "The Gospel to Every Creature", 1956, and the chapter "To Humanize or to Evangelize" this term enters Catholic missiological and pastoral literature.

2. In the documents of the II Vatican Council, the verb "evangelize" appears 17 times and the noun "evangelization", 23 times. Likewise, a *change* of meaning is noticeable. Whereas in the past among Catholics the term referred almost exclusively to "mission", it now includes other "services of the Word". (cf. especially the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, AD GENTES, AG 6 "Evangelization and Mission" and AG 38, "The Hierarchy and Evangelization").

3. The Bishops' Synod of 1974 broadened the meaning of this concept still further. Evangelization now means - according to R. Laurentin - the entirety of the "Mission of the Church, mainly the Proclamation of the Good News of Salvation".

4. The Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI on Evangelization in the Modern World, EVANGELII NUNTIANDI (EN, 1975) is so far the most important treatment of the theme "evangelization". The word "evangelization/ evangelizing" as noun or verb appears 214 times - that is twice per page.

It is almost impossible to briefly summarize this document of 27,500 words within 82 paragraphs; you will find here only a few sentences which in view of our theme seem to be important.

#### 4.1. The nature of evangelization.

EVANGELII NUNTIANDI gives this rather extensive description:

*"For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity and through its influence transforming humanity from within making it new: 'Now I am making the whole of creation new'. But there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by baptism and by lives lived according to the Gospel. The purpose of evangelization is, therefore, precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence, the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs" (EN 18).*

#### 4.2. The contents of evangelization: the Kingdom of God.

The Apostolic Exhortation specifies the contents of evangelization as follows: *"Christ first of all proclaims the Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, and this is so important, by comparison, that everything else becomes 'the rest', which is 'given in addition'. Only the Kingdom therefore is absolute, and it makes all else relative" (EN 8).*

#### 4.3. Evangelization: the task of the Church.

EVANGELII NUNTIANDI clearly states that evangelization is the main task of the Church:

*"We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is, in effect, the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity" (EN 14).*

#### 4.4. The Church's need to be evangelized.

The Church can fulfill her mission to evangelize only if she herself is being evangelized anew time and again: *The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself. She needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe, to her reasons for hoping, to the new commandment of love. She has a constant need of being evangelized, if she wishes to retain freshness, vigor and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel" (EN 15).*

This is also true about the individual believer:

*"Finally, the person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others" (EN 24).*

And of the basic communities:

*"As hearers of the Gospel which is proclaimed to them and privileged beneficiaries of evangelization, they will soon become proclaimers of the Gospel themselves" (EN 58).*

5. During the short time of his pontificate, Pope John Paul I repeatedly talked about evangelization. He did so significantly in his first speech already on 26 Aug. 1978, the day after his election:

*"We would like to remind the entire Church that evangelization is her first duty...welcome or unwelcome (2 Tim 4,2) to spread the Word, to proclaim the Good News, to announce salvation."*

6. John Paul II pays attention time and again to the theme of evangelization as the most important mission of the Church. Here are some instances:

To the Ambassador of the Dominican Republic on 2 Feb. 1987:

*"Evangelization is an on-going responsibility and a basic demand of the living Church, as the II Vatican Council explained so fully."*

During the Eucharistic Celebration in Buenos Aires on 10 Apr. 1987:

*"Renew in your spirits and in your hearts the ultimate and sublime goal of evangelization. You have been called to make*

*the word of St. Paul your own which should be the basis of our daily examination of conscience and to live it with all its consequences: "Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Good News!" (1 Cor 9,16).*

To the Bishops of Belgium on 24 Apr. 1987:

*"Evangelization is the task of all of the members of the Church: of bishops, theologians, priests, religious and lay people of the adults and the youth."*

## II. The meaning of "new evangelization".

1. Pope John Paul II seems to have been the first to use the expression "new evangelization". For lack of an exact and detailed study of the term, only a few random remarks from his speeches during the last years are quoted:

In Port au Prince, Haiti, 9 Mar. 1983, he specified

*"new evangelization" as "new in its zeal, new in its methods, new in its expression".*

To the Bishops of Granada and Seville, Spain, on 14 Nov. 1986, he said:

*"We cannot hope for greater vitality in the Church if we do not at the same time intensify our new evangelization".*

He stated in addressing priests, brothers, deacons and seminarians in Santiago, Chile, 1 Apr. 1987:

*"The Church is preparing to begin the third millennium of her pilgrimage towards the heavenly Jerusalem. This provides an opportunity for you to renew your commitment and fidelity to the mission of evangelization."*

He exhorted the Mission Aid Societies on 8 May 1987:

*"We must continue our task of evangelization with courage and confidence, even if the times today are more difficult than formerly!"*

Summing up the accomplishments and the task ahead in evangelization, he told the pilgrims at the Marian Shrine in Vallavérde on 25 May 1987:

*"Through my apostolic visits in five continents, I have reached the conclusion that the evangelization in today's world is better organized than ever before... Conscious of its mission the Church feels herself obliged to the double task of evangelizing the world and of re-evangelizing Christianity."*

2. There are some aspects of the "new evangelization" which time and again appear in the addresses of the Pope:

-1. Repeatedly, he brings up the topic of "new evangelization" in relation to the approaching third millennium. The consciousness of this event, significant for our epoch becomes clear time and again also in other connections; for example in his first encyclical letter REDEMPTOR HOMINIS.

