

Catholic Biblical Federation

No. 29

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Bulletin

Verbum

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Biblical Federation 1991 - 1993**

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English Edition

The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) 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 CBF 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, lectors 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 these great tasks.

+ Alberto Ablondi, Bishop of Livorno
President of the CBF

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

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Editorial

In this issue, halfway between the Plenary Assembly of Bogotá (1990) and the next Plenary Assembly in Hong Kong (1996), we provide you with an updated overview of the Federation based on the reports which were exchanged during the Executive Committee Meeting in June, 1993. On the yellow pages, the responses received from the European Federation members to the questionnaire on "Bible and Laity" have been summarized and the general secretary has composed a letter which informs you of our current situation regarding Bulletin Dei Verbum and a questionnaire which primarily requests your suggestions on how to improve of the BDV. From the Vatican, the Pope's address to the Executive Committee members and a section of the new Ecumenical Directory, the first official document presenting the CBF in the service of the Universal Church, are reproduced. From Africa, we publish the Statement of the 6th Congress of the Pan-African Association of Catholic Exegetes from July in Accra, Ghana. The last article addresses the difficulties Bible translators are faced with when translating into a language from a totally different culture as demonstrated in an example from Asia.

Thanks

This year, three meritorious co-workers vacated their positions: Jos Rijks as treasurer of the Federation and Piet Rijks and Abbé Marc Sevin as two general secretariat staff members.

Mr. **Jos Rijks** is originally from Belgium but worked as financial director for many years with the international funding agency *Church in Need* in Königstein, Germany. He was treasurer of the Federation for three years, since the Plenary Assembly of Bogotá (1990) and member of the Federation's Administrative Board. He professionally and with great personal interest did his utmost to secure the finances for our work. Mid 1993, he moved with his family to the USA.

Piet Rijks has worked several years as a missionary in Zaire and then at the same funding agency as his brother, Jos Rijks' where he was in charge of *Africa*. In 1979, soon after the Plenary Assembly of Malta, he joined the general secretariat team. During the 14 years as head of the project department he also, for some years, shouldered some of the responsibilities of treasurer. Many people know and appreciate him as an affable and very committed colleague.

Apart from his main duties of evaluating biblical pastoral projects, he ventured with assiduity into publishing a catalog of Catholic and interconfessional Bible translations. The first two volumes (Pacific and Africa) have been published, the third (Asia) is ready for print, and the fourth is still in the preparatory stage.

On August 1, 1993, Fr. Piet Rijks accepted a position with the Austrian funding agency *Dreikönigsaktion der Katholischen Jungschar Österreichs* in Vienna. We are confident that the good cooperation between our office and *Jungschar*, as sufficiently known to many Federation members, for the benefit of the biblical-pastoral work in the universal Church is guaranteed due to Fr. Piet Rijks new position in Vienna.

Abbé **Marc Sevin**, a Frenchman and priest of the diocese Orléans, joined the general secretariat team in 1985 as editor of *BULLETIN DEI VERBUM* (BDV), one year after the Plenary Assembly of Bangalore. Prior to that he served for six years as director of the French Biblical Association *Service Biblique Évangile et Vie* in Paris. The BDV format and quality largely carries his imprint. As an exchange of information and experiences - and an important link between the Federation members - BDV has made the Federation better known and has given new impulse to the biblical-pastoral ministry. Also the organization of the subregion *Latin-Europe* (South and West Europe) which in recent years has unfolded in greater dynamics, is a reflection of his initiative.

Marc Sevin is now in France where he continues to be editor of the review *Fêtes et Saisons* and has just recently accepted a new task with the French publishing house Bayard Press.

Each one in his own way, the Rijks' brothers and Abbé Sevin have contributed to the unfolding of the Federation and the growth of the manifold and worldwide biblical apostolate. We have learned to appreciate their contributions and are indebted to them with sincere gratitude. Wishing them success in their new tasks, we all hope that they will continue to be bound with the Federation and its concerns for which they so successfully made strong efforts for so many years.

Ludger Feldkämper, General Secretary

Development of the Catholic Biblical Federation 1991 - 1993 Information shared during the Executive Committee Meeting

The Executive Committee of the Catholic Biblical Federation meets at least once every two years to gain an overview of the members' activities and an overview of the Federation, its structures and organization as well as its relations with other organizations, especially the Bible Societies. This year's meeting was held on June 15-21, 1993 in Nemi.

The trends of the Federation for the past three years have primarily been the following:

1. Advancement in areas where the Church is "in need";
2. Further development and solidification of structures (Final Statement of Bogotá (FS) 8.2 and 8.3.2);
3. Interest in the Dogmatic Constitution DEI VERBUM (FS 8.1.1);
4. A growing emphasis on Bible Sunday, Week, Month, and Year (FS 8.1.2, 8.3.4.3, and 8.3.5.7);
5. Role of the laity (FS 8.3.3.2 and 8.3.4.6);
6. The need of formation on various levels (FS 8.3.3);
7. *Lectio Divina* (FS 7.2);¹
8. Discussion on a new way of reading the Bible (FS 7)²;
9. The need of reflection on the criteria of the biblical-pastoral ministry.³

The following report summarizes information regarding these trends presented by the general secretary and each Executive Committee member who represents a Federation region.

¹The publication of the series on lectio divina in *Bulletin Dei Verbum* has received a very positive response in various countries e.g. Italy, Spain, and the United States.

²The suggestions given in this section of the FS have already given rise to reflection and discussion which will have to be carried on and perhaps even intensified. "...start with reality" (7.1) seems to be taken by some people in an almost exclusive sense with reference being made to the Emmaus account (Lk 24:13-35), and the reflections based thereon in the FS, Part Two "What we understand by the New Evangelization". Others defend the validity of a lectionary based reading of the Bible which would be a great help in acquiring a greater familiarity of the Bible which seems to be presupposed in the method starting with reality. Here reference is made to Lk 4:16f - Jesus reading Scripture in the synagogue of Nazareth. This method starts with Scripture and then moves on to life/reality. Still others propose we have to start with the reader e.g. the reader's background, understanding, horizon, hopes, expectations, etc. A biblical model is the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), "Do you understand what you are reading?... How can I if nobody instructs me". All three starting points and methods seem to be valid, the differences are perhaps just a matter of emphasis. In any case, reflection on this matter, especially on the validity and limits of the so-called popular or common reading of the Bible is the great challenge ahead of us.

³Regarding this need, the work initiated during the Plenary Assembly of Bogotá has to be carried further. In the FS, it has been made clear that the Federation's understanding and model of the New Evangelization is that of inculturation and not of indoctrination (neither a type of "restoration" nor of fundamentalism). Perhaps

Activities of the Federation Members

I. Motivating all Members to Implement the Final Statement of Bogotá.

The general secretariat has put forth a great effort to motivate the Federation members to put into practice the recommendations of the Final Statement of Bogotá. For the last three years, a questionnaire has been sent to each Federation member:

- 1991: on Bible Sunday (Bible week/month/year);
- 1992: on Bible and Laity;
- 1993: on how the recommendations of the Final Statement have been implemented.

