

World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate

N°4

3 / 1987

Bulletin

*Sei
verbum*

** General Secretary's Report (pages 4-5) * * * The Executive Committee of the Federation (page 6) * * * The Bible in the Vocation and Mission of the Laity (page 7) * * * A Biblical Apostolate Handbook (page 8) * * * New Federation Members (page 9) * * * Criteria for the Biblical Pastorate (pages 11-14) * * * General Information (pages 15-20) * * **

English Edition

Bulletin DEI VERBUM N°4

3 / 1987

July - August - September

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 interconfessional 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, to support the production of pedagogical aids for a better understanding of biblical texts, and to 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 wishes to promote a dialogue also 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 this great task.

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

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Editorial Board:

Anton Steiner, François Tricard,
Ludger Feldkämper, Marc Sevin.

Editorial Team:

Heinz Köster, Marc Sevin, Carola Tress.

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GENERAL SECRETARIAT
Mittelstr. 12, P.O. Box 601
7000 Stuttgart, West Germany
Tel (0711) 609274 or 604099

The World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate is an "international Catholic organization of a public character" (cf. Code of Canon Law, 312.1.1).

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

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 32 new members who have recently joined the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate (cf. page 9). Thank you for enriching the Federation with your experience.

1990, three years from now: far away, yet very soon here! This is the time we have for preparing the next WCFBA Plenary Assembly, to be held in a region in which the biblical apostolate is very much alive: Latin America. The next Plenary Assembly was one of the topics discussed by the WCFBA Executive Committee during its annual meeting last May. You can take note of the main decisions reached by this Committee (pages 6-8). In his report, which served as a basis for the work done during this meeting, the General Secretary outlined issues of present concern (pages 4-5).

It's an opportunity one can't afford to miss! The next Synod of Bishops in October has as its theme "The vocation and role of the laity in the Church". Our Federation must not fail to seize this chance to recall not only the immense work accomplished by the laity in the area of biblical apostolate and biblical pastoral, but also the importance of taking into account bible reading as practiced by the laity for a just interpretation of the Scriptures. The latter point belongs to the traditional wealth of our Church but is sometimes, not to say often, forgotten! In a special declaration the Executive Committee provides guidelines (page 7).

Publication of a handbook on the biblical apostolate to serve as a reference book for all Federation members was one of the resolutions passed by the last Plenary Assembly (Bangalore 1984). This has proved much more difficult than envisaged owing to - as is well illustrated in this Bulletin (pages 15-20) - the variety and extent of experience and practice within the biblical apostolate throughout the world. But must we complain about this diversity? Is it not, on the contrary, a sign of vitality and richness? In consideration of this the Executive Committee prefers, as a first stage, the production of regional handbooks. It might be good also to gain profit and inspiration from the publications already in existence (page 8).

Confronted with the abundance of biblical-pastoral experiences it appears essential to draw back and reflect on the criteria for action. This is exactly what the biblical animators of Colombia did during their first national meeting. Their conclusions are most interesting (pages 10-15).

A big thank you to all who have sent us information and material for publication in the Bulletin. If you have given thought to the theme "The Bible and the Laity" and have any ideas or suggestions which would enrich the dossier which we propose to present to the Synod Fathers, please send these to us as soon as possible.

Marc Sevin

General Secretary's Report to the members of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of the Federation held its 1987 annual meeting from 26 to 28 May in Königstein, near Frankfurt, West Germany.

The report given by the General Secretary, Fr. Ludger Feldkämper, svd, formed the base for the work of the Executive Committee during the following three days.

This report comprised three parts:

- 1. The situation of the Federation in seven regions: regional affiliation and coordination.*
- 2. Implementation of the resolutions arising from the Nemi Executive Committee meeting.*
- 3. Issues of present concern.*

It is this last part which we present here. The complete text can be obtained from the Stuttgart office.

The following items result from the reports on the situation of the biblical apostolate and the Federation in 1987, and are proposed here as possible matters for discussion. Other issues are by no means excluded, but the following seem to me to be the most important ones.

1. Organization

The Federation is at the service of its members for the sake of the biblical apostolate; it is not an end in itself! It's task must be to help, animate and mobilize the members for the biblical apostolate through its proper structures. Hence, the question arises: are the existing structures a help for the movement? Two aspects must always be kept in mind, namely effectiveness and finances.

This Executive Committee meeting should provide the occasion for a critical look into our present reality, keeping in view possible changes during the next Plenary Assembly.

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Are its competencies and functions defined clearly enough and understood well enough?
- What is to be said about the size of the Executive Committee?

- Does the Executive Committee exist only when in session?
- What can/should be expected from the Executive Committee members in between the meetings?
- In view of the need for continuity, the concern for adequate representation and the problem of financing, is it wise to give greater importance to territories than to persons?

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Their importance is not only emerging in reality but has also been stressed in the Plenary Assemblies of Malta and Bangalore, yet nothing is found about them in the Constitution, and at the Executive Committee meetings they are only guests.

- By whom should regional coordinators be appointed or elected?
- How should their tasks and functions be described?
- What is their relationship to the Executive Committee and to the General Secretariat?

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

Depending on the degree to which the role of the regional coordinators gains in importance, the General Secretariat's functions and competence would of necessity also undergo a change in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, which would be its specific role under and between the Executive Committee and the regional coordinators.

COMMISSIONS AND SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

- Where would the commissions and special interest groups proposed by Bro. Poswick fit in?
- How would they be related to the Executive Committee, the regional coordinators and the General Secretariat?

2. Finances

Finances is a regular item on the agenda of the Executive Committee meetings. This is not the first time in the history of the Federation that the financial problem is a burning issue. The situation is aggravated at present owing to several factors:

- The growth of the Federation, i.e. the increase in the number of Executive Committee members since the last Plenary Assembly and the growth of the General Secretariat (staff, equipment, journeys).
- The difficulties involved in soliciting funds for the biblical apostolate among Catholics. Our membership fees supply only about 10% of the income of the General Secretariat. The funding agencies tell us that they have reached the limit of what they can give us. We are not permitted to engage in direct fund-raising, at least in the area of the Catholic European funding agencies.
- The world economic situation, i.e. the decline of the US dollar.

Theoretically there would be two solutions to this problematic situation:

- A reduction of costs
- An increase of income.

3. Communications

Following a decision made at the last Executive Committee meeting, *Bulletin Dei Verbum* has taken the place of *Word-Event*. A resolution was passed to involve the regions more closely in its production.

The *Directory* is now available in German, English, French and Italian. Spanish and Portuguese editions will soon be completed.

The decision to produce a *Handbook* on the biblical apostolate requires more detailed definition. The idea has not been abandoned.

4. Formation

Preparations for the pilot biblical-pastoral course in Nemi are going ahead well. Since this centre is seen as part of a network of formation centres and institutes, the question to be discussed would be how to step up the process of networking. Certainly much depends on the viability of our regional structures.

5. 1987 Synod of Bishops on the Laity

It is not yet too late to implement last year's resolution that "a memorandum should be prepared by members of the Executive Committee for the bishop delegates to the Synod, pointing out the needs of the laity for biblical apostolate". In fact, having been approached on this matter by Bishop Ablondi, Cardinal Martini has asked for a pro-memoria from us. This could also be sent to the delegates of the bishops' conferences for the Synod.

Here are some fragmentary thoughts on "Bible and Laity" which could serve as a basis for further reflection and development.

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

- Regarding the final statements of Malta and Bangalore, Malta speaks about "the emergence on all the continents of spontaneous groups, chiefly among the laity", and Bangalore states: "... not only recognize the important role of the laity, but also see that lay persons are increasingly active members of the Prophetic Church" (1.3). Furthermore: "It is the right of the laity to take their proper part in the interpretation of the Word of God concerning the burning questions of the day" (2.2.2).

- In the directives of the II Vatican Council concerning the same matter we read, for example "Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful" (DV 22). Likewise, "The understanding of revelation grows through contemplation and study on the part of the believers" (DV 8). Gospel-inspired lay people (EN 70) should interpret this world in the light of the Gospel and change it through the power of the Gospel (AA 4; EN passim).

PROPOSALS

In the light of these statements and directives the following issues could be proposed for the consideration of the Synod Fathers:

- The wish of the Council that easy access to sacred Scripture be provided for all has not been sufficiently implemented (The 1985 Synod of Bishops: "Dei Verbum too much neglected during the last 20 years").