-2. "New evangelization" is referred to as having its specific meaning in the various continents or contexts:  
a. In Latin America, it is distinguished from the first evangelization which began with the arrival of the Spanish and the Portuguese almost 500 years ago.  
b. In Europe, this "new evangelization" would mean "re-evangelization".

-3. The Pope points out two characteristic aspects: "new evangelization" must:  
a. be inspired by the II Vatican Council  
b. be directed especially towards the new generations.

-4. He also speaks of a double task of "new evangelization", namely:  
a. the evangelization of the world  
b. the re-evangelization of Christianity (25 May 1987).

## III. What is the role of the Word of God and the Bible in the new evangelization?

1. In the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *DEI VERBUM*, we find at least two relevant texts:

*"Like the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and ruled by sacred Scripture" (DV 21).*

*"Just as the life of the Church grows through persistent participation in the Eucharistic mystery, so we may hope for a new surge of spiritual mentality from intensified veneration for God's Word which 'lasts forever' (Is 40,8; cf 1 Pet. 1, 23-25)" (DV 26).*

2. EVANGELII NUNTIANDI does not speak as distinctly and explicitly about the role of sacred Scripture. Nonetheless, there too are some important elements in this regard:

Pope Paul VI speaks about the two-fold fidelity in the service of the Word: towards the message which must be handed on and towards people to whom it must be transmitted (EN 4). In other words: the handing on of the biblical message must really reach its addressees. This twofold fidelity then implies that the old message can and must have a new meaning.

In relation to basic Christian ecclesial communities, sacred Scripture is mentioned as an important element which unites the communities, invigorates and animates them (EN 58). In fact, experience shows that the Word of Scripture becomes alive and exerts its life-giving force where it is read - as the Book of the community - in community.

Finally, in dealing with the lay people's "activity in the world", EVANGELII NUNTIANDI speaks about the need of "gospel inspired lay people" (EN 70). Only in this way can they do justice to their calling and their mission (cf. also No. 4, the Decree on the Laity of the II Vatican Council).

3. The clearest and perhaps shortest testimony on the Bible and evangelization is the Statement of the Latin American Bishops in their PUEBLA document No. 376:

*"Sacred Scripture must be the soul of evangelization."*

This word is probably a modification and further development of the word of the Council, taken from "Providentissimus Deus" of Leo XIII and from "Spiritus Paraclitus" of Benedict XV: "The study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology" (DV 24).

#### IV. Which relationships exist between evangelization and Bible?

1. The relation between evangelization, Church and the world;

- evangelization of the world is the main mission of the Church (EN 14).
- the Church herself must be evangelized in order to be able to evangelize (EN 15).
- the Church evangelizes by carrying the Good News into all the realms of humankind (EN 18).

In other words, evangelization has as its object both the Church and the world and as its subject (under the action of the Holy Spirit!) the Church.

2. Evangelization and sacred Scripture.

Sacred Scripture is the nourishment, norm and soul of evangelization. (DV 21, PUEBLA 372).

#### V. Summary

Through an "intensified veneration of God's Word" (DV 26), the Church must:

- \* first of all and time and again be evangelized anew so that she become more and more a sacrament that is sign and instrument for the innermost union with God and for the unity of the entire human race (LG 1);
- \* carry the Good News into all the realms of humankind and, through its influence, change and renew it from within (EN 18).

The center, therefore, is the Church who opens herself anew to the Gospel and who listens to the Word of God - the message of the Kingdom, still coming and yet in Jesus already begun - in order to proclaim it (i. e. to evangelize).

Ludger Feldkämper, SVD  
General Secretary

in Bogotá, Colombia, in conjunction with the 500 years celebration of the first evangelization of Latin America.

An **Executive Committee** chosen at the Plenary Assembly, meets annually and monitors the implementation of the resolutions of the Plenary Assembly.

The **General Secretariat** located in Stuttgart, West Germany, consists of a small international team that coordinates the work of the Federation and hands on impulses according to the directives of the Plenary Assembly and the Executive Committee.

In these efforts, it is supported by the **Regional Coordinators**. They endeavor to encourage, reinforce and promote the biblical apostolate and the pastoral ministry in their respective regions.

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#### Role of the General Secretariat

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The General Secretariat encourages and stimulates the members of the Federation with their work in various fields. During the General Secretary's visits, members have the opportunity to discuss and evaluate their work and endeavors. The General Secretary establishes close relations between the members and attempts to better coordinate their efforts and share their experiences. He organizes the meetings of the Regional Coordinators, the Executive Committee, and the Plenary Assembly.

He likewise maintains effective liaison with the official Church authorities and especially with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

He is in contact with the other Christian biblical organizations and particularly with the United Bible Societies.

The Secretariat annually evaluates 150-200 new biblical-pastoral projects submitted by the funding agencies.

The Secretariat informs the members and the competent authorities about biblical-pastoral activities and initiatives everywhere. To this end, it publishes the quarterly *BULLETIN DEI VERBUM*, which is edited simultaneously in English, French and German.