The responses to all the questionnaires were summarized according to each region and have been published in *BULLETIN DEI VERBUM*.

II. Africa

A. Regional level

1. Africa - Madagascar is the only region in the Federation that has a regional coordinator. *Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar* (SECAM) appointed Fr. Laurent Naré to act jointly as director of *Biblical Center for Africa and Madagascar* (BICAM) and regional coordinator for Africa, and the Executive Committee formally approved the latter appointment. Upon accepting appointment, Fr. Naré was faced with the challenge of reorganizing BICAM.

2. Resuming a prior attempt to establish a "network for the biblical apostolate all over the continent", Fr. Naré wrote a new circular letter to "all the General Secretaries of SECAM at the national and regional levels" to inform them about BICAM and sent a questionnaire in order to obtain information about the biblical apostolate in the different subregions.

3. In various African countries there is a lot of collaboration with the United Bible Societies (UBS) in the effort to make the Word of God more available to the faithful through translation, publication, and distribution particularly in the local languages.

4. In July 1993, the 6th Congress of the Pan-African Association of Catholic Exegetes took place in Accra, Ghana, on the theme, "Kingdom of God in the Synoptics. Conversion, Justice and Peace in Africa." (see page 14-17 of this issue) The Fifth Congress was held in Abidjan,

the role of the Bible in the Church in general (cf. the title of DEI VERBUM chapter 6: The Bible in the Life of the Church) and particularly in the new evangelization needs further clarification and precision. This need is felt for various reasons, two of which will be mentioned: The lamented lack of interest on the part of many bishops and priests, which stands in sharp contrast to the laity and their ever growing hunger for the Word of God in Sacred Scripture; and the publication of the universal catechism. It would seem that the Federation is called upon especially for this kind of reflection since it has to be based on pastoral practice and experience. The members of the Latin European subregion seem to be aware of this need more than others.

Ivory Coast, under the theme, "Universalism and Mission" in July 1991.

5. The forthcoming Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops has as a theme "The Church in Africa and her Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000. 'You shall be my Witnesses' (Acts 1:8)". In the Synod working document, *Instrumentum Laboris*, the Word of God is considered a top priority. The biblical apostolate is mentioned as a means of formation for the laity, as a field of inculturation and ecumenical dialogue, and as an adequate means of meeting the pastoral challenges presented by the sects.

B. Subregional level

1. Africa is subdivided into six zones. Fr. Chidavaenzi is responsible for the biblical apostolate in the IMBISA (Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa) zone which includes Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Msgr. Robert Sarah, Archbishop of Conakry, is responsible for the biblical apostolate in the CERAO (Conférence Episcopale Régionale de l'Afrique de l'Ouest Francophone) zone which includes Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Niger, and Togo.

2. A biblical-pastoral training course, modeled after the biblical pastoral course offered in Nemi but clearly adapted to the African context is envisaged, and in many places of Africa, new Bible sharing groups are springing up. Like everywhere, the urgent need for formation and guidance is felt.

a. Burkina Faso: A biblical correspondence course served some 160 applicants from 9 countries.

b. Central African Republic: Biblical, theological, and spiritual courses for the laity were organized at the *Centre Jean XXIII* in Bangui.

c. Kenya: Three one-week national biblical workshops were successfully organized in collaboration with BICAM.

d. South Africa: The *Lumko* Missiological Institute continues its leading role in the field of formation by offering training courses and producing appropriate materials both of which are being used in more than 60 countries and becoming known and appreciated even in Europe.

e. Zaire: In the present-day situation of Zaire, every work, every collaboration, indeed every activity have become more and more difficult. Nevertheless, the three Federation Associate Members, the *Center for Biblical Apostolate* in Bandundu, the *Biblical Center St. Irénée* in Kikwit, and *Verbum Bible, Société du Verbe Divin* in Kinshasa received the means to translate and publish the Children's Bible and the Bible for the Youth in Kikongo and Lingala. Some 100,000 copies have been sold, and in many schools, these two texts are the only ones the pupils own. A first edition of the Bible in Kiluba is on the press, and a new Bible edition in Tshiluba is being prepared for printing.

III. America

A. Regional level

1. The region America is comprised of two subregions: Latin America and North America.

2. Because of the numerous "Latinos" living in the U.S., Latin America is interested in joining hands with North America. The U.S. would act as a functional zone of Latin America in terms of biblical pastoral ministry.

B. Subregional level

1. Latin America

a. Fr. Gerardo Mellert SVD, Bogotá Colombia, has been the Latin American subregional coordinator since June, 1991, and his assistant is Ms. Clara María Díaz.

b. The Catholic Biblical Federation of Latin America (FEBIC-LA), seated in Bogotá, is officially recognized by the Colombian Government as a "juridical personality" (personería jurídica).

c. For the last three years, Fr. Gerard Mellert and/or Ms. Clara María Díaz have maintained contact with FEBIC-LA members and other persons/institutions committed to the biblical apostolate through some 1200 pieces of correspondence and 15 journeys. FEBIC-LA also publishes a quarterly bulletin entitled *La Palabra Hoy* (The Word Today). In preparation of the Fourth General Assembly of the Latin American Bishops in Santo Domingo, FEBIC-LA provided the bishops copies of the Final Statements of the LA Workshops of the Federation (Bogotá 1985; Mendes 1989; Bogotá 1990) and a special issue of *La Palabra Hoy* featuring a three part article on the biblical-pastoral ministry since the Second Vatican Council and the General Assemblies of Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979). As a follow up to the Assembly, Bishop Mario de Gasparín, Executive Committee member, published a concluding article entitled "The Word of God in the document of Santo Domingo".

d. Numerous meetings, workshops, and seminars are organized which include:

1) The FEBIC-LA annual executive committee meeting, which includes the six zonal coordinators.

2) The Third Latin American Workshop for the Biblical Apostolate, held in Quito, Ecuador, in October 1993 with the theme, "The Faithful Reading of the Bible".

e. The Latin American subregion is divided into six zones: Brazil, Caribe, Central America, Cono Sur, Mexico, and Países Bolivarianos.

1) Brazil, a zone comprised of itself, is divided into 18 regions and 300 dioceses. Sr. Pulga, Executive Committee member and representative of Serviço de Animação Bíblica (SAB), reported that the biblical-pastoral program of Brazil is reviewed every four years. There are four pastoral centers, one of which, SAB, prepares scripts which are transmitted for five minutes a day by 700 radio stations all over the country, offers Bible courses with focus on the laity, and has held an annual national meeting with all the coordinators of the Bible and Catechesis Department of the Bishop's Conference since 1986. Additionally, an agreement was reached

with the authors of the *Bibliographia Biblica Latino-Americana* in São Paulo to work jointly on a "data bank" which would include information on the biblical-pastoral ministry (courses, resources, persons, etc.).