- Lay people often complain about the lack of interest and ability on the part of priests to give them proper introduction to and guidance in the use of the Bible. Hence, many fall prey to a subjectivistic, literalistic, fundamentalistic interpretation of the Bible. The problem becomes all the more serious because of the proselytizing activities of many sects who capitalize on the awakened interest in the Scriptures among Catholics.

- There would seem to be a great need to reflect on the sense of faith of the faithful; on the legitimacy and limitations of the so-called popular interpretation of the Bible; on the relation between this kind of interpretation and the magisterial and exegetical handling of the Bible.

- In order to increase, throughout the entire Church, the awareness of the role and importance of sacred Scripture we recommend a Bishops' Synod on sacred Scripture in the life of the Church and the annual celebration of Bible Sunday.

6. Plenary Assembly 1990

During this meeting we should at least start to discuss participants, place, theme and dynamics of the preparation and of the event itself. The discussion should lead to a decision on steps to be taken between now and the Executive Committee meeting of 1988.

7. Bible Sunday

The promotion of Bible Sunday was recommended by the Malta Plenary Assembly. Discussions on the topic in Bangalore, which did not result in any concrete resolutions, revolved around the question of celebration on a national and/or international level together with the UBS.

Bishop Ablondi has taken this up on several occasions during the past year. Through a questionnaire in the first issue of BULLETIN DEI VERBUM we have tried to promote the idea (although we must admit that reactions have been few so far).

Although the ecumenical value of the Bible should not be underestimated, one may also think of a Catholic World Bible Sunday like World Mission Sunday, World Day of Social Communications, World Day of Vocations, etc. On the other hand, such a Sunday specially dedicated to the Word of God in sacred Scripture could, for Catholics, be seen as a counterpart to the Feast of Corpus Christi following the emphasis placed by the II Vatican Council on the two-fold table of the Word and the Eucharist Bread.

The Executive Committee

Based on the report of the General Secretary, the Executive Committee worked mainly on four topics:

1. *Preparation of the next Plenary Assembly and proposals for altering the internal structures of the Federation.*
2. *The Bible in the vocation and mission of the laity, and this in view of the coming Synod.*
3. *The Federation's own publications.*
4. *The financial situation of the Federation, particularly with regard to the General Secretariat in Stuttgart.*

These are the main conclusions reached by the Executive Committee.

1. THE 1990 PLENARY ASSEMBLY AND THE PROBLEMS OF STRUCTURES.

Six years after the Bangalore Assembly, the next Plenary Assembly will take place in Latin America. The country and exact dates are still to be fixed, by mutual agreement, between the Regional Coordinators for Latin America and the General Secretary.

"The role of the Bible in the new evangelization" could be the general course along which the various questions studied during the Assembly could be interrelated and resolved. A preparatory commission has been appointed to prepare a work project which will be presented to all the members to help them to actively prepare this important event for our Federation. This preparation of the 1990 Plenary Assembly might perhaps allow for:

- an examination of conscience by each of the members of the Federation: Where is there real biblical apostolate? What has been done so far? etc.
- a review of the main documents and resolutions of the last Plenary Assemblies.
- a reflection on "the role of the Bible in the new evangelization" and on the questions arising from this reflection.

A commission has been established to study proposed reforms and new possibilities concerning certain structures of the Federation. In particular this involves seeing if it is possible to incorporate the regional coordinators in the Constitution of the Federation.

The Executive Committee is engaged in defining the conditions for participation in the Plenary Assembly and in finding out what financial contribution could be expected from the participants themselves.

The next Executive Committee meeting will take place in Chicago, Illinois (USA). Cardinal Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago, has kindly offered his hospitality.

2. PREPARATION OF THE NEXT SYNOD ON THE LAITY.

The next Synod on the laity is a chance to be seized for recalling the role of the Bible in the vocation and mission of the laity. The Committee members ascertained that there had been practically no reaction to the Executive Committee resolution of 1986 (Nemi) on the preparation of the next Synod. The resolution of the last Committee on the elaboration of a sort of "memorandum" on the question must be respected. A commission started work immediately on this task and has submitted the text reproduced on page 7 of this bulletin.

The next issue of *BULLETIN DEI VERBUM* will be entirely devoted to this question and may also be distributed among the Synod Fathers. For the compilation of this special issue the Committee members are collecting the witnesses of lay people for remittal to the General Secretariat.

3. THE "COMMUNICATIONS" SECTION OF THE FEDERATION

a) The "Handbook" on the Biblical Apostolate.

During the Bangalore Plenary Assembly it was decided to produce a publication which could serve as a type of handbook on the biblical apostolate. From the reflections during the various Executive Committee meetings it transpires that the richness and diversity of the biblical apostolate throughout the world make it very difficult to compose an internationally applicable handbook. Also, as a first step, the Executive Committee members of two regions (Latin America and Asia) have each taken on the task of preparing a handbook according to the criteria of their choice. The other regions are invited to follow suit. (Already in 1977 Fr. Adrian Smith, then coordinator of the Federation for Africa, composed two small manuals based on his previously published articles on biblical-pastoral matters: "Bridging the Gap" and "Applying Scripture to Life". By way of example you will find a summary of the booklet "Bridging the Gap" on page 8 of this bulletin).

b) BULLETIN DEI VERBUM

On examination of the numbers already published, the Executive Committee has given its approval to the continuation of the Bulletin.

Owing to the diversity of approaches and mentalities of the various countries of the world, the Bulletin will always give the impression of being somewhat "disconnected" and "stuffed full". In order to give each number a certain unity, each region of the Federation has committed itself to providing basic stock material according to a fixed schedule: 1) A description of the biblical apostolate in a country of the region; 2) A presentation of teaching materials for the biblical apostolate or biblical pastorate; 3) A detailed review of an important book on the biblical apostolate or biblical pastorate written in that same region.

THE BIBLE

IN THE VOCATION AND MISSION OF THE LAITY

The declaration of the Executive Committee made during the meeting in Königstein in view of the forthcoming "Synod on the Role of the Laity in the Church":

The biblical formation of the laity is necessary for an authentic Christian life because "ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ" (DV 25). According to Dei Verbum "easy access to sacred Scripture must be provided for all the Christian faithful" (DV 22), and yet, in the words of the Holy Father to the members of the Executive Committee of the WCFBA in 1986, Dei Verbum is one of the most neglected documents of Vatican II in its implementation. The Catholic tradition has been very emphatic with regard to the breaking of the bread while the ministry of sharing the Word has not been fulfilled with the same eagerness, even though the Conciliar Document expects the Church to give equal veneration to the Word and the Bread (DV 21). For all these reasons it is necessary to give an added impetus to the promotion of biblical apostolate among the laity.

The basis of involvement of the laity in the biblical apostolate rests on the fact that the people of God, by virtue of their baptism and confirmation, have received the Spirit of God. The same Spirit speaks to them the Word of God; by responding to this Word they become a community of faith. It is this *sensus fidei* which empowers them with the mission of proclaiming the Word.

The members of the people of God fulfil their mission in a variety of ways according to their particular charisms. The exegetes have to interpret the Word of God using scientific instruments; the members of the hierarchy have to express the Word of God in terms of faith formulas in their role of unifying mission in the faith community. The lay person has his special competence with regard to the ministry of the Word in translating it into life and proclaiming it as a witness in the liturgical assembly and in the midst of the human community as an evangelizer. In doing this he interprets the signs of the times in terms of the Word of God and interprets the Word of God in terms of the signs of the times.

Some specific roles and characteristics of the ministry of the Word fulfilled by lay persons:

A. *The Bible in the formation of the laity*

- a) By educating them to read and listen to the Word of God on various levels (e.g. parish, family, basic ecclesial

communities, groups) and forms (e.g. study, meditation, prayer, liturgy, Bible sharing groups).

- b) By preparing translations of the Bible in current and modern languages.
- c) By organizing biblical seminars to initiate the laity, to read and listen to the Bible in the light of the signs of the times.
- d) By giving every association or group a biblical dimension in its formation and programming of activities.
- e) By having qualified persons in every parish and diocese who can initiate people to the reading and the listening to the Word of God.
- f) The Bible must not only be read by the people, but it must be read with the people.
- g) The people must not only read the Bible but must be able to celebrate it both in life and in worship.