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#### The Present Situation

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The World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate is present in 90 countries with 68 Full Members and 165 Associate Members.

At a private audience granted to the members of the Executive Committee on 7 April 1986, Pope John Paul II strongly urged the Federation to intensify its work. He said: "The final report of the Synod of Bishops (1985) declared that the Dogmatic Constitution *DEI VERBUM* has been too much neglected in the course of the twenty years that have passed since the Council; it deserves a deeper consideration and implementation. May I ask you, therefore, to make a special effort in response to this challenge?"

In 1989, the Federation commemorates its 20th anniversary. Next year, 25 years after the promulgation of the Dogmatic Constitution *DEI VERBUM*, its 4th Plenary Assembly will take place with the theme: "The Bible in the New Evangelization".

# WORLD CATHOLIC FEDERATION FOR THE BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE

1969 - 1989

**W. C. F. B. A.**

(Katholische Welt-Bibel-Föderation)

Mittelstraße 12

Postfach 10 52 22

D - 7000 Stuttgart 10

The World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate is an international association of biblical-pastoral organizations created to carry out concretely in the pastoral and apostolic fields the recommendations of the II Vatican Council concerning the Bible. Its aim is to be of service to the Bishops in the fulfilment of their responsibility to proclaim the Word of God to all the faithful. Every Catholic organization engaged in the biblical apostolate and related pastoral work and enjoying ecclesiastical approval is eligible for membership.

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## Origin

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Vatican II recommended that "Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful" (Dei Verbum, 22). In order to put into operation this mandate from the Council, Cardinal Bea, in 1967, made contact with existing Catholic biblical organizations.

Under the patronage of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, the directors of these organizations founded the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate on 16 April 1969.

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## Aims

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The Federation pursues a variety of goals:

- It instigates, encourages and supports the translation, production and distribution of the Bible at Catholic and interconfessional levels. The

message of the Scriptures, which liberates and nourishes hope, will thus be heard by the widest possible audience and in particular by the marginalized and the oppressed.

- It promotes biblical studies and the production of educational tools for the sake of a better approach to and understanding of the Bible. It aims to respond to the needs of various kinds of groups and to facilitate for all age-groups a personal and community reading of the Bible. At the same time, the Federation remains attentive to recent developments for the dissemination of knowledge through modern media. It encourages a reading of the Bible that takes into account the social and cultural history of the respective nations and the thought processes of contemporary people.

- It encourages and stimulates cooperation and tries to establish bridges between biblical science, pastoral ministry and Church communities on all levels.

- It promotes a reading and study of the Bible in small communities which helps them to discern the signs of the times, to pray with the Bible, to live the biblical message especially within the family itself.

- It favors the exchange of initiatives and experiences in the biblical-pastoral ministry and the biblical apostolate in all sectors of the Church.

- It supports interconfessional dialogue based on the common heritage of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, and also the dialogue between the religions based on Sacred Scripture and those scriptures considered as sacred by the other religions.

- It emphasizes the importance of the formation of the ministers of the Word.

- It encourages a "Bible Week" in every country and collaborates with other Christian Churches which have similar objectives.

For the implementation of its goals, the Federation appeals to all who are ready to add their personal or community support to this great work

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## Work of the Federation

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The activities of the Federation are those of each and all of its members. They extend over varied fields: translating, editing, distributing of the Scriptures; introductions to the Bible and animation to use it through courses and educational means; catechesis and liturgy; theater, music, audio-visual media, etc.

The Federation has two categories of members:

- **Full Members** are the organizations mandated with Bible work by their local Bishops' Conference. Each country may have only one Full Member.

- **Associate Members** are Catholic organizations dedicated to the biblical apostolate in any of its many forms.

Every six years, delegates of the members meet for a **Plenary Assembly** to define the policy of the Federation and give directives for the succeeding years.

The first Plenary Assembly was held in Vienna in 1972; the second one took place at Malta in 1978; and the third at Bangalore in 1984. The next Plenary Assembly is scheduled for 1990



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## General Information

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### ARGENTINA - Evangelization course.

The Association of Parish Workers of Christ the King (Cooperadores Parroquiales de Cristo Rey) continues its training activities thanks to the Permanent Evangelization Service Through Audiovisual Media (SEPA). A group of priests, as well as members of religious orders and lay people are busy preparing reading helps so that God's Word can reach the various social levels. Among others, the group is working on a sound-slide evangelization course supplemented with videos and books. The purpose of this course, which is addressed to all persons involved in the biblical-pastoral ministry, is to help people know and love God's Word.

*Information:* Servicio de evangelización permanente por medios audiovisuales, Casa. Ntra. Sra. de Fátima, Juan José Paso 8385, Fisherton, 2000 Rasario-Santa Fé, Argentina.