2) The Caribe zone is comprised of Antilles, Grenada, Haiti, and Trinidad. In 1991, the subregional coordinator and zonal coordinator visited Cuba and subsequently two invited guests from Cuba attended the FEBIC-LA meeting in Puerto Rico in October 1991. In September 1992, the zonal coordinator with an assistant gave a whole series of biblical workshops and seminars in Cuba. The Society of St. Paul in Venezuela obtained permission and funds to print and import 100,000 copies of the *Biblia Latino-Americana* into Cuba.

3) The Central America zone is comprised of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama. A biblical workshop for leading pastoral agents in Central America was held in San José, Costa Rica, May, 1993.

4) The Cono Sur zone is comprised of Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The second biblical-pastoral meeting was held in April 1993 in Santiago de Chile.

5) Mexico is a zone comprised of itself. The First National Biblical-Pastoral Congress was held in Puebla, in August 1991. An issue of *La Palabra Hoy* was entirely dedicated to that Congress.

6) The Países Bolivarianos zone is comprised of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela. The Third FEBIC-LA Executive Committee meeting was held in Quito, Ecuador, in October 1992, in preparation for the Third Latin American Biblical-Pastoral Workshop.

f. Some common activities and concerns in Latin America:

1) Bible Sunday, Week, Month, and Year have spread practically throughout the whole subregion. Celebrations in Argentina (Bible year in the diocese of Quilmes), Brazil (Bible Month organized by the Catholic Biblical Animation Service, SAB), Chili, and Honduras (Bible Week) have been published in *La Palabra Hoy*.

2) There is always need for Bibles in Latin America, especially Bibles at a low cost. Due to the facts that a lot of Latin Americans do not particularly care for the *Biblia Latino-Americana* and that the Jerusalem Bible is very expensive, a project is currently underway to publish an edition of the new Bible of La Casa de la Biblia, adapted to the Latin American context.

3) In 1992, the Divine Word Missionaries, associate member of the Federation, have run a four-month biblical-pastoral course with 30 participants from most of the countries of Latin America. The particular focus of the course was the sociological reading of the Bible. This pilot course was offered to members of the Divine Word Missionaries and of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit. It is hoped to offer this course to the general public at a later date.

2. North America

a. Canada and the USA form the North American subregion. The Federation is presently looking for a new subregional coordinator.

b. Two member organizations of the Federation in Canada are very active in the biblical-pastoral ministry as is

evident from their publications: The Société Catholique Biblique (SOCABI) in the French-speaking part and the Catholic Biblical Association in the English-speaking part of the country. The 50th Anniversary of SOCABI was in 1990.

c. USA

1) There is not a lack of recognized biblical scholarship or of biblical-pastoral initiatives in the USA e.g. in the area of formation, emphasis is placed on Bible study and lectionary-based *lectio divina*.

2) The dioceses generally choose to organize the biblical pastoral ministry among themselves. In this regard, close collaboration among the dioceses and among the Federation members in the U.S.A. seems to be lacking. But, there is close collaboration between the Catholic Bishops' Conference and the American Bible Society in the production of Bibles. A new edition of the New American Bible has been published with ample introductions and notes prepared by the Department of Biblical Languages and Literature of the Catholic Theological Union of Chicago, an associate member of the Federation.

IV. Asia / Oceania

A. Regional level

1. The region Asia/Oceania is comprised of four subregions: Northeast Asia, Oceania, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. The United Chinese Catholic Biblical Association (UCCBA) can be considered a "cultural", not a geographical subregion, since it cuts across the borders of North and Southeast Asia uniting Chinese communities in numerous countries of Asia.

2. The Third Asian Workshop on the biblical-pastoral ministry will be held in Bangkok in November 1993 on the theme, "Responding to God's Word in Asia Today".

3. The United Chinese Catholic Biblical Association (UCCBA) held its third meeting in November 1992, in Singapore with the theme "Bible and Formation of Laity". Also, the Association publishes a bimonthly bulletin entitled *Communion* in Chinese. Many copies are sent to Mainland China.

B. Subregional level

1. Northeast Asia subregion is comprised of Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Ms. Cecilia Chui is subregional coordinator. The First Northeast Asian Subregional Workshop was held in Seoul, Korea, in October-November 1991 under the theme, "The Bible and Laity". Some 50 delegates participated including representatives from Macao and Singapore. The Second Northeast Asian Subregional Workshop is scheduled to be held in 1994 in Nagoya, Japan.

a. Hong Kong

1) In 1992, the Hong Kong Catholic Biblical Association (HKCBA) held its 20th Annual General meeting and celebrated its 20th anniversary with a Bible year program and the publication of a commemorative book which offers a profile of the organization, a collection of ten bible sharing and study methods, and some testimonies

by lay members. HKCBA publishes a Bible month program annually and supports manifold biblical-pastoral efforts in Mainland China. Fr. Dominic Chan, Executive Committee member, visits Mainland China almost every year. Mainland China is in need of books, especially the Bible. The Chinese government granted permission to have 200,000 of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Bibles printed in Beijing. Additionally, Hong Kong has provided Bible teaching materials, and lay people have been asked to give Basic Bible Seminar Courses.

2) The Hong Kong Filipino Catholic Biblical Pastoral Ministry (HKFCBPM) celebrated its 2nd Anniversary in 1992. HKFCBPM has already organized twelve Basic Bible Seminars and held the First Annual Bible Awareness Program in 1993.

b. Japan

1) The Biblical Committee of Japan has closely collaborated with the Theological Faculties in three Catholic Universities in the Major Seminaries of Japan to promote more structures in all the dioceses for biblical pastoral work.

2) Studium Biblicum Franciscanum is now publishing the 32nd volume, Books of Judges and Ruth, of annotated critical translations of the Old and New Testament.

c. Three new associate members of Korea have been actively involved in promoting the biblical pastoral ministry e.g. providing resources and materials to religious and laity who give biblical instruction and translating formation and other biblical materials into Korean.

d. Taiwan: As a follow-up to the First Northeast Asia Subregional Workshop held in 1991, Taiwan has established an Episcopal Commission for the Biblical Apostolate under the Chinese Bishops' Conference. Under the direction of this Commission, there are Biblical Associations in each of the seven dioceses. There is a harmonious rapport among all the Bible Associations, and the biblical apostolate has steadily taken root. Generally speaking, there is at least one bible reading group in almost all parishes of Taiwan.

2. The Southeast Asia subregion is comprised of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. The subregional coordinator is Sr. Mary Clara Antoni, ij, Infant Jesus Convent, Kuala Lumpur.

a. Indonesia

1) In 1992, a six-week "Mini-Nemi" formation course was given for the first time in eastern Indonesia.

2) In Jakarta, the National Biblical Association has set up a three-year Bible Course program.