B. *The laity at the service of the Bible*

- a) in the liturgical celebration
 - 1. Training should be given to prepare proclaimers of the Word.
 - 2. Lectors, including women, should be instituted in every diocese and parish.
- b) in catechesis
 - Importance should be given to biblical catechesis in the parishes and schools.
- c) in the family
 - The Bible should be present in the families, and its daily reading by the whole family should be encouraged.
- d) in social communications
 - We should try to procure some time for the Bible in the TV and radio programmes.
- e) The biblical Sunday or week should enable all Christians to realize their prophetic mission.
- f) Every Christian should feel it his vocation to spread the Word of God.
- g) The Bible must become for the Christian an efficacious instrument in building up a just society.

Some members of the Executive Committee have agreed to write or obtain articles for the Bulletin on the criteria for a biblical catechesis open to other dimensions of catechesis, with a view to the "Universal Compendium on the Faith" (or directory for preparing national catechisms) as envisioned by Roman authorities and due to appear in 1990.

c) LA PALABRA HOY

For the present, *LA PALABRA HOY* will remain the Spanish equivalent of *BULLETIN DEI VERBUM*. This review reproduces articles and news according to the pastoral needs of Spanish-speaking countries. From now on it will also contain one or two pages of information on the biblical apostolate and biblical pastorate in areas which are not Spanish-speaking.

d) Bible Week or Bible Sunday

The Executive Committee members feel the importance of encouraging the practice of celebrating Bible Week or Bible Sunday. First the regional coordinators will gather information on what has already been realised in this area.

Led by Msgr. Ablondi, a commission will continue the deliberations and submit proposals.

4. FINANCIAL PROBLEMS.

The financial situation of the Federation, and especially that of the Stuttgart General Secretariat is anything but bright! On examining the financial returns, the Executive Committee has set a budget, not to be exceeded, for the coming year and has left it up to the General Secretary to decide, together with his team, how best to cut expenses by way of a reduction in staff and salaries.

Additional financial means cannot be obtained by raising the membership fees. Similar attempts have been futile in the past.

For financial reasons the Executive Committee meeting was held on a smaller scale this year. A reduction in the costs of the meeting will also be aimed at next year.

The Federation gives priority to recommending the funding agencies to finance the activities of the regional structures of the Federation.

Preparation of the budget of the 1990 Plenary Assembly must begin already now. A financial contribution from each participant will be unavoidable.

A Handbook on the Biblical Apostolate

In their Final Statement, the participants of the Bangalore Plenary Assembly (1984) recommended to the Executive Committee and the General Secretariat to "prepare a handbook on the biblical apostolate". This recommendation has appeared on the agenda of the various Executive Committee meetings since Bangalore. However, the task of producing a "handbook on the biblical apostolate" which corresponds to the needs and practices of the different countries appears very difficult. At the last Executive Committee meeting in Königstein (1987) the decision was therefore made that the realization of this task should be taken over by the regions. Based on the regional recommendations, the General Secretariat will study the possibility of publishing an edition for the whole of the Federation.

Two regions have started work on such a handbook: Latin America and Asia (India).

Already in 1977 Fr. Adrian Smith, wf, then director of the English-speaking Africa Service of the Federation, collected his previously published articles and edited them in the form of a "Handbook for the biblical apostolate" under the title "Bridging the Gap". It seems a good idea to reproduce the table of contents of this book, which might well inspire those who wish to produce a similar handbook in their own country. Those of you who are interested in Fr. Adrian Smith's publication can apply to the Stuttgart Office of the Federation for further details.

In the introduction the aims of the biblical apostolate are recalled:

- to provide people with Scriptures to read;
- to help them comprehend what they read;
- to help them understand how God is speaking through Scripture to their life situation today, so that they can respond to this understanding by conversion.

The handbook is divided into three parts:

Part one: The biblical apostolate as an approach to evangelization.

- What is the biblical apostolate?
- "Primary evangelization": the direct proclamation of the biblical message.

Part two: Promoting the biblical apostolate at the national or diocesan level.

- Appointing a promoter.
- Setting up a biblical commission.
- Planning a national meeting.
- Bible Sunday.
- Financial assistance.
- Launching a correspondence course.
- Working with the Bible Society.

NEW MEMBERS OF THE FEDERATION

During its annual meeting, the Executive Committee received the following new members into the Federation:

Africa

. *Associate Member:* Diocese Louis Trichardt-Tzaneen, P.O.Box 261, Tzaneen, South Africa

Asia

. *Associate Member:* Mother of Life Catechetical Formation Centre, Bo. San Augustin Novaliches, P.O.Box 180, Quezon City, Philippines

. *Associate Member:* Philippine SVD Northern Province, Bangued, Abra 0101, Philippines

. *Associate Member:* Philippine SVD Southern Province, 258 - A.D. Jakosalem St., Cebu City, Philippines

. *Associate Member:* Philippine SVD Central Province, P.O. Box 4145, Manila 2800, Philippines

. *Associate Member:* Institute for Lay Spirituality, Christian Leadership Formation Centre, Talamban, Cebu City 6410, Philippines

. *Associate Member:* Infant Jesus Sisters (Province of Malaysia), I.J. Convent, Bukit Nanas, 50250 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

. *Associate Member:* Diocesan Pastoral Centre, 4 Kane Road, Bandra, Bombay 500 050, India

Europe

. *Full Member:* Conferencia Episcopal d'Espana, C/Anastro, Apdo, Correos 2905, 28033 Madrid, Spain

. *Full Member:* Scandinavian Bishops' Conference, C/o Katolinen Kirkko Suomessa, Rehbinderintie 21, 00150 Helsinki 15, Finland

. *Full Member:* Conferenza Episcopale d'Italia, 50 Circonvallazione Aurelia, 00165 Rome, Italy

. *Associate Member:* Pontifical Biblical Institute, 25 via della Pilotta, 00187 Rome, Italy

. *Associate Member:* Catechetical Institute of the Salesian University, 1 Piazza Ateneo Salesiano, 00139 Rome, Italy

. *Associate Member:* Missionari Claretiani, 5 via S. Cuore di Maria, 00197, Rome, Italy

. *Associate Member:* Missionari Saveriani, 40 viale Vaticano, 00165 Rome, Italy

. *Associate Member:* Missionari di Mariannhill, 91 via S. Giovanni Eudes, 00163 Rome, Italy

. *Associate Member:* Abbazia Benedettina di Parma, Piazzale S. Giovanni Ev. 1, 43100 Parma, Italy

. *Associate Member:* Dienerinnen der Hl. Kindheit Jesu, Oberzell, Hauptstr. 1, 8702 Zell, Germany

. *Associate Member:* Provinz der Redemptoristen, Kaulbachstr. 47, 8000 München 22, Germany

. *Associate Member:* Comboni Missionare, Rothenbacherstr. 8, Postfach 1252, 7090 Ellwangen, Germany

. *Associate Member:* Erzabtei St. Ottilien, 8917 St. Ottilien, Oberbayern, Germany

. *Associate Member:* St. Joseph's Mission Centre, Burn Hall, Durham DH1 3SR, England

. *Associate Member:* Theological Faculty of the University, ul. Pedzameza 8, Krakow, Poland

Latein America

. *Full Member.* Conferencia Episcopal de Colombia, Apdo. 74448, Calle 26 n°27-48, Piso 4, Bogota D.E., Colombia

Near East

. *Full Member.* Hiérarchie Catholique de Syrie, Boite Postale 22249, Bab Charki, Damascus, Syria

. *Associate Member:* Centre for Biblical Formation, P.O.Box 19056, 41 Via Dolorosa, 91190 Jerusalem, Israël

. *Associate Member:* Mater Ecclesiae Center, P.O.Box 207, 14101 Tiberias, Israël

North America

. *Associate Member:* Paulist National Catholic Evangelization Association, 3031 Fourth Street, N.E., Washington, DC. 20017, U.S.A.

Oceania

. *Full Member.* Episcopal Conference of New Zealand, P.O.Box 119, Wellington, New Zealand

. *Associate Member:* Fatuoaga Pastoral Centre, Pago Pago, American Samoa, Oceania

. *Associate Member:* Diözese Tonga, Toutaimana Centre, P.O.Box 1, Nuku'Alofa, Tonga, Oceania

. *Associate Member:* Navesi Catechetical Centre, P.O.Box 3169, Lami, Fidji, Oceania

- The biblical message to illiterates.
- Memorisation of the biblical message in an oral culture.