### BELGIUM - Suggestions for the initial meeting of a Bible group

In this year's first issue of "V.B.S.-Informatie", the Bulletin of the Catholic Biblical Association of the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium, the following suggestions are given for a Bible group meeting for the first time:

1. Welcome.
2. A brief presentation of the aims of the newly formed Bible group (biblical themes to be discussed; how to read biblical texts, and make use of reading aids; comparing the biblical message with everyday life).
3. Two suggestions for work during this first meeting:
  - Presentation of a slide series on Israel and the Bible to help the participants correlate significant biblical places to the biblical texts (origin of the Bible, the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Bible, the discovery of manuscripts, history...).
  - Discussion around three texts: the vocation of Jonah (Jon 1, 1-16); the tower of Babel (Gn 11,1-9); the letter to the Philippians (3,17-4,9) (Organization of the discussion will depend on the number of participants and available time; the texts can be divided among three groups). The following questions may be of use:
    - . What is this text about?
    - . What is its biblical context?
    - . Are there any elements in this text that could be historically verified?
    - . Why did people want to preserve these elements in writing?
    - . Does the text contain an intention or message? If so, what is it and how could we translate it for today?

The result of the common search will be compiled under the guidance of the facilitator, who will proffer the relevant explanations based on exegetical research.

*Information:* Vlaamse Bijbelschting, Prof. Van Segbroeck, Sint-Michiëlstr. 6, 3000 Leuven, Belgium

### BELGIUM - The Bible on CD-ROM

CD-ROM is the abbreviation for Compact-Disc Read Only Memory, a high density memory disc for personal computers. The Centre Bible and Computer (Promotion Biblique et Informatique) of Maredsous and the Foundation for Advanced Biblical Studies are working together to produce CD-ROMs for Bible study. Several discs are already available from FINDIT in Willowdale (Ontario, Canada). Current plans are to put biblical texts in modern and ancient languages (6 versions in English, 2 in Spanish, 1 in German, the French Bible of Maredsous, the original Hebrew and Greek texts, the LXX, the Latin Vulgate), as well as biblical reading aids like dictionaries and encyclopedias, on CD-ROMs.

*Information:* Promotion Biblique et Informatique, Rue de Maredsous 11, 5198 Denée, Belgium.

### BRAZIL - Planning a Latin American Biblical Bibliography

Well-known are the importance of Bible reading among Latin American Christians and a reading related to the context of the continent. This new way of reading the Bible is presented in various ways, not only through books, but also through brochures, articles, reviews, essays, dissertations, etc... It becomes more and more difficult to have access to all these riches, and to keep oneself up to date. For this reason biblical scholars plan to promote the exchange of Latin American biblical literature through the project of a "Latin American Biblical Bibliography". This project includes the publication - for the first time in 1989 - of a biblical bibliography, the search for means to have access to biblical research instruments originating from the continent; a growing exchange of reading aids; and the organization of meetings. The team responsible for this filicitous initiative, supported by the ecumenical "Post Graduate Institute in Religious Sciences", relies on cooperation between pastoral centers, publishers and Bible promoters. It has already started producing a "Bibliography Bulletin".

*Information:* Bibliographia Biblica Latino-Americana, Caixa postal 5150,009735 - Rudge Ramos, Sao Bernardo do Campo, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

### CHINA - The Bible available for purchase.

The people of the People's Republic of China will soon be able to buy the Bible in bookstores which was previously only available inside the churches. But for some time now the Bible has been printed again in China. There is a notable interest in the Bible among numerous professors and students of literature and history. (Bibel und Kirche)

### FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY - Ecumenical Bible Week.

The Christian Churches have chosen the Gospel according to John as theme for the Ecumenical Bible Week 1988/1989.

*Information:* Katholisches Bibelwerk, Silberburgstr. 121, D-7000 Stuttgart 1.

**ISRAEL - Centenary of the "École Biblique" in Jerusalem.**

The French School for Bible and Archaeology (École Biblique et Archéologique) of Jerusalem will celebrate its centenary in 1990 by organizing an international conference to be held in Lyon, France, from 20 Oct. to 2 Nov. 1990. Open to all interested people, this conference is dedicated to the theme "The Beginning of the critical mind". An exposition entitled "Jerusalem - One Hundred Years of Bible Study" will be featured at this conference.

Founded in 1890 by Fr. Lagrange, op., the "École Biblique" welcomes male and female students (religious and lay people of all confessions) who want to specialize in biblical sciences. The professors, primarily Dominicans, teach the following subjects: text criticism, exegesis of the Old and the New Testament, hermeneutics, biblical theology, biblical history and geography, history of the Ancient Orient, intertestamentary literature, rabbinical studies, Christian antiquity, Greek and Semitic epigraphy, oriental languages (Accadian, Sumerian, Syriac, Aramaean, Coptic, etc...).

To further deepen the knowledge of the Holy Land visits and excursions are arranged to all parts of Palestine and the neighboring countries.

Regular students must have a working knowledge of Greek and Hebrew when they enter the School, in addition to understanding some French, English and German. The studies are of one, two or three years duration. At the end, a Church recognized diploma is given. The school also admits guest students (who want to enroll in a particular course) and such students who prepare for a doctorate or pursue other scholarly work.

The School's library contains more than 80.000 volumes, and subscribes to 300 magazines. Their museum contains important collections composed of pieces of ceramic work, coins, tables with cuneiform script, inscriptions, monuments, etc. The School is also involved in numerous excavation projects and in the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In addition to "Revue Biblique", the School also supervises the publication of several series of books such as "Les Cahiers de la Revue Biblique" and "Études Bibliques". The School also publishes various French editions of the Jerusalem Bible.