3) The National Biblical Consultation which is held every three years was held in July 1992.

b. A Bible Year was celebrated in the archdiocese of Kuching, Malaysia.

c. In Myanmar (Burma), steps are being taken to establish a Biblical Pastoral Commission of the Bishops' Conference by a bishop and two priests; one trained at the Biblical Institute in Rome and has been entrusted with the translation of the Bible into Burmese.

d. Philippines

1) After conducting a brief training course for biblical-pastoral ministry in 1991, the East Asian Pastoral Institute instituted a much more comprehensive five and a half month course in 1992 "Formation of Ministers of the Word". The institute continues to publish biblical pastoral material in a journal entitled "East Asian Pastoral Review", and in relation to the training course, the institute has agreed to publish a handbook on the biblical-pastoral ministry.

2) The John Paul I Center in Vigan continues to be active in conducting workshops and in newsletter publication.

e. In Thailand, the English edition of the Jerusalem Bible is currently being translated into Thai.

3. Subregion South Asia is comprised of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Subregional coordinator is Fr. Alex Dassayanake from Colombo, Sri Lanka.

a. The National Biblical Catechetical Liturgical Center in Bangalore, India under the directorship of Fr. Jacob Theckanath, has doubled its formation courses for lay people during the past two years and expects to triple them by next year.

b. The Second National Workshop on the biblical apostolate, the New Evangelization and the Biel, was held in Sri Lanka in April 1991.

4. Oceania subregion is comprised of American Samoa, Australia, Fidji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Tonga. Fr. Wim Hoekstra is subregional coordinator. The First Pacific Consultation on Catholic Bible Ministry was held on December 7-13, 1992 in American Samoa. A booklet of the whole proceedings is being prepared for print.

V. EUROPE / MIDDLE EAST

A. Regional level

1. The Europe / Middle East region has four subregions: Central Europe, Middle East, Southern (Latin) Europe, and Rome. In October 1992, the subregional coordinators met for the first in Malta. They shared their experiences as coordinators, reflected on the possible meeting with the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) on the Bible and biblical-pastoral ministry, and exchanged experiences of working together with the Bible Societies.

2. The necessary preparations, which include numerous preliminary meetings and a prepared questionnaire sent to all the members in the subregion, are being made to hold a CCEE sponsored meeting on the biblical-pastoral ministry scheduled for February 16 - 20 1994 in Freising, Germany. The theme will be: "Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church of Europe Today and Tomorrow" and, the primary focus will be chapter 6 of DEI VERBUM.

B. Subregional level

1. The Central Europe {Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mitteleuropäischer Bibelwerke, (AMB)} subregion is comprised of Austria, Flemish-speaking Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Germanophone Italy

(Diocese Bolzano-Bressanone), Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Rumania, Scandinavia, and Germanophone Switzerland. The subregional coordinator is Mag. Anton Kalkbrenner, successor to Dr. Norbert Höslinger. The AMB has been functioning since 1971. Due to political upheavals these last years, the AMB has had to develop new structures.

a. Austria

1) In 1991 and 1992, two one-week workshops for biblical animators from the European post-communist countries, were organized by the Central European subregional office.

2) A biblical-pastoral workshop for the entire subregion was held in Vienna in September 1993. Biblical scholars meet every two years in Vienna for the "Colloquium Biblicum" which is intended for those in Eastern European countries as a forum for exchanging ideas and concerns.

b. Austria and Germany celebrated the "Year with the Bible 1992" in a common effort of all Christian Churches.

c. Biblical-pastoral organizations have been established in Croatia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

2. The Southern (Latin) Europe subregion is comprised of Francophone Belgium, England, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Spain, and Francophone Switzerland. Pbro Santiago Guijarro is the subregional coordinator.

a. Annual meetings of the Southern European members of the Federation, coordinated by the subregional coordinator, were held in Milan, Italy (1991), Malta (1992), and Toulouse, France (1993). The sharing of information, experiences, and organization greatly helped to stimulate a greater commitment and bring to light a couple of common concerns: "Role and formation of biblical animators" and the "criteria for the biblical-pastoral ministry". A fruit of the 1992 meeting was a paper by Mr. Thomas Osborne entitled "Orientations for the biblical-pastoral ministry at the end of the 20th century" which was discussed at great length during the meeting in Toulouse and reproduced in *Bulletin Dei Verbum* issue No.28.

3. The Middle East subregion is comprised of Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. P. Paul Féghaly, a Maronite priest in Haissa, Lebanon, is the subregional coordinator and the successor to Msgr. Naguib, Coptic Catholic Bishop of El Minia, Egypt, who laid the foundations for the subregion's organization but had to resign for health reasons. Fr. Paul Féghaly has already visited all the Federation members of his subregion and initiated the publication of a biblical bulletin in Arabic. In January, 1993, the Third Middle East Biblical-Pastoral Workshop was held in Beirut, Lebanon with the theme "The Synoptic Gospels". The general concern remaining for many years is a basic one: "Reading of Sacred Scripture in our context".

4. The Rome subregion, "sui generis", is comprised of the Generalates of different religious orders, academic institutions, and various international religious centers. The subregional coordinator is Suor Filippa Gastronovo, FSP, and Associate members meet annually.

New Associate Members of the Federation

On behalf of the Federation, we welcome most sincerely the new associate members:

United Chinese Catholic Biblical Association (UCCBA)
c/o Chinese Bishops' Conference
34, Lane 32, Kuang-fu South Road
Taipei, Taiwan 105, **Republic of China**

The UCCBA aims to offer assistance to Chinese communities worldwide to promote the biblical-pastoral ministry; to promote Bible enthronement and Bible reading in families; to strengthen biblical spirituality and translate the Word into life; to train Bible facilitators and offer biblical formation for children and youth; to promote the biblical-pastoral ministry in overseas Chinese communities and the Church of Mainland China.

Sección de Estudios Bíblicos
de la Universidad de Antioquia
Apartado Aéreo 1226, Medellín, **Colombia**

This department has been working since 1960 within the University of Antiochia, a public university in Medellín, Colombia. The aim is to foster biblical studies with a double orientation: training catechists and biblical animators and deepening biblical studies.

Instituto "Cor Mariae",
Conference of Religious Sisters of Costa Rica
Apartado 7616-1000, San José, **Costa Rica**

This Institute offers the Conference of Religious Sisters an adequate service for the formation in faith. The study and the deepening of the Word of God holds a privileged place in the courses offered on two levels: the basic two-year course for postulants and novices; the four year theology course affiliated with the *Universidad Guatemalteca Francisca Marroquín*.

Asociación Bíblica Católica de Panamá
Apartado 6368 - Zona 5, **Panamá**

The Association aims to promote an adequate approach to the Catholic Bible; to collaborate with the bishops and priests in the biblical apostolate; to organize courses, workshops, seminars, meetings and other activities fostering the formation in Sacred Scripture; to support the celebration of Bible Sunday, week, and month in all parishes; to participate in the New Evangelization through the service of the Word.