Part three: Promoting the use of Scripture at local level.

- Biblical Spirituality.
- "Gospel response" as a means to forming basic Christian communities.
- Bible study in groups.
- How to lead a bible study group.
- The bible service.
- Enthroning the Bible in the home.
- The homily.
- Training lectors.
- Use of the Bible in primary schools.
- Use of the Bible in secondary schools.
- How to read the Bible.
- The Bible and ecumenism.

Appendix: What is the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate?

**The Federation:
that means *you* ...**

**BULLETIN DEI VERBUM wishes
to keep its members informed
about what is being achieved
in the field of the biblical
apostolate and biblical
pastorale.**

**Please do not hesitate,
therefore, to pass on to the
General Secretariat in
Stuttgart:**

- your reports
- your programmes
- your publications
- your folders
- your documents
- your ideas
- your book reviews
- your news
- etc.

**A BIG THANK YOU IN
ANTICIPATION**

Criteria for the Biblical Apostolate

Number 44 of LA PALABRA HOY is entirely dedicated to the First National Meeting on the Biblical Apostolate held in Colombia in November 1986 (see page 15). During this meeting the participants worked to define criteria for the basis and direction of the biblical apostolate. Here are their suggestions. If similar work has been done in your country or region please send us a copy of the documentation. Without pretending to be able to draw up universal and final criteria for the biblical apostolate, it would still be possible to put the reflections and ideas of individuals on this subject at the service of all.

1. The Bible is the Word of God.

The principle

God has revealed himself to man in many ways and on many occasions (Heb 1.1), but in the Bible he reveals himself in a very special and personal way; that is why we say that the Bible is inspired by God, it has God as author.

This special revelation to the people of the First and the New Covenant tells us that God is a mystery of communion, of communication from the Father to the Son in the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Scriptures, read in faith, introduce us to the unfathomable mystery of the Father who meets with his children in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit (DV 2).

The consequences

- The Bible is the food of spiritual life, i.e. of our relationship with God in daily life.
- We must read the Bible in an atmosphere of prayer in order to hear our Father.
- Holy Scripture is the means with which God spreads sanctification among the people. The Bible is the soul of the pastoral work of the Church.
- The Bible should be read in the same spirit in which it was written.
- Those engaged in the biblical apostolate should not forget that the Holy Spirit is the true teacher who inspires authentic experiences of God in the people and in each individual member.

2. Jesus Christ, the final Word of the Father in its fullness.

The principle

The final and complete Word of the Father to the people is Jesus Christ revealed in the Holy Spirit. Christ is the fullness of revelation. God sent him as his Son made flesh with his words, his works, his signs, his miracles, his death and his resurrection.

The Holy Scriptures explain to us the meaning of Jesus Christ. The people of the First Covenant (OT), Israel, prepared in history the coming of Christ, thereby accounting for the presence of God in the difficult and complex life of a society.

The New Testament explains Jesus Christ and his presence in our midst through the Church. Not one of God's Words can be completely understood without Jesus Christ. He is the historical and concrete revelation of God. But, as Christ is truly man, it follows that man himself becomes a criterion for bible reading since the supreme value of all creation is man: "The glory of God is man" (St. Irenaeus).

The consequences

- All biblical texts of the First Covenant must be interpreted in the light of Christ.
- Also the texts of the New Testament can only be understood and unified in the person of Jesus Christ.
- One may not, therefore, follow those Christians who take the texts of the Old Testament literally without any reference to Jesus Christ, texts such as those concerning the purity of food, the blood or the Sabbath.
- In the same way, one may not follow those who select texts from the Old Testament to justify the use of violence as criterion for the Christian of today.
- Our knowledge of the Father comes to us through Jesus Christ. This is the basis of the importance of Christ for the entire Christian theology and biblical apostolate.
- Defence of human dignity is the aim of biblical pastoral.

3. God spoke to the people of Israel and to the apostolic community in their historical context.

The principle

God revealed himself to man through deeds and through words (DV 2). The people of Israel lived the history of its relationship with God and put down its experiences in writing. The people experienced the Word of God operating in their own situation and historical circumstances. To understand the words of the Bible correctly, therefore, it is necessary to know the historical facts and circumstances of the biblical era.

The progress of exegetical science and a suitably adapted pedagogy must, in accordance with the Vatican II document *DEI VERBUM* and more recent documents of the Church authorities, be placed at the service of Christian communities in such a way that the revelation can be understood in the historical process of the people of God as well as in the context of the various cultures and literary genres without a search for purely exegetical information.

The consequences

- This is why the Church has created institutes and universities for the scientific study of the historical and cultural contexts of the people of Israel and the apostolic community in order to discover what the inspired authors wished to say. This is the area of exegesis (DV 12).
- This is why the Church has condemned the consistent tendency to neglect the scientific study of the Bible and to consider the only criteria for bible reading to be the spiritual feeling and psychological propensity of the reader.
- Popular bible reading ("lectura popular") without the guidance of competent persons has resulted in the appearance of numerous religious directions and sects.
- Since the Bible is a book resulting from a different time and culture than ours it is necessary to study the literary forms and cultural languages of each epoch and each biblical text.
- The Bible is not a scientific book: cosmology, geography, history as a chronicle of events. It seeks to deepen our faith in the actual presence of God in our own history.
- Biblical fundamentalism must be avoided.

4. God speaks to modern man in his present historical context.

The principle

The Bible communicates the Word which God sends for our benefit in the historical context which is ours today. Therefore we must read the Bible in the context of our Columbian situation. In our country, as in the rest of Latin America, the vast majority of our brothers and sisters live in a state of poverty and also of misery; misery which has ever been aggravated in recent times (Puebla 1135).

The biblical apostolate can help us to understand and to live more fully the preferential option for the poor in order to create and renew our Christian communities and to contribute towards the complete liberation of our country. Consequently the reflection, conscience and freedom of Christians are indispensable if the Christian message is to be realized.

The consequences

- In the same way that it is necessary to study the cultural context of the biblical epochs, we also have to study our

own situation since the Bible does not address itself only to the ancient people of Israel or to the first Christians, but indeed to us.

- This is why it is not sufficient just to study the book of the Bible; one must also study the book of life.
- Furthermore, to hear the Word of God we have to study the sociological, psychological and anthropological aspects as well as those of other sciences, in respect of their own autonomy.
- Under divine enlightenment, exegetical and hermeneutical science must unite with the wisdom of the people to gain a better understanding and discernment of the "signs of the times".
- The people of God, which hears all the voices of truth, tries to understand the Word of God. In this task it requires help from the Church which, in the name of Christ, defines with authority the authentic interpretation to uphold the original meaning and universal unity.
- Sacred Scripture is the book of God's people, which nourishes and builds all our communities. The tradition and the magisterium of the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit, lead us towards a better understanding of the words and signs passed on to us.

5. The Bible and the church community.

The principle

The Bible is the book of the people of God which, together with the sacraments, builds and activates our communities. This is why it should be read in communion with the Church, in which the Holy Spirit makes the Word lively and effective.

The magisterium of the Church has the divine commission to authentically interpret the Holy Scriptures.

Christ sent the apostles out to preach the gospel. Some of them put it down in writing. The apostles then confided it to the bishops, their successors. This tradition and sacred Scripture are like a mirror in which the Church contemplates God.

With the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and thanks to reflection, study and preaching, tradition progresses on in the Church towards a better understanding of the words and things passed on.

Sacred tradition, sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church are linked and cannot stand without each other, and together they contribute to the salvation of souls (DV 10).

The consequences

- If everyone were to interpret the biblical texts in his own way, then each could create his own church and the

Christians would become ever more divided (2 Peter 1:20).

- We must thank God for the tradition and magisterium of the Church which keep us from falling into errors of faith.
- The unity of the Church has visible signs willed by God: the pope and the cohesion in the interpretation of sacred Scripture and tradition.

6. The biblical apostolate, a task for all.

The principle

The biblical apostolate is the task of all the people of God. All members of the Church must, in the dialogue of the various charisms, take part in bible reading with deep respect for the mission of the Church, the responsibility of the laity who find solutions to the problems which concern them in the light of the gospel, and for the necessary function of exegetical and theological science.