*Information:* Ecole Biblique, Nablus Road 6, P.O.B. 19053, Jerusalem, Israel.

**ITALY - Bible Study Weeks**

The Italian Bible Association organizes several Bible Weeks:

- 3-8 July: 28th Bible Week for the clergy on "The prayer of Jesus - Prayer in Judaism".

- 10-16 July: 25th National Bible Week for lay people on "The letters of Peter and of James"

- 24-29 July: Bible Week for Sisters on "The letter to the Hebrews".

- 31 July to 4 August: Sardinian Bible Week on "The Book of Exodus and the letter of Saint Paul".

- 25-30 August: 21st National Bible Week for Sisters on "The Gospel of Mark".

*Information:* Associazione Biblica Italiana (ABI), Via della Scrofa 80, I-0000186 Rome

**PAKISTAN - Bible Sunday**

On 29 Jan. 1989, the Catholic Church of Pakistan celebrated its annual Bible Sunday dedicated to the theme, "Growing with the Word and Going with the Word".

On that occasion, Catholics met with Protestant Christians in Karachi, while in a parish in Lahore, Muslims and Christians celebrated together. A Muslim explained the importance of the Koran for Muslims, and a Christian the significance of the Bible for Christians.

**PHILIPPINES - First consultation among regional centres of the biblical apostolate**

The celebration of the 10th anniversary of the foundation of the John Paul I Biblical Centre in the province of Luzon provided the opportunity for a first consultation among the five regional centers of the biblical apostolate in the Philippines.

Representatives from the National Catholic Biblical Centre of Manila, as well as from the Biblical centres John Paul I in Northern Luzon, St. Pius X from Southern Luzon, St. Jerome in the Visayas, and Paul VI in Mindanao, participated in the consultation.

The following items were discussed: "Interconfessional cooperation within the biblical apostolate"; "The most important recommendations of the First Asian Meeting for Biblical Apostolate in Hong Kong"; "The Pastoral Letter of the bishops of the Philippines on the biblical apostolate"; "The Bible in the evangelization of the Philippines of today".

*Information:* Fr. Wim Wijtten, svd. John Paul I Regional Director, 2700 Vigan, Ilocos Sur, Philippines.

**PORTUGAL - 12th National Bible Week**

Dedicated to the theme: "The poor in the Bible... and in today's life", the 12th National Bible Week of Portugal will be held in Fatima from 27 August to 1 September.

The following subjects will be discussed during this week: "The God of the poor - poverty in the biblical context and in the historical books of the Bible"; "The Messiah of the poor - the cry of the poor in the books of the Prophets"; "The poor evangelize - the poor Christ, proclaiming the Good News to the poor according to the Gospels"; "They shared everything together - a Church of the poor and for the poor: poverty and wealth in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Letters of Paul"; "The preferential option for the poor - poverty and wealth in the history and in the social doctrine of the Church"; "Situations of poverty in Portugal"; "Reasons for poverty in Portugal and solutions"; "Attempts to free oneself of poverty in Portugal".

During this year the Biblical Movement (Movimento do dinamização Bíblica) will organize courses for leaders and promoters of the biblical-pastoral ministry, a national meeting of Bible groups (on 15-16 July), biblical retreats, and the National Bible Week.

*Information:* Secretariado Nacional de Dinamização Bíblica, Casa dos Capuchinhos, Estrada da Moita, 26, P-2495 Fatima.

**ZAIRE - Day Camp for Bible training.**

The diocese of Mbuji-Mayi in Zaire organized Bible training sessions in 20 centers in 1988 with an average of 45 participants in each session. Each center serves several communities and the sessions were intended primarily for the community leaders. During the session, the role and the importance of the Bible in every day life was examined, a first introduction to the books of the Bible was given, and reading aids were offered in order to facilitate Bible reading within the communities. A biblical review entitled "Njila Wa Moyo" will be produced in an effort to extend the formation day through a training and idea exchange publication.

*Information:* Père Gerard Lesch, SVD, Verbum Bible, P.O. Box 7463, Kinshasa 1, Zaire

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**Books and Reviews**

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**Antonio De Col, La Biblia - Historia de Dios y de los hombres - I. Antiguo Testamento, Ediciones Don Bosco Argentina, Confederación interamericana de educación católica, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1987, 50 pages. Spanish**

This small handbook contains an introduction to the various epochs of biblical history and the formation of the Old Testament books. In the appendix an illustrated folding page is found with charts and diagrams providing an overview of the historical process as a whole, as well as of the different sections of the salvation history.

**Clara Maria Diaz Castrillon, Leer el texto: - vivir la palabra - Manual de iniciación a la lectura estructural de la Biblia, Verbo Divino, Estella, Spain, 1988, 248 pages. Spanish**

Developments in language sciences have made new reading methods possible. Applying these methods to the Bible has resulted in a renewed and more active reading of the Scriptures especially for many young Christians in Europe. This manual introduces step by step the "structural method". This guide could be an incentive to live a more meaningful life in the future - a life that is directed by Scripture and gives witness to the Word of God.