Congregatio Missionariorum Filiorum
Immaculati Cordis B. Mariae Virginis
(Missionari Claretiniani)
Via Sacro Cuore di Maria, 5, 00197 Rome, **Italy**

The Claretians asked for re-admission to the Federation after resigning in 1990. Their last General Chapter, entitled: "Servidores de la Palabra" (Service of the Word), had decided "to give Bible reading a privileged place within missionary tasks and to read the whole Bible individually and in community in the course of four years as a basis of apostolic activity".

Follow-up to the Bogotá Assembly

The Laity and the Biblical Pastoral Ministry in Europe

The following is a summary of the responses to the questionnaire sent to the Federation members in Europe by the general secretariat regarding the laity's role in the biblical pastoral ministry. (Summaries about other continents have been published in issues 25, 26, and 27.)

Origin of responses

- National Biblical Associations in Croatia, England, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland.(9)
- Diocesan and interdiocesan centers in Linz, Austria; Birmingham and Chichester, England; Düren and Maihingen, Germany; Brixen, South Tirol, Italy; Madrid and Tui-Vigo, Spain; St. Gallen, Switzerland. (9)
- Religious Orders: Conference of Superiors Masculine Orders, Vienna, Austria; Bible Information Center, Maredsous, Belgium; Mill Hill Missionaries, London, England; Divine Word Missionaries, Bottrop, Germany; Combonian Missionaries, Ellwangen, Germany; Franciscans Convent, Wuerzburg, Germany; Missionary Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit, Rome; Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, Rome; Publishing House Verbo Divino, Estella, Spain. (9)
- Institutes: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, London; Le Passage, Paris; Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome; Catechetical Institute of the Salasian University, Rome; Evangelium et Cultura, Rome; international Catholic Charismatic Renewal Office, Vatican City. (6)

Summary of the Responses

a. Activities, Objectives, and Methods

The biblical movement that surged in Europe and was pushed forward in a definite way by the encyclical of Pius XII *Divino afflante Spiritu* (1943) focused primarily on the scientific study of the Bible in the new perspective introduced in recent pontifical documents. Included in that movement, since the beginning, is the intention to give back the Holy Scripture to lay people in order to help them understand its meaning and improve its use in the different sectors of Church life.

That intention, which today is characteristic of the biblical pastoral ministry, took form in several different

activities, especially after the Second Vatican Council: popular bible translations and commentaries, guided tours to the Holy Land; seminars, courses, Bible weekends and weeks, and conferences all of which are aimed at introducing the use and deepening the meaning of the Bible; study and prayer meetings on biblical themes; biblical exhibits; biblical games for children and youth; etc.

All of these possibilities are offered to a large number of Catholics in Europe often as ecumenical activities. Even computer technology is serving a purpose in biblical pastoral work. The theological faculty considers it necessary to convey to the students not only the exegetical formation but also the hermeneutical "restlessness" and some methodical means so Holy Scripture fulfills its role in the life of the Church according to the Constitution Dei Verbum. The number of lay people interested in feeding their faith from the Scriptures is increasing in practically all the European countries. Furthermore, they are becoming the ones who actively carry out the biblical pastoral ministry. Some responses point out three central points of the programs: prayer, common study of a biblical theme, and practical application to daily life. Also, they use the Final Statement of the Plenary Assembly of Bogotá as a point of reference.

b. Difficulties

The biblical pastoral ministry in Europe surpasses that of other continents in the number of activities and methodological means; however, the laity seem to experience the same difficulties as those of other continents.

1) on the part of the laity themselves

a) The laity in general have not overcome the conviction that when dealing with the Bible only priests and other trained people know its true meaning. Some laity have no prior knowledge of Christianity at all, and when attending biblical meetings, they tend to project their image of the Church they have received from mass media on the animators, i.e. they are also authoritarian, conservative, and intolerant.

b) The laity hold a predominate mentality, common even before the Second Vatican Council, that the Bible does not have a central place in the life of the Church. The laity ascertain a mistrust regarding the use of the Bible as something typical Protestant. Catholics prefer to attend acts of private devotion.

c) Few people find time for formation. The most active people are overwhelmed with daily responsibilities or choose to be too preoccupied by extracurricular activities.

The promotion of the biblical-pastoral ministry is an enterprise which requires a lot of patience and perseverance.

2) on the part of the hierarchy, bishops, priests, and religious

a) As in the other continents, the responses point out that only a few bishops are really convinced of the Bible's importance in the life of the Church and of the necessity to promote laypeople to church ministries. The recommendations about promoting the biblical pastoral ministry, which are written relatively frequently, don't correspond to an effective engagement; however, several responses reveal a slow change taking place.

b) Almost all the programs, carried out in the different European countries, result from private and/or group charisma and have made an attempt to respond to the needs of the laity. In several cases, the bishops have recognized afterwards the usefulness of such programs and have charged the responsible organizations with promoting the biblical apostolate in their local churches.

3) on the part of the organization itself

a) Some responses state that not only are there no difficulties at all on behalf of the organization itself, but the collaborators, discovering that the activities of the biblical apostolate are directed towards and carried out by laypeople, work with greater enthusiasm.

b) An internal difficulty within one of the European countries is that there is a competitive mentality between the several formation centers and Catholic associations.

c) In some of the other countries, there are other internal difficulties: a lack of personnel and economic resources and the fact that the hierarchy does not offer an explanation as to how certain decisions regarding the local Church have been made; therefore, many people choose not to engage themselves.

c. Positive Aspects and Reasons for Optimism

1) The enthusiasm of laypeople discovering they are called because of baptism and confirmation to share responsibility in announcing the Gospel has benefited especially the communities that do not have a priest.

2) The weekend Bible seminars are accepted with gratitude but tangible results are seen only when it is possible to work with the same people for a long period of time. When the participants feel that the Bible reading gives them something personally, they begin to have interest in communicating the same experience with others.

3) The actual interest of many people is not so much to know more *about* the Bible but to learn new methods of Bible reading that bring spiritual help to people in concrete situations. Common Bible work also benefits ecumenical cooperation.

4) People in general take into account with interest that those who communicate the Good News are also

laypeople, people who have the same problems as they themselves have. They consider it positive when the parish priest sits among the laity and listens to a layperson speaking about God.

5) The most stimulating for the collaborators is to see that the discovery of the Bible arouses great enthusiasm among the people. Many people wonder why this has not happened before in the Church. It becomes evident that the power of the Word takes a living form among the people through frequent bible reading in a climate of prayer, more intensive participation in the liturgy, and creative ideas for the religious education of children.

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New Staff Members

On behalf of the Catholic Biblical Federation, we would like to welcome **Br. Bruno Rehm** of the Divine Word Missionaries as new Federation treasurer appointed by the Executive Committee and **Fr. Gerhard Lesch SVD** as a new member of the general secretariat staff in charge of projects. Like his predecessor, Fr. Lesch was also a missionary in Zaire. He was co-founder of the publishing house *Verbum Bible*, associate member of the Federation and was member of the Executive Committee of the Federation from 1984-1990. We rejoice in their collaboration and welcome them most heartily. - Unfortunately we have not yet succeeded in finding a new editor for *BULLETIN DEI VERBUM*. We welcome proposals and/or applications of interested candidates.