Evangelization is the first responsibility, not only of the bishops, priests and deacons, but also of all the faithful (Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, 1985).

The consequences

- Discover in every Christian his/her prophetic vocation received at baptism.
- Become aware that we are all called, in one way or another, to proclaim the Word of God to the world.
- Create bible centres for children and young people to form them for biblical-pastoral work.
- Without disregarding the magisterium of the Church, the laity must use their own skill in the interpretation of sacred Scripture.
- The different members of the Church must recognize and listen to each other.
- The poor have a special potential for evangelization. They must be heard by the other sections of the Church.
- We must accept the competence of exegetes and theologians who counsel us on bible reading.
- The laity have a right to suitable formation for the biblical apostolate.

7. The Word, source of sanctification for the community.

The principle

"Faith comes from what is preached, and what is preached comes from the Word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). In order that the Word may live in the hearts in all its richness, it is necessary that he who preaches this Word has already taken it into his own heart.

Sacred Scripture reveals to man the mystery of Jesus and of man himself of all ages, races and cultures. For this reason we must recognize therein both the prophetic announcement of sanctification and the denunciation of sin, i.e. of everything which hinders the building up of God's Kingdom among us.

The consequences

- In the same way that God revealed himself through his actions and words in history, so also must evangelization take place through witness.
- The Good News gathers the community around the Word which is Christ himself and must therefore be announced for the community, by the community and with the community.
- We must lay great importance on all forms of preaching and the announcement of the gospel message (homily, liturgical celebrations, catechesis, witness to life) and on the advancement of technology at their service. Worthy of special attention are both school and parish catechesis, study and bible reading groups, prayer groups and basic communities which unite around the Word.
- An important element among the various forms of evangelization and preaching is a simple and appropriate form of language.
- Not to be ignored are people impeded by loss of sight, hearing or speech, and the mentally handicapped. These are also children of God and members of the Church who have a right to the Divine Word.

8. The Bible, norm for interpreting other Words of God.

The principle

The Bible is not the only Word of God. Communication from God to man also takes place in creation and history. This is what the conciliar document Dei Verbum wishes to express when it states: God, who through the Word creates all things and keeps them in existence, gives men an enduring witness to Himself in created realities (DV 3). Man is called to discover this witness which God gives in creation and in history, in the cultures and religions of the people.

Reading of the Word of God with our people must take into account the different cultures and sub-cultures with their values and limits (local Indian tribes, coloured people, town and country dwellers, etc), i.e. all the truths and words of God as they appear in the world and in history.

The consequences

- A dialogue must be sought between the cultures in mutual sincerity and respect which permits the discovery and cultivation of the seeds of the Word present in the souls of all peoples and which helps them to bring abundant fruit for the faith in Jesus Christ.

- We must work together in order that the missionary dimension of the Bible reaches all people as the proclamation of the Good News of salvation.
- This type of dialogue is also to be used for what one calls "popular catholicism" or "popular piety" which should not be condemned or destroyed but enlightened and evangelized through the revealed Word. On our continent it is of the greatest importance to enlighten and explain religious manifestations through the gospel.

9. Celebration of the Word.

The principle

The Bible must inspire the entire liturgy because this is the celebration of faith which is born of the announcement and acceptance of the Word of God. In its turn the Word only reaches its full effectiveness in the communal celebration of the sacraments (see DV 21). In consequence, our people cannot attain conscious and active participation in the liturgy without the help of the biblical apostolate.

The consequences

- Every liturgical celebration must be active, conscious and participative. It is not enough to proclaim the Word if the people cannot understand it (consciousness) or take up a position (participation). Following the Second Vatican Council the liturgy must include both aspects: understanding and answer.
- Proper preparation of every celebration of the Word of Christ who revealed himself to us and who makes us participants in his salvific work.
- A practical method of bible study is to follow the liturgical readings.

10. The Bible and the new society ("Nueva Sociedad").

The principle

God treated himself in history as a force of liberation and transformation. Sacred Scripture gives full meaning to the participation of Christians in the building up of a new society of justice and fraternity. With its help we can understand and judge the reality in which we live, and we can provide an answer to all those who turn to us with the goal of building up "a civilization of love". In turn, the reality in which we live helps us to understand the true message of the Gospel.

The consequences

- If we seek to build up a new society of harmony and justice we must promote the study and assimilation of sacred Scripture at all levels.
- Christ is the saviour come to save us and society from the slavery of sin.

- It is necessary for us to become aware that sacred Scripture is the answer to the burning questions of our time.
- The Bible must never become an instrument for creating new states of slavery. It must not be allowed for the Bible, under the pretext of spiritualization, to become a brake for the critical analysis of the state of injustice or an obstruction to the creative transformation of Christians.

11. The Bible and Ecumenism.

The principle

The biblical Word of God is addressed to all people. It cannot, therefore, be the inheritance of any one particular group. On the contrary, it must be offered to all people.

Without doubt the Word of God has been confined to the care of the Universal or Catholic Church which, founded by Christ, was given the responsibility as a gift from the Holy Spirit to interpret it authentically.

God wants all people to be saved and to reach full knowledge of the truth (1 Tm 2:4).

One of the great requirements of the Second Vatican Council was that of re-establishing unity among Christians. It is from this that the decree on ecumenism stems. The division of the Churches, which present themselves before man as the true inheritance from Christ, goes against the will of God.

Before his passion and death Christ prayed for unity, instituted the eucharist and promised the Holy Spirit who then reunited the people in the New Covenant, i.e. in the Church (Jn 14-15-16).

Christ confided to his apostles the charge of teaching, governing and sanctifying, and gave to Peter all his sheep and the keys to the Kingdom (Mt 16, 18-19). Christ wished for the Church to grow in the unity of faith and for the Holy Spirit to give the variety of gifts following the model of the unity in the Trinity.

The Council encourages the ecumenical movement in which it sees the initiatives on which the promotion of unity among Christians is based and the surmounting of obstacles which stand in the way of perfect communion.

The consequences

- The Bible in its New Testament and in the complete original texts is the same for all Christians: Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox. In this sense there is no Catholic or Protestant Bible.
- In the Old Testament there are two canons or official lists of books: the Hebrew Canon, which is recognized by the Jews and most of the Protestants, and the Greek. This contains, in addition to all the books of the Jewish Canon, several books which were only translated into Greek for the use of Jews in the dispersion. The Early Church used

the Greek translation to express the Christian faith.

- The notes and commentaries and even the translation of a Bible can contain a doctrine which is not in line with the Catholic doctrine.
- There are churches which do not stand in perfect community with the Roman Catholic Church because they are the heirs of ancient oriental patriarchates. These we call "orthodox". They are venerable Churches.
- Other confessions which merit our respect and esteem arose from the reformation during the historical situation of the 16th century: Lutheran, Anglican, Presbyterian, Calvinistic, etc. Therefore it is not right to speak of them generally as "protestant sects". The ecumenical groups must confront the sects together.
- The sects are religious groups with a specific conception of the world, derived - often with deviations - from the teachings of the great world religions. They are characterized by a particular structure of authority and by a form of brain-washing. They build groups which nurture feelings of guilt and fear.
- One characteristic of the sects is proselytizing, something very different from the true missionary spirit of a church community. The proselytizers make use of dishonest methods: abuse of ignorance or of the state of misery, empty promises in the area of politics, half-truths, blackmail, psychological pressure. To sum up: everything that harms the human right not to be pressurized in religious affairs. Their methods of spreading the Gospel do not comply with the ways of God who summoned people to answer his call freely and to serve him in spirit and in truth.
- Our attitude towards the sects should contain the following elements:
 - Humbly discover God's call for more intensive pastoral work. Accept also the reproach that the growth of the sects results from our own pastoral deficiencies.
 - The best response to the avalanche of sects is a lively and well organized pastorate, especially a biblical pastorate, since gaps provide the best ground for proliferation of the sects.
 - The sects present a problem for both the Catholic Church and the great historical confessions.
 - We must ask ourselves what the other preachers offer which we do not and so find out what we can legitimately offer.
 - In their own way the sects respond to the basic needs of the people, which brings them success:
 - *Religious yearning* is a global aspect of man in the face of transcendence and his own future. The sects permit the spontaneous expression of religious feelings.