**Philip A. Cunningham, Jesus and the Evangelists - The Ministry of Jesus and its Portrayal in the Synoptic Gospels, Paulist Press, New York/Mahwah, USA, 1988, 240 pages.**

This work explains what is known about the origin and formation stages of the gospels according to Mark, Matthew and Luke based on current biblical findings. Modern biblical science today enables a better understanding of the individual

characteristics of each of the gospels and thereby a better approach to the work and person who was Jesus of Nazareth.

In the first part, the author treats the origin of the gospels, the accents particular to each, and the Jesus-tradition as re-interpreted by the synoptic gospels. The second part is dedicated to the person of Jesus, the mystery of his ministry, his preaching of the Kingdom of God, his death and resurrection and their consequences. An epilog points out the impact of critical science on our Bible knowledge, on our readiness to raise certain questions about the person and ministry of Jesus, and on the Church of today. Each chapter of the book closes with a series of questions which might invite further reflection and possible group discussion.

**Lucien Legrand, Le Dieu qui vient: La mission dans l'Eglise, Desclée, Paris, 1988, 236 pages. French**

Rather than an account of 35 years' worth of experience in India, the author presents a true handbook of Mission Theology through an attentive reading of the Bible. This important book offers an original synthesis on mission in the strict sense of the word and will inspire all who in one way or another are involved with evangelization in its manifold forms. The title indicates the main thesis: mission is not based on the generosity and the activities of the missionaries, but on the initiative of the "God who comes". He comes according to his free will, to choose and build up for himself a people in order to bring salvation to all humankind - this alone is the goal of salvation history.

The Old Testament (part one of the book) is already an incarnation of God in a world dominated by conflict and injustice. The meaning of Israel's election is indeed "connected with potential universalism capable of embracing all human beings". This universalism did not develop consistently, but like the ebb and flow of the tide, in different currents.

Israel's mission was to build up a community, and to create not only one faith, but a faith shared through the living witness of a people. Since the beginning of the New Testament the people charged with this mission are a people according to the Spirit rather than according to flesh and blood. They are characterized by faith and no longer by ethnic origin.

God's Word had to first be proclaimed in the heart of concrete human conditions, and in the midst of a chosen people: this is the Good News of Jesus (2nd part). But the essential newness, consists in this: eschatology no longer refers to the end of a far-away world. The indefinite eschatological future becomes the present. "It is the Resurrection which grants the Christ-event, the whole extent of the divine Power, and thus its universal significance". The resurrection results in Jesus Christ's continued presence - he supports and embraces all mission. Evangelization does not carry the gospel, it is the gospel, the power of God, that carries the evangelizer.

In the ancient Church (3rd part), mission had different faces which must not be opposed to one another. For Matthew, mission work is instruction; for Mark, it is being on the way; for

Luke it is communitarian, and for John, transforming. In the Acts of the Apostles Luke shows that all of the great missionary options during Paul's ministry were already prefigured in the apostolate of Peter. Mission work is first of all an action of God. "Only God matters who makes all things grow" (1 Cor. 3,7).

Little is said about John as a representative of mission. But nevertheless, the prologue (Jn 1) and the epilogue (Jn 20) complement each other for a great missionary vision of God's Word made flesh in Jesus, revealed in the glory of the signs of his exaltation, directed to the world. Mission means: God coming to the world; and thus "the unfortunate dichotomies can be overcome between the active and the contemplative, between grace and human responsibility, between spiritual experience and social commitment, between monastic and apostolic vocations". Mission means first of all "the God who comes" in order to gather a people for himself: Israel in the O.T., the Church in the N.T. John expresses this notion in the most theological way by describing the unity of the disciples as "radiating from the trinitarian unity".

At the end Legrand approaches briefly, yet clearly, the present day issues on the development of missionary work in all its situations. He refuses to demarcate between "faith in the Most Holy God which is isolated and in danger of a pharisaical or a jansenist inflexibility", and an inculturation, which lets itself fall prey to the surrounding mentality.

This book contains many riches ... maybe too many! But reading is facilitated by the author's clear presentation and didactic efforts. A study of this book could be stimulating and fruitful.

(Reviewed by Jean Herly, Cahier Evangile No. 65.)

**K. Luke, Companion to the Bible, Vol. I, Bible in General & Old Testament; Companion to the Bible, Vol. II, New Testament, both from Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, 1988, 190 pages each.** These two books give an introduction to the Bible, taking into account the results of modern biblical scholarship although there is no explicit reference to it. They are quite easy to follow yet permeated with a spiritual atmosphere. Addressed to non-specialists, the books endeavor to help believers to better understand God's Word finding in it inspiration for their spiritual lives. They try to give the reader an overview of each of the biblical books emphasizing the unifying factors.

**Carlos Mesters, Milton Schwantes, Pablo Richard, Elsa Tamez, Leitura Popular da Bíblia - por uma hermenêutica da libertação na América Latina, RIBLA, Imprensa metodista, São Paulo, Brazil, 1988, 110 pages. Portuguese and Spanish**

Biblical organizations of different Christian denominations in Latin America have just launched a new review "Revista de Interpretação Bíblica Latino-Americana" (RIBLA). This review reports on the faith experiences of the Christian people and on the struggle of the communities and Churches within the

special Latin American context. Its basis is the painful lives of the poverty stricken people, and it supports their fight for an existence in justice and human dignity. The review wants to inform the public about these experiences and reflections from both local and regional levels that resulted from a Bible reading in the Latin American context.