25 Years

On April 16, 1994, we commemorate the founding of the Catholic Biblical Federation 25 years ago. For this occasion, the general secretariat will be publishing a book entitled "Twenty-five Years of Biblical Pastoral Ministry". It will contain articles from Federation members worldwide which represent biblical-pastoral programs originated according to the spirit of the Constitution Dei Verbum during the past 25 years and are successfully practiced today. These programs may serve as incentive models of the biblical apostolate in one or another region. Copies will be available from general secretariat for a donation to cover the printing and mailing expenses.

Dear Co-workers in the biblical apostolate,

For some time now you have been receiving *Bulletin Dei Verbum* (BDV), a publication of the Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF). As you may already know, the CBF, an international fellowship of biblical-pastoral organizations in the service of the respective local churches, was founded in Rome in 1969 and has been seated in Stuttgart since 1972. Beginning with the deepening of the biblical message, CBF strives to enliven the biblical pastoral ministry and to implement the directives of the Second Vatican Council concerning the role of Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church.

The BDV is a quarterly composed and edited by the CBF general secretariat staff and published in four languages: English, French, German, and Spanish. The staff makes use of information and reports on the pastorally orientated biblical work initiated, accompanied, or supported by the members of the CBF (at the moment 78 Full Members and 177 Associate members in 96 countries). The BDV fosters contact not only among the members of the CBF but also among other persons and groups engaged in the biblical-pastoral ministry.

Information and reports are not the only things that are published in BDV; fundamental reflections, which receive impulse from the general secretariat on orientation and enrichment of the biblical apostolate, are also published. One can say the CBF members themselves are the true editors of BDV and through their contributions serve the *entire* Federation. Time and time again, members find useful suggestions for their own work in BDV, and often use partial or entire contributions in their own regional and/or local publications.

Since the Second Plenary Assembly of the CBF in Malta (1978), and especially since the Fourth Plenary Assembly in Bogotá (1990) the aim, supported by the general secretariat, to have regional and subregional structures of the CBF has been realized more and more. Some regions have made remarkable progress and are in the position to offer biblical information, though in modest form, in their own regional language.

The vast development of the CBF has forced us to reevaluate the concept of the BDV. At this time, we would like your assistance and ask that you answer the questionnaire on the reverse side and send it back to the general secretariat office. We would be grateful if you freely offer your suggestions and proposals.

Indeed, the BDV cannot be considered only from a financial viewpoint, but due to the development of the CBF and the increase of postage in Germany since July, 1993, it is one that must be reevaluated. Because the annual financial contribution of CBF members is in most cases sent directly to the respective regional coordinating office and only a small portion of the regular subscribers have the means to pay the subscription fee, the general secretariat is left to shoulder the majority of the expenses for the BDV. As you complete the reverse side, please consider a supporting subscription to assist us with these costs.

We are fully aware that the continuation of BDV does not depend solely on financial considerations. The BDV contributions of our members are manifold. There is, first of all, prayer for the concerns of the CBF and the proclaimers of the Good News in all the world from whom we receive reports on their work, new programs, methods, and aids and even some share their own publication with us. We rejoice in all these contributions for they provide us the means to provide the BDV to those of you in the biblical-pastoral ministry. BDV finds a strong echo and has contributed to a stronger influence of the biblical message in all aspects of the church's pastoral work especially in the countries of the so-called Third World where often financial means are lacking. Many letters and reactions in regional publications give testimony of this.

We are not alone in the CBF, but each of you united with the CBF fulfills an important task in the universal Church. We are sincerely grateful for your support.

Fr. Ludger Feldkämper, SVD
- General Secretary -

Bulletin Dei Verbum (BDV) Questionnaire

Please complete the following questionnaire and return it to:
(please type or print)

Catholic Biblical Federation
Postfach 10 52 22 D - 70045 Stuttgart, GE

Thank you!

1. What is your **complete** address and the name of the organization you represent?

2. Regarding the **content** of *BULLETIN DEI VERBUM*:

2.1 In your opinion, does BDV fulfill its goal as a link between
the members of the Federation? yes no

2.2 Do you find sufficient information in the BDV about:
Your region, subregion, zone? yes no
The biblical apostolate worldwide? yes no

2.3 Which biblical-pastoral magazine/review do you use the most?

How do you rate the BDV?

2.4 We must choose from among manifold materials we receive worldwide.

Prioritize the following according to what interests you the most? (1 being the most and 4 being the least)

.....Practical Programs/Methods

.....Information/Reports/Questionnaires

.....Fundamental articles like *lectio divina*, spirituality ...

.....Other? Please make further suggestions to help us make the BDV a more informative and helpful bulletin
for those involved in the biblical apostolate. (If necessary, please answer this question on a separate sheet of paper)

3.1 Are you an associate or full member of the Federation? yes no
Ordinary subscriber? yes no
Supporting subscriber? yes no

3.2 Would you be willing to give a gift subscription to a friend
of yours or to a friend of the Federation? yes no
(If yes, please complete the subscription form on page 19 and 20)

3.3 Do you know of other persons/institutions engaged in the biblical apostolate who would be interested in a
BDV subscription?
Address: Language:

Statement of the Sixth Congress of the Pan-African Association of Catholic Exegetes (PACE)

Held in St. Paul's Catholic Major Seminary,
Sowutuom, Accra - Ghana
July 16 - 20, 1993

1. Preamble

1.1 The Sixth Congress of the Pan-African Association of Catholic Exegetes (PACE) was held in St. Paul's Catholic Major Seminary, Sowutuom Ghana from 16th to 20th July, 1993. The twenty-seven (27) participants in the Congress consisted of twenty-two (22) exegetes from thirteen (13) African countries, three (3) special guests from Europe, and two observers from Ghana. The participants comprised of bishops, priests, religious, and the laity. The purpose of the Association is to promote among its members biblical research of high scientific quality in an African perspective and to be of service to the biblical-pastoral ministry in the Church in Africa and Madagascar.

1.2 During its Fourth Congress, which took place in Nairobi in July, 1989, the Association decided that the themes of subsequent Congresses be chosen in view of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, which had just been announced by the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, on the 6th January, 1989, the Solemnity of the Epiphany of our Lord, and which will be held in Rome as from Low Sunday, 10th April, 1994. The theme of this Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is: "The Church in Africa and her Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000, 'You shall be my witnesses' (Acts 1:8)." In this way, the African Catholic exegetes intended to make a biblical contribution, modest as it may be, in preparation and celebration of this historic Synod in which the Church and people of Africa and Madagascar have so much hope and expectations.