- . *The yearning for a new world.* The sects fill a space which they found empty.
- . *The yearning for security.* In the face of great danger and uncertainty the sects offer the experience of absolute dogmatic security.
- . *The yearning for personal affirmation.* The sects offer a personal evangelization and give each person a chance to strengthen his own values, making use of the immense potential of the laity whom they train as leaders.
- . *The yearning for fraternity.* Against the loneliness and loss of individuality the sects provide an atmosphere of brotherly hospitality, of comradeship and social support. Some sects live again according to the model of the domestic church.
- . *The yearning for engagement.* The sects make their followers into missionaries and voluntary ministers at the service of the group cause.
- . *The yearning for moral goods.* Many sects succeed because they preach a more moral and exacting christianity.
- . *The yearning for wellbeing.* Many sects promise the solution to both economic and health problems (healing).
- . *Opening to the Word of God.* Through the Bible, the sects have easy entry into Protestant and Catholic circles.-
- We must examine these aspects of the sects with great care in order to show our Christians the good which they offer without them becoming victims of the sects.
- Our celebration of the Word often leaves much to be desired through our own fault: our liturgy is very deficient in many Catholic communities.

General Information

AUSTRIA: "Bible Bishop"

After 19 years, Auxiliary Bishop Alois Stöger of St. Pölten has handed over his office as "Bible Bishop". Looking back, Bishop Stöger remarked that although there was not always complete agreement on all matters, the common love of sacred Scripture led to "one heart and one soul". At the Administrative Board meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association of Austria on 28th April 1987, Msgr. Helmut Krätzl, Auxiliary Bishop of Vienna, took over the responsibility of "Bible Bishop" for Austria.

BRAZIL: Biblical-Pastoral Workshop

The programme of the workshop on biblical apostolate held in Belo Horizonte from 8th May to 1st June this year was: 1/ Information on the biblical apostolate in the different regions. 2/ Proposals for the 1987 Month of the Bible: study of the Elijah cycle. 3/ Evaluation of the 1986 Month of the Bible. 4/ Planning of the 1987 Month of the Bible. 5/ Study of the possibilities for organizing a biblical apostolate service in the regions.

Further information: Hermana Rosana Pulga, sab, Av. Alfonso Pena, 2142 - CEP 30310 Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

COLOMBIA: First National Meeting on Biblical Apostolate

The detailed report on this meeting of November 1986 appeared in No. 44 of *La Palabra Hoy*.

The first part of the meeting consisted of a presentation of pastoral experiences within the country, from biblical catechesis in a college to university studies and including an account of the activities of various biblical centres.

The participants gave their ideas on the question of criteria for biblical apostolate; a synthesis of their suggestions can be found on pages 10-15 of this bulletin.

The delegates also examined current tendencies in the biblical apostolate and needs to be fulfilled.

Among the tendencies observed one may note:

- Bible reading preferably in community.
- Bible reading which interprets the situation today.
- Biblical formation of a popular rather than scientific sort.
- Bible reading carried out without priests.
- Better biblical formation for the laity.
- An efflorescence of biblical movements without connecting links between them or coherence.
- An effort for a more unified biblical apostolate.
- Search for support from the hierarchy.

The challenges for the biblical apostolate in Colombia are many. Some examples are:

- Avoid the penetration of sects and ideologies by the doctrinal formation of the faithful.
- Direct the biblical message clearly at the situation today.
- Integrate popular wisdom, exegesis and hermeneutics.

- Reduce the cost of Bibles.
- Seek the help of the bishops.
- Provide a form of liturgy which permits a true experience of the Word.
- Produce teaching materials.
- Make use of simple language and also of the mass media.
- Create centres for forming ministers of the Word.
- Bring the gospel message to all and not just to certain social classes.
- Establish a link between the hierarchy and the laity with a view to promoting the biblical apostolate.
- Make special efforts in the area of education of children and youth.
- Support bible reading in the family.

FRANCE: National Conference on the Biblical Apostolate

The fourth national conference on the biblical apostolate, organized jointly by the Catholic biblical service "Evangile et Vie" and the Protestant biblical federation "Les Equipes de Recherche Biblique" will take place in Nantes from 8th to 10th April 1988. The theme of the conference will be "Biblical Animation".

GERMANY - TANZANIA:

Reverend Alkuin Bundschuh, osb

On 10th June 1987, at the age of 87, one of the pioneers of the Catholic biblical apostolate in Africa died: Fr. Alkuin Bundschuh. He belonged to the Missionary Benedictines of the Arch-Abbey St. Otilien, which is a member of the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate. Working in East Africa since 1929, Fr. Alkuin was the driving force behind the founding and advancement of the Ndanda Mission Press in Tanzania. In this printing press he saw a possibility to spread the Word of God, thus becoming himself a bible translator. Only last year he published a new translation of the New Testament in Kiswahili, based on the original Greek text, together with a short commentary: "Agano Jipya", Benedictine Publications, Ndanda-Peramiho, Tanzania, 1986.

JAPAN: An Interconfessional Bible

The Japanese Bible Society will publish a new Japanese translation of the Bible in September. The new common Bible represents 18 years' work by more than 40 Catholic and Protestant specialists who made translations from the Hebrew and Greek texts. A major challenge was standardizing names, including the name of Jesus, which differs in Japan's Catholic and Protestant traditions. The Japanese Bible Society hopes that this translation will improve the understanding of the Word of God and the proclamation of the Good News in this predominantly Shintoist and Buddhist country. (UCANEWS, 24th June 1987).

LEBANON: An Association of Professors of Sacred Scripture

Catholic Scripture professors have founded a biblical association. One of their projects is the publication of a biblical review or bulletin in the Arabic language which would be of great service to the entire Middle East.

MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE, BRUNEI: The Bishops engage themselves in the Biblical Apostolate

During their meeting from 23rd to 26th February 1987 the Episcopal Conference of Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei accepted recommendations on the biblical apostolate specially prepared at their request. The questions raised concerned among other things the formation of a regional biblical commission with the participation of the eight dioceses of the Conference, the formation of a biblical commission in each diocese, the organization of biblical courses and workshops, the annual celebration of a Bible Week and Bible Sunday, the organization of a course of biblical songs and of a biblical theatre festival.

NIGERIA: Episcopal Biblical Commission

The Biblical Commission of the Nigerian Episcopal Conference chose as the theme of its assembly in March this year "The Bible, the Word of God for our times". After reflection, the bishops of Nigeria called for better and more extensive use of the Bible by the people of God. On their part, they have engaged to make the Bible more easily accessible by providing simple translations in the various languages of the country. It is with great satisfaction that they note a growing interest in the Bible among the faithful. They wish to support and strengthen the Catholic Bible Movement in Nigeria which extends its activities over all the dioceses. This organization is preparing a handbook on the biblical apostolate.

NIGERIA: Pastoral letter from Bishop Adelakun

By way of his pastoral letter for Lent, Msgr. J.B. Adelakun, Bishop of Oyo, published a little booklet to help the faithful to "read and pray the Bible". Bible reading is very much the business of Catholics and is not reserved, as many think, for other Christian religions. It is for this reason that Msgr. Adelakun has launched the biblical apostolate in his diocese. He encourages daily Scripture reading and requests every little Christian community to spend about a quarter of an hour daily in reading, hearing, meditating and praying the Word of God.

Further information: Bishop J.B. Adelakun, Bishop's House, P.O. Box 78, Oke-Ayepe, Oshogbo, Oyo State, Nigeria.

PANAMA: Bible Course

A bible course on the theme "Jesus Christ in the synoptic gospels" took place from 3rd to 7th March this year in Panama, organized by the pastoral authorities and religious of the country. The participants expressed the need of reflection on the national level on biblical apostolate work.

PHILIPPINES: Pastoral Letter from Bishop Almario

Msgr. Cirilo Almario, one of the two representatives of Asia in the Executive Committee of our Federation, has composed a pastoral letter on "The centrality of the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church". The Extraordinary Synod of Bishops had already stated that "the central role of the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church must be given special attention". On their part, the

Philippine bishops have engaged themselves to give sacred Scripture priority as the basis of their pastoral programme. Msgr. Almario speaks of three areas in which the Bible must have its special place: liturgy, Christian formation and pastoral ministry. For Msgr. Almario sincere humility, purity of heart and reverential faith are the proper dispositions with which we can benefit from bible reading and study.