The first issue is dedicated to the interpretation of the Bible in its historical context, and its service to God's Word, whose living and life-giving power is felt in the basic Christian communities in Latin America today. Indeed, Latin America shows its own originality particularly in the realm of Bible interpretation - an interpretation which starts from the plight of the people, and aims towards liberation while at the same time realizing it is obliged to the historico-critical method of modern biblical science.

Following an article summarizing popular Bible reading in Latin America, some concrete reading experiences are reported on: "Proposal to read the Prophet Hosea anew from the Latin American view point"; "Biblical elements which enlighten the way of the Christian community (an interpretation exercise to the Epistle of James)"; "The prophets John and Jesus, and the other popular leaders of their epoch"; "The visions in the Book of Amos, 7-9".

**Hervé Morissette, scs, Jesus is Alive, Holy Cross House, 45 Museum Road, Bangalore, India, 1987, 323p.**

Individual Christians as well as entire communities are moved today by the Spirit to discover anew the riches of the Bible. Christian faithful, especially young people, have developed a great hunger for the Word of God.

The charismatic movement, for example, has led many Christians to read the gospel and thereby to rediscover Jesus. In a number of colleges, parishes and basic communities, we have observed that many people come together for a communal reading of the gospel.

They meet regularly to exchange their experiences and insights and to reflect on the meaning the Word of God has for them. They gather frequently to share and to pray, often without the assistance of a priest or teacher.

This book is meant to help such groups study the gospel with greater confidence and to deal with the Bible in community. It provides them with a few basic interpretation guidelines for various chosen texts, as well as with proven methods of investigation into the full meaning of the Word of God.

The questions, interpretations and practical exercises offered here may help both individual believers and Christian groups to come closer to the mystery of Christ through a deeper understanding of the Scriptures and to develop a more intimate relationship with him as well as to bear witness to what they see and hear.

**Atlas Biblico Oxford, Verbo Divino / Ediciones Paulinas, Colección Manuales "Nueva Imagen", Spain, 1988, 160 pages.**  
*Spanish version of the well-known small English Bible atlas.*

**Frederick J. Cwiekowski, *The Beginnings of the Church*, Paulist Press, New York, 1988, 222 pages.** A solid study on the links which unite the Church of today to the early Church.

**José María González Ruiz, *Evangelio según Marcos, Verbo Divino, Estella, Spain, 1988, 240 pages.***  
*Spanish*

A portion of the book deals with questions concerning the formation of the gospel according to Mark and its author. Ruiz defends the thesis that the gospel originated in the North of Galilee between 65 and 75 AD. The gospel text is presented in a new version and commented upon.

**John J. Kilgallen, sj, *A Brief Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Paulist Press, New York/Mahwah, 1988, 236 pages. - *A Brief Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Paulist Press, New York/Mahwah, 1988, 236 pages.**

Two simple commentaries on Luke and Acts around the central theme of God's salvation granted to the world through Jesus Christ.

**John J. Kilgallen, sj, *First Corinthians, An Introduction and Study Guide*, Paulist Press, New York/Mahwah, 1987, 150 pages.**

A guide for bible groups on the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians. Ten major questions posed by the community to the apostle are recommended here as a starting point for Bible study groups.

**Diarmuid McGann, *Journeying within Transcendence, The Gospel of John through a Jungian Perspective*, Paulist Press, New York, 1988, 218 pages.** A psychoanalytical reading of the gospel according to John.

**Robert Michaud, *Qohelet y el Helenismo, Verbo Divino, Estella, Spain, 1988, 276 pages.***  
*Spanish*  
An introduction to the history and theology of the Wisdom Literature.

**Annemarie Ohler, *Grundwissen Altes Testament*, 3 volumes, Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, Stuttgart, W. Germany, 1988, respectively 160, 144 and 152 pages.**  
*German*

This handbook is a very pedagogical introduction to the Old Testament.

**Charles Perrot, *L'Épître aux Romains, Cahier Evangile No. 65, Service Biblique Evangile et Vie, Le Cerf, Paris, 1988, 66 pages.***  
*French*

This booklet fills a gap since until now, a solid, plain and easily

understandable commentary on the Letter to the Romans did not exist in French.

**Xabier Pikaza, *Para leer la historia del pueblo de Dios, Verbo Divino, Estella, Spain, 1988, 280 pages.***  
*Spanish*

A historical fresco of the history of biblical Israel designed for school use.

**John N. Wijngaarts, *Comunicar la palabra de Dios, Verbo Divino, Estella, Spain, 1988, 230 pages.***  
*Spanish*

How to transmit the message of Scripture in the most attractive and most effective fashion possible.

This book offers some advice and techniques to help succeed in this venture. Translated from the English, "*Communicating the Word of God*" (1978).

**Fundamentalism, in: *Bibel und Kirche*, 43(1988)No. 3, Katholisches Bibelwerk, 7000 Stuttgart, W. Germany.**  
*German*

Numerous members of the Federation are confronted in their daily work with the problem of fundamentalism in the biblical field. *BULLETIN DEI VERBUM* has repeatedly pointed out investigations on this theme.