1.3 The Fifth Congress which was held at Institut Catholique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ICAO) in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire had as a theme: "Universalism and Mission in the Bible". The theme of the present Congress is "The Kingdom of God in the Synoptics: Conversion, Justice, and Peace in Africa". This statement contains some of the fruits of our exegetical analysis and reflection on the above two themes which we consider relevant to some of the sub-themes of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops.

2. Need for a Biblical Oriented Evangelization

2.1 We firmly believe that the Good News of Salvation heralded by Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, is destined for all the people and races of the world (Mt 28:16-20). We thank God that there have been various attempts right from the beginning of the Church to proclaim this Good News of the people of Africa and

Madagascar. We rejoice that the modern attempt of the evangelization of Africa is bearing good fruit and the Reign of God proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth is becoming a reality in Africa. Nevertheless, we are aware of the fact that the great majority of our people are still waiting to hear this Good News and to enter into the Church which is the sacrament of this Reign of God on earth. Today more than ever before the populations of the African continent are yearning for the justice and peace which characterize this Reign (Mt 5:6, 9,10; 6:33; Lk 2:14; 10:5; Jn 14:27; cf. Ps 72:78; Is 9:5-7). Even among those who have received the Reign there is still need for true and profound conversion - metanoia - a real change of heart at all levels which is the *conditio sine qua non* for the reception of this Reign of God which is already present among them (Mk 1:14-15; Mt. 4:17).

2.2 Faced with these challenges, we need to renew our endeavor and methods of evangelization which should be "new in its ardor, new in its methods, new in its expressions" (John Paul II). But above all, we need an evangelization that is biblically oriented; therefore, the basic question is: How should we proclaim the Good News so that it touches the lives of the African? For the Word is life: "Something which has existed from the beginning, that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes; that we have watched and touched with our hands; the Word, who is life - this our subject" (1 Jn 1:1; cf. Jn 1:1-4; 6:63; 10:10).

3. Biblical Ways of Proclamation

3.1 The Good News should be proclaimed as a message of joy, of consolation, and of freedom; that is, in the spirit of the beatitudes (Mt 5:3-11; Lk 6: 20-23).

3.2 It should be proclaimed as a prophetic Word coming directly from the mouth of God to the people of Africa (Is 59:21; Jr 1:9-10) and not just as human words.

3.3 The Word should be proclaimed as the Word that simultaneously fulfills as well as challenges and even contradicts some African values and earthly standards because Christ is the sign of contradiction (Lk 2:33; cf. Mt 10:34-39).

3.4 The Word of God is powerful but not magical (Is 55:10-11; Rm. 1:16; 1 Co 1:18-25; 2:14; 2 Co 12:9-10; 1 Th 2:13; Heb 4:12). It should be proclaimed in patience and with humility (Is 49:2; Mk 4:26-27; 2 Co 4:7; Jm 5:7).

3.5 Christ made use of all the possible means of communication in his time: dialogue, questions, exhortations, stories, parables, images of all kinds (Mt 13:34-35; Mk 4:33-34; Jn 16:25). In imitation of Christ the Church should make use of all the possible means of communication in the proclamation of the Good News.

4. Content of Proclamation

4.1 Christ the Incarnate Word of God (Jn 1:1-18) is the one who proclaims and the one proclaimed (Heb 1:2; Lk 4:16-21; Jn 7:46; Ac 2:14-36; 1 Jn 1:1-4). The proclamation of the Good News must focus on the person of Jesus

Christ (Rm 1:1-5) especially his passion, death, and resurrection (1 Co 2:1-5; 15:1-5).

4.2 In proclaiming Christ to the Africans, one should not lose sight of Christ's historical dimension, since the history of salvation is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ (Mt 1-2; Lk 24:25-27).

4.3 The proclamation of the Good News must not be mere information; it must be vigorous and convincing leading to conversion and commitment (Mt 3:1-12).

5. Kingdom of God

5.1 The Kingdom of God should be proclaimed as already "among" the people of Africa. Whatever good there is in the African culture and religion is already an expression of God's reign among the Africans (Mk 1:14-15; Lk 11:20; 17:20-21; Ac 17:23-34).

5.2 Nevertheless, this Kingdom finds its visible expression in the Church instituted by Jesus Christ (Mt 16:16-18), the sheepfold into which Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gathers all the scattered children of God (Jn 10:1-21; 11:51-5).

5.3 In the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, care should be taken to avoid the dangers of legalism and ritualism (Mt 23:23-32). The new Temple is the person of Jesus Christ (Mk 14:57-58; 15:37-38; Jn 2:19-22) in whom we encounter God (Jn 4:21-24). Church structures should not, therefore, hinder contact with God (Mk 10:14; Mt 19:14; Lk 18:16).

5.4 This Kingdom, which is a present reality, tends, however, to eschatological fulfillment (Jn 18:36-37; 2 Co 5:1).

5.5 The happiness of the Kingdom of God proclaimed in the beatitudes is a reality and an ideal for all categories of people (Mt 5:3-12; Lk 6:20-22).

5.6 The healing ministry should be taken more seriously because it was an integral part of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom (Mt 10:7-8; Lk 10:9; cf Mt 4:23-25; Mk 3:10).

5.7 Jesus' kingship makes the Church a royal and priestly people (1 P 2:5, 9; Rv 5:9-10). His Kingdom behests the Church to instill in the faithful in Africa a Christian sense of dedicated service and humble leadership both on the part of the rulers and of the subjects (Mt 20:24-28; Mk 10:41-45; Lk 22:24-27; Jn 13:12-15).

5.8 Our environment is an integral part of the Kingdom (Gn 1-2; Lv 25:23; Rm 8:19). Africa is the continent where degradation of the soil and desertification are among the greatest challenges. It is part of the mission of the Church to protect the integrity of humankind and its environment.

6. Conversion

6.1 Faith as the personal encounter with Jesus Christ rising from hearing the Word is the climax of proclamation, and the result is a new way of living and thinking after the manner and example of Jesus Christ - the proclaimed

Word of God challenges the hearer to conversion (Rm 10:14-17).

6.2 Conversion implies a radical rupture with the past and the acceptance of Jesus with all its implications (Lk 19:1-10; Rm 6:1-11; Ep 4:17-24; Ph 3:8-16). The Church in Africa should not fail in presenting the Good News as a call to the radical change and newness of life in Christ (Mt 9:16-17; Mk 2:21-22; Lk 5:36-39; Rm 7:1-6; 2 Co 5:17; Ga 1:6; 4:8-11).

7. Witness

7.1 Jesus bears witness to the Father, and this is his whole program of life (Mt 11:27; Jn 5:31-32; 8:13-14; 1 Jn 5:9-10). The Apostles in turn bear witness to Jesus Christ (Mt 28:19; Lk 24:48; Ac 1:8, 22; 3:15; 4:33; 10:39f; 22:15). The Holy Spirit and the people of God bear witness to Jesus, the crucified and risen Lord (Jn 15:26-28); therefore, witness should be a major preoccupation of all Christ's faithful: clergy, religious, and laity. This witness may lead to persecution and even to the point of martyrdom (Rv 7:14-17; cf Mt 5:10-12; 10:20-21; 1 P 3:13-17).