Further information: Msgr. Cirilo Almario, Bishop's Residence, Barasoain, Malolos, Bulacan, 26 01, Philippines.

SUDAN: Bible Seminars

From 3rd to 18th February 1986, Sr. Theresa Nyathow, national promoter for the biblical apostolate in Sudan, gave a Bible seminar for biblical animators throughout the country in Juba, together with Rev. Wynnand Amewowo, director of the Catholic Biblical Centre for Africa and Madagascar (BICAM). In the report which Sr. Theresa sent to the General Secretariat in Stuttgart one can see that of the subjects dealt with, the majority are directly concerned with the biblical apostolate: "How to lead the faithful to acquiring the habit of fruitful bible reading"; "How to communicate the Word of God to those who cannot read"; "How to introduce children to the Bible within the family"... In spite of the great political and economical problems besetting the country, two similar seminars were held in El-Obeid and in Tore. A further seminar took place in Juba at the end of June this year.

Further information: Sr. Theresa Nyathow, National Promoter of the Biblical Apostolate, P.O. Box 186, Juba, Sudan.

SPAIN: Meeting of Biblical Organizations

On 30th April 1987, leaders of different biblical organizations in Spain met for a mutual exchange of experiences in the biblical apostolate which is developing in Spain, and to discuss their respective work.

It was decided to use this type of consultation since the participants agreed on the importance of better coordination on the national level among all those who work in the area of the biblical apostolate.

The most urgent task today is the formation of biblical animators able to initiate the faithful to bible reading. Many organizations employ them but without coordination among themselves. This subject could be on the agenda of a future meeting for the preparation of a "plan of formation for biblical animators". One suggestion made was to create a centre for the formation of biblical animators in the Holy Land. The lack of instruments adapted to initiation into bible reading and for biblical groups was verified. Some biblical aids are being prepared; others exist but are too little known.

The participants agreed to support a "Day of the Bible" which was started by the "Casa de la Biblia" of Madrid several years ago.

Further information: Casa de la Biblia, Mayor 81, 28013 Madrid, Spain.

SPAIN: Meeting of Members of the Federation from Latin-European Countries

To establish preliminary contact, Federation members from Spain (Casa de la Biblia), France (Evangile et Vie), Italy

(Associazione Biblica Italiana) and Portugal (Difusora Biblica) met last June 4th in Madrid. After presenting biblical work in each of the countries the participants decided to establish links and opportunities for exchange in the field of the biblical apostolate between the Latin countries of Europe. In spite of the language barrier these countries have the same cultural sphere, and the problems posed by the biblical apostolate are much the same from country to country. Plans are made to hold a new meeting in April next year with the hope that friends from Belgium, Luxembourg and French-speaking Switzerland will also be able to participate.

SWITZERLAND: Ecumenical Week on Biblical Formation

The "Centre Catholique Romand de Formation Permanente" and the "Service Evangile et Culture" organized an ecumenical week of biblical formation for animators and formators from 28th June to 4th July this year. A further formation course for biblical animators will take place from 12th to 17th October in Leysin.

Further information: Centre Catholique Romand de Formation Permanente, 31 bd de Grancy, 1006 Lausanne, Switzerland.

Biblical Projects

Burkina Faso

Each of the twelve parishes which compose the diocese of Dégougou has its own language! The Spanish Fr. José Maria Sarasola, WF, of the parish of Boni, is working on bible translations in Bwamu. This language is spoken by 140,000 people in the prefectures of the Northwest, Volta Noire and Haut Bassin, and also by 350,000 people in Mali. With the financial aid of the funding agency "Fastenopfer der Schweizer Katholiken" Fr. Sarasola has already published the Gospel of Luke.

Mali

The church of Mali will soon celebrate its first centenary of evangelization: 20th November 1888 - 20th November 1988.

On this occasion the Episcopal Conference of Mali will publish the New Testament in Bambara. This language, which is divided up into many mutually understandable dialects, is spoken by 6 million people in Mali, the Ivory Coast and Senegal.

It will be the first Catholic edition of the whole of the New Testament. Funds for the project are still to be raised.

Mozambique

The diocese of Lichinga, to the northeast of Mozambique has

published a mass book for Sundays and feast days with a translation in Makua of all the readings, a book of hymns and prayers and a catechism for adults.

Makua is spoken by about 4 to 6 million people in the north of Mozambique. The books will also serve in a campaign which is being developed to teach the people to read and write.

Togo

The diocese of Dapaon, with the help of the funding agency "Fastenopfer der Schweizer Katholiken", has produced the first volume of a mass book in Lamba. This language is spoken by 80,000 people in the prefecture of Keran and 20,000 others in the People's Republic of Benin. In the diocese of Dapaon, north of Togo, the gospel is proclaimed in three languages: Moba, Anufo and Lamba.

The funding agency "Fastenopfer der Schweizer Katholiken" has already supported the diocese in the publication of a lectionary in Anufo and a translation of the Acts of the Apostles in Moba.

Tschad

Msgr. Gabriel Balet, bishop of Moundou, requests financial help for the bible translations in Kabalayé and Mboum.

Kabalayé is spoken by only 30,000 people. Two French Franciscans, Frs. Fortunat Gouraud and Jean-Jacques Filiatrault, have been living with these people for many years. They began by transposing the language into writing and are now following this up by translating the Bible.

For over 20 years, Fr. Atílio Ladogana has worked on translations in the Mboum language which is spoken in the southwest part of the diocese by about 40,000 people and also in Cameroon. He has already translated the Gospels.

Fr. Franco Martellozzo, an Italian Jesuit, is working with catechists on translations in the Kwong languages. 6 booklets have appeared so far: Mark, John, Matthew, Luke, Acts of the Apostles and a Selection Bible. Kwong is spoken by 20,000 people in the Archdiocese of N'Djamena.

The various languages of "Niger-Kordofan" in which the Bible is being translated are also beginning to develop their own literature. Bible translations are a very important factor here for keeping the different cultures alive.

All these translations already completed or in process have been financially supported by the funding agency "Fastenopfer der Schweizer Katholiken".

Zaire

In order to help the various local churches in Africa, Verbum Bible, the publishing house of the Divine Word Missionaries in Kinshasa, plans in 1987-1988 to publish biblical texts in Kikongo, Lingala, Kabiye, Swahili, Malgache and Kinyarwanda.

Getting to know each other

We continue the column which we started in the second number of BULLETIN DEI VERBUM in order to get to know the organizations which make up the Federation. The capacity of the Bulletin does not permit long or numerous presentations. Owing to the abundance of material we are obliged to limit ourselves to two members in this issue.

Associate member:

STUDIUM BIBLICUM FRANCISCANUM, Hong Kong

The Studium Biblicum Franciscanum (SBF) was founded in Beijing in 1945 and transferred to Hong Kong three years later. The SBF has been an associate member of the Federation since 1978.

A milestone for the biblical apostolate in China was the Chinese translation of the complete Bible with commentary. This work was accomplished from 1945 to 1962 and was published in two volumes. A single volume edition appeared in 1968 and has been reprinted several times since then.

Five collaborators work together as a Franciscan fraternity under a chosen director. The SBF is engaged in providing instruments for practical bible work in all sectors of the biblical apostolate. Each year the team arranges the programme and divides up the work involved.

Among the important programmes offered are bible conferences, instruction of the diocesan catechists, assistance to the Hong Kong Catholic Biblical Association and an annual pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

For the past ten years the SBF has published a bi-monthly review. It also provides new commentary editions to the books of the Bible published singly. Presently in preparation is a handy edition of the Gospels with more pastoral explanations for the faithful. Every year the SBF publishes a special Bible edition for students of Catholic colleges. This year more than 6,000 copies were distributed. Another recent publication is a new edition of the complete Bible in simplified Chinese characters which will be used in Singapore and Malaysia, and hopefully, later, on the Chinese mainland.

The SBF also offers help to teachers, students and leaders of bible reading groups through its translation of the Canadian publication "Journey of Faith", 40 small volumes with introductions and pastoral explanations to the single books of the Bible, and through its "Handbook for formation of leaders of bible reading groups".

The diocese of Hong Kong has great need of well trained leaders for bible reading groups. The clergy has become

aware of the importance of scripture reading, and the SBF has been requested to prepare more simple and easily accessible explanations of the New Testament. For this purpose it is preparing a book for daily bible reading: Scripture texts with a short meditation and prayer.