*Bibel und Kirche*, the magazine common to the biblical pastoral organizations of West Germany, Switzerland and Austria, has dedicated one entire issue to the problems of "Fundamentalism".

A sequence of short coherent articles deals with the problem of fundamentalism as well as reflections on the possibilities and limitations of a simple Bible reading. A brief bibliography completes this issue.

**Palabra y Vida, A biblical review, Editorial Guadalupe, 1452 Buenos Aires, Argentina.**  
*Spanish*  
Since 1986, the Guadalupe Publishing House has produced a bi-monthly publication of 32 pages addressed to animators in biblical work.

Each of the editions deals with a biblical subject aiming at establishing a relation with today's life. Six additional pages geared towards the Sunday celebration offer suggestions and commentaries as an aid to better understand the biblical texts of the Sunday liturgy.

**Sickness and Healing in the Bible, in: *The Bible Today* 27(1989) No. 1, Collegeville, Minnesota, USA.**

The January 1989 issue of the American biblical pastoral review *The Bible Today* contains a short dossier on sickness and healing in the Bible. This excellent magazine regularly informs its readers about biblical events in the United States as well as the major biblical publications that could be of interest to biblical apostolate promoters.

## WCFBA: SPANNING 20 YEARS

### Letter from Bishop Ablondi

#### *History becomes Prophecy*

#### MANY REASONS TO BE GRATEFUL...

Together with numerous friends, the WCFBA is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its foundation. My thoughts therefore return first to those who formerly carried responsibilities in the Presidency, the General Secretariat or on the Executive Committee. I am also united, however, with all the members of the Federation and with all other people who as individuals or within a community are active in the world-wide biblical apostolate or in the biblical-pastoral ministry.

May the love of the Word of God which unites us become a prayer. May it lead us together to thank the Lord in remembrance of Pope Paul VI and Cardinal Bea who envisioned the WCFBA as the fruit of the Council.

#### A PAST RICH IN HOLY SPIRIT

Precisely the goals which Pope Paul VI and Cardinal Bea established for the WCFBA demand that the celebration of a date (1969-1989) be more than the remembrance of the foundation, a view back on the passage made, or an evaluation of the results.

When an ecclesial body like the WCFBA reflects on the past, it must do so in the biblical style whereby "remembrance becomes prophecy".

In this manner, the past is not only history, but also a happening of the Spirit; a past which is never extinguished but rather retains in itself the vigor to reach into the present and open the future with the inexhaustible fruitfulness of the Holy Spirit.

#### ...SO THAT THE HISTORY BECOME PROPHECY

Now, dear friends of the WCFBA, let us consider the way in which the Holy Spirit has called us to cooperate so that our history may indeed become "prophecy".

History is the "Council epoch", in which the Federation was founded; and today we have the prophetic mission to bring the values of the Council into an encounter with "another epoch, the third millennium".

The Bible, the gift of the Council for the Christians, must now become a gift in the hands of the Christians who are called to the new evangelization of the world. Our next Plenary Assembly and the preparations for it must be realized with a responsibility towards history (Council) and prophecy (third millennium).

History is that the WCFBA was inspired by the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation DEI VERBUM, with the priority to procure for Catholics "easy access to sacred Scripture". However, this goal has not been reached in the past. The admonition of Pope John Paul II: "DEI VERBUM has been too much neglected" directs our view to Christians, Churches, and people who do not yet have access to the Bible. They are standing only at the threshold of Holy Scripture: because they do not have a Bible yet; because they cannot read; because they do not know how to proclaim the Word of God; because they are not yet able to pray with the Bible. This is a prophetic challenge for us.

History is the "biblical-ecumenical" charism of the founder Cardinal Bea and his openness towards the United Bible Societies for a fruitful collaboration in the distribution of the Bible in interconfessional translations. Prophecy today, however, makes us see above all the many people and even many continents who are still waiting for the Word of God which the WCFBA and the United Bible Societies may offer them through collaboration. In view of the separation among the Churches, it becomes a prophecy to realize that the encounter among Christians has happened in the most natural way and still will happen through and on account of the Word of God.

Finally, in the history of its birth with the word "World", the WCFBA wanted to demonstrate its universality as an expression of the Church. The prophetic significance of this universality is manifold. Universal is the WCFBA because it animates through the Word of God all dimensions of the Church (individuals and groups - liturgy - catechesis - charities); universal is the WCFBA because it is like the Church, not only present in all places, but it must have the ability to enculturate the Word of God in all nations (even with its articulation in "regional" organizations); finally the WCFBA must be universal in the dialogue that is becoming more and more necessary with other religions with the goal to offer them the Word sacred to us and to accept the fragments of sanctity of so many religions (Nostra Aetate, 2).

Dear friends of the WCFBA, after these 20 years of the mission to the Word of God, "let us remember all the way the Lord has led us" (Dt 8,2) in order to be a "new dough" (1 Co 5,7) in a new world.

Faternally yours,

+Alberto Ablondi  
Bishop of Livorno  
President of the WCFBA