Further information: Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Catholic Mission, 16 Caine Road, Hong Kong

Associate member:

MOVEMENT FOR A BETTER WORLD, Bangalore, India

The Movement for a Better World, which came into existence after the second world war, was established in India in 1965. The Indian section has been an associate member of the Federation since 1983.

The goal of the organization is both individual and community spiritual renewal. Its engagement in the biblical apostolate in India manifests itself in biblical seminars and retreats given throughout the country as well as in courses and liturgy. It also aims to train leaders for prayer groups in dioceses and religious communities. The Movement recognizes the need of practical methods for relating the Word of God to daily life situations and vice versa, as well as for more training for catechists and teachers in all Catholic schools so that they can teach the Bible effectively and inspire a love for bible study in young people. Furthermore, it searches for ways to reply to the needs of the faithful constantly confronted by the teachings of the sects.

Among the wishes of the Movement are that the Bible become available in all the languages recognized by the Indian Constitution, that there be more enthusiasm in the celebration of Bible Sunday, that a Bible College be established for the formation of lay leaders, and that more Bible Camps be provided for high school and college students. The biblical apostolate should be based more firmly on the actual Bible.

Further information: Movement for a Better World, 31 MSO Colony, Banaswadi Road, Bangalore 560 033, India

Books and Other Publications

Cassettes from Radio Timothée

The French association *Radio Timothée* is preparing cassettes for radio programmes on a variety of topics, a great majority of which are biblical. These programmes are intended for French-speaking countries of the Third World, and recently also for private radio stations in France. This year's cassette series from Timothée deals mainly with the Old Testament. Following *Leviticus*, *Joshua* and the Song

of Songs, the new programmes help to discover *Exodus*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Job*, *Judges* and *Jeremiah*.

Radio Timothée is an ecumenical association which assists French language radio transmitters (or moderators with a knowledge of French) in Africa, Madagascar, the Antilles, South America, Oceania, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Further information: Radio Timothée, B.P. 6, Groissiat, F-01870 Martignat.

Orientacion Biblica, a new review published by Difusora Biblica of Mexico.

We welcome the appearance of *Orientacion Biblica*, a review for the biblical apostolate edited by the Capuchin Fathers of Difusora Biblica. The first number offers a simple introduction to the Bible and describes the present situation of the biblical apostolate in Latin America and Mexico.

Further information: Difusora Biblica, Ruiz Cortinez 20, C.P. 87040, Cd. Victoria, Tamaulipas, Mexico.

"Bible Weeks" - Chile.

With his collection "Bible Weeks", Fr. Rafael Guidotti provides a series of biblical aids. These are short thematic presentations with a method description intended to facilitate study, reflection and prayer during bible weeks. The following four-week plan has been published so far:

First Week: General aspects

- 1st day: What is the Bible?
- 2nd day: Why read the Bible?
- 3rd day: Who should/can/may read the Bible?
- 4th day: Bible reading - how?
- 5th day: How was the bible written?

Second Week: How to read the Old Testament

- 1st day: A law which leads to holiness.
- 2nd day: A story interpreted by the prophets.
- 3rd day: The prophets: bearers of news.
- 4th day: The scriptures of a community.
- 5th day: The psalms, man's cry resounding in the heavens.

Third Week: How to read the Gospels

- 1st day: The gospels, words of God.
- 2nd day: Matthew, the gospel of the Church.
- 3rd day: Who speaks, Peter or Mark?
- 4th day: The good news which Luke announces.
- 5th day: Meeting Christ in the gospel of John.

Fourth Week: How to read the other books of the New Testament.

- 1st day: The powerful progression of the Early Church.
- 2nd day: Paul, the apostle.
- 3rd day: Paul's letters and those attributed to him.
- 4th day: Pastoral letters and Catholic letters.
- 5th day: The apocalypse, gospel of the last days.

Further information: P. Guidotti, Parroquia "Los cuarteles", Parral, Chili.

National Office, Franciscan Youth Federation, India: Documentation.

A big "thank you" to this organization for the new materials sent to the Stuttgart office. For practical bible work the

centre has published a series of simple and suitable aids in English and the local language (reviews, brochures, leaflets, posters, pictures, calenders...). These are easy to distribute and provide a guide to the Bible, to praying with the Bible, to evaluating bible groups, etc.

Further information: National Office, Franciscan Youth Federation, Trivandrum 695015, S. India.

Would that all were Prophets, report on the Fifth All-India Biblical Meeting.

A year after the WCFBA Bangalore Plenary Assembly in 1984, the Fifth All-India Biblical Meeting once again resumed the theme of this Assembly, "Would that all were Prophets", to place it anew in the Indian context. To gain an idea of the dynamism of the biblical apostolate in India it is sufficient to read the report on this meeting, published by Fr. Paul Puthanangady, member of the WCFBA Executive Committee and director of the National, Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre of Bangalore. Apart from papers on the theme itself (sociological, ecclesiological, pastoral and charismatic studies, etc), this publication shares concrete experiences (Bible and audio-visual aids, Bible and dance, Bible and theatre, etc) and offers activity reports from the various regions.

Further information: National, Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, Bangalore 560084, India.

Justin Taylor, sm, As it was written, an introduction of the Bible, Paulist Press, New York, 164 pages, 1987.

This book does not presuppose biblical knowledge. In 17 chapters (11 for the Old Testament and 6 for the New), each book of the Bible is introduced in simple language without technical expressions. With Israel and the Early Church as its background, this publication tries to reveal the religious message of each of the biblical books. The significance of the Bible for the Catholic reader today is the main preoccupation of the author. The last two chapters deal with the Bible as the "Book of God" (inspiration, the truth of the Bible) and as the "Book of the Church" (canon, Scripture and tradition, magisterium, the Bible in the life of the Church). In each chapter a small reading guide and questions for personal or communal reflection can be found.

Fr. Michael McGrath, sma, Sr. Nicole Grégoire, sa, Africa: Our Way to Talk with God, Billing and Sons, Worcester, Great Britain.

Under this title, two missionaries from Nigeria have prepared a series of booklets which lead simply, by way of prayer, to knowledge of the Bible: Meditations based on the Gospels (book 1); on the Acts and Epistles (2); on the Psalms (3); on the Prophets (4); on the Rosary and the Way of the Cross (5).

Carpets para semanas biblicas, Asociacion Biblica San Pablo, Madrid.

The Society of St. Paul (Paulists) addresses itself to people who already have a certain biblical formation which they

wish to increase. It recommends to its members meditation, study and distribution of the bible. It has taken on the task of promoting bible weeks, bible groups and formation sessions. "Carpets para semanas biblicas" is a little folder offering suggestions and information for the organization of a bible week. With very practical advice on the organization of a bible week, the folder gives detailed suggestions for the programme: 1/ The Bible is not a book but a library; 2/ The Bible tells us a story of love; 3/ The Gospels; 4/ The Prophets; 5/ Saint Paul. Available in Spanish.

Further information: La Casa de la Biblia, Mayor 81, 28013 Madrid, Spain

Semiotique, Introduction à une pratique de lecture et d'analyse des textes bibliques, Cahiers Evangile No. 59, Evangile et Vie - Cerf, France 1987.

It is not easy to explain to someone who is not a specialist the process of an approach to biblical texts based on a very new science. But those who have tried what we call "structural analysis" of biblical texts often change their way of reading. They discover new richness in the old texts of the Bible.

Thanks are also due to the biblical organization Evangile et Vie for this booklet which, by way of three analyses of biblical texts, provides an initiation into the practice of semiotics. This booklet is also open to several theological questions posed by the reading and gives practical recommendations for those who wish to enter the "adventure of semiotics". This book wishes to provide practical help for both the "beginner" and the leader of bible reading groups. Further information: Evangile et Vie, 6 avenue Vavin, 75006 Paris, France.

Jean-Pierre Charlier, op, Jésus au milieu de son peuple, Cerf, France, 194 pages, 1987.

By becoming human the Son of God incarnated also into history, into an exactly defined social, political and economic context. It is therefore important to get to know better the daily reality of the land in which Jesus lived. The conditions of rural or urban life, the strong currents which formed Judaism, the hierarchy which structured society: all these points of view help to clarify the gospel texts.

This concise guide, well composed and easy to understand, is really a little handbook which bible group leaders will be glad to read and use for consultation.

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