7.2 The content of this witness should include our knowledge of Jesus Christ (1 Co 2:1-12) and our experience of him (Mk 5:19-20; Lk 5:14; 1 Cor 2:1-5; 1 Jn 1:1-3).

8. Justice and Peace

8.1 In the development of this Kingdom on earth, good and evil co-exist (Mt 13:24-30) but that should not discourage its proclamation. In the fight against evil and injustice in the world, care must be taken not to destroy good (Gn 18:16-33; Mt 13:24-43). In its proclamation, the People of God should be exhorted to live in hope and to have the spirit of perseverance which is characteristic of the beatitudes (Mt 5:11-12; Rm 5:3-5; 1 P 4:13-14).

8.2 In the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, the Church should have preferential option for the poor and seek to promote justice (Mt 5:3, 6; 11:5; Lk 4:18; 6; 20; 7:22; Rm 15:26; 2 Co 8:9; Jm 2:1-13).

8.3 The Kingdom should be presented in such a way that both the agents and the victims of injustice should be transformed and be reconciled (Mt 5:23-26; Rm 5:10-11; 2 Co 5:18-21).

8.4 The preferential option for the poor should not make the Church to neglect the rich, nor should the Church be seen only as an agent of development (Mt 6:33; 19:21-29; Lk 19:8-10).

8.5 In the Old Testament, the Messianic time is described as a time of peace (Is 9:1-7; 11:1-9; 60:17; 66:12; Ps 85:2). This peace, which is the total welfare and aspirations of humankind, was fulfilled with the birth of Jesus Christ who is the Prince of Peace (Lk 2:14; 19:38). He sent out his disciples to proclaim his peace (Mt 10:12f; Lk 10:5-6; Jn 14:27; Jn 20: 19-21). In the beatitudes, he invites all

his followers to be peacemakers (Mt 5:9; Ep 2:11-18); therefore, the primary preoccupation of the Churches should be the promotion of peace. The Reign of God implies love, justice, and peace.

8.6 In the Old Testament, the principal function of kings was to establish and guarantee peace (Jg 17-21; 2 S 7:4-16; Ps 72:7-8; Is 9:1-7; 11:1-9). This aspiration was fulfilled by Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace (Lk 19:38,41-42). The Church should make sure that leadership and peace are blended together. It should play a prophetic and pedagogic role in the formation of consciences of both the rulers and the ruled with respect to the right understanding of authority and political leadership which guarantee peace.

8.7 The Church is a community of the People of God, which welcomes all people without distinction (I Co 12:12-13; Ga 3:26-29; Ep 4:1-6) and in particular the poor, the marginalized, and all those who suffer; therefore, it should be a caring and sharing community characterized by the spirit of *koinonia* and *diakonia* (Ac 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5:12-16; 6:1-7).

9. Inculturation

9.1 The event of the incarnation is the true model of any genuine inculturation: "The Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14; cf. Ga 3:25-27; Heb 2:17). When the African knows and accepts Christ totally, Christ cannot but be incarnated into the African people and culture.

9.2 Indeed, Christ breaks into all cultures, races, and tribes, uniting them into his body (Ac 2:1-13; Ga 3:25-27). The Church which is the body of Christ should be enriched by all cultures (Mt 2:1-12; cf. Is 60:5-6).

9.3 Christ transcends, transforms, elevates, and completes all cultures (Rv 21:24, 26,27; cf. Mt 5:20-48); therefore, inculturation should bring about a radical change from the past to a new and special way of life because of our attachment to the person of Christ (Mk 1:14-15; I Co 5:6-8)

10. The Importance of Dei Verbum and the Biblical Pastoral Ministry

10.1 The Dogmatic Constitution of the Second Vatican Council on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, underlines in its Chapter 6 the place which Sacred Scripture - the Bible- the Word of God, should have in the life of the Church. The fathers of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops regretted the fact that this important Constitution has been very much neglected. It would seem that this reproach does not apply to the Church in Africa and Madagascar because already in 1981 during the SECAM Plenary Assembly held in Yaounde, Cameroon, the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar decided to include the biblical apostolate among their top pastoral priorities, and established for this purpose, in Nairobi, the Biblical Centre for Africa and Madagascar (BICAM).

10.2 It is our utter conviction as exegetes that only through the biblical pastoral ministry is the Word of God

given its rightful place in the life of the Church. There is no doubt that through the organization of the biblical pastoral ministry, according to the directives of chapter 6 of *Dei Verbum*, our endeavors to evangelize Africa will bear greater fruits. For as Jesus himself said: "If you remain in me and my Words remain in you, you may ask my Father for whatever you please and you will get it... I have commissioned you to go out and bear fruits, fruits that will last" (Jn 15:7,16; cf. Col 3:16).

11. Recommendations

11.1 We, therefore, recommend that the biblical pastoral ministry, according to the Directives of *Dei Verbum*, be introduced at all levels of the Church in Africa as the first step of evangelization.

11.2 We recommend that catechesis be biblically based and be impregnated with biblical symbols and images which are closer to the African world view. This was the pedagogy of the early Fathers of the Church.

11.3 We recommend that the laity be formed to interiorize the Word of God and become agents of the biblical-pastoral ministry and subsequently true agents of evangelization.

11.4 We further recommend that the bishops of Africa and Madagascar provide necessary structures and personnel at all levels for the promotion of the biblical apostolate. In this connection, we would like to see BICAM equipped with adequate human and material resources which will enable it to carry out the functions entrusted to it by SECAM.

11.5 We further recommend that particularly in Africa the translation of the Bible into various African languages be an urgent necessity and priority in order to make available this indispensable tool of evangelization.

11.6 We finally recommend that the bishops of Africa and Madagascar organize a symposium on the Bible.

12. Conclusion

12.1 We hope that this modest contribution in the context of the forth coming Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops will be appreciated and taken in the spirit in which it has been given. It is our plea that the new era of evangelization of Africa be more solidly based on the Word of God for a better growth and expansion of the Kingdom of God in Africa and Madagascar.

12.2 We pray that the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops may be a new Pentecost for the Church in Africa so that the Word of God, which is spirit and life (Jn 6:63), may continue to find fertile ground and become more incarnated in Africa (Mt 13:4-9, 18-23) in order that it may "bear fruit, fruit that will last" (Jn 15:16).

Revere and Proclaim the Word of God

On June 21, 1993, the Holy Father received the members of the Executive Committee of the Catholic Biblical Federation. The Pope addressed them in English, encouraging them in their important work of helping make the Scriptures accessible to all people.

Hearing the word of God with reverence and proclaiming it confidently" (*Dei Verbum*, n. 1).

1. In these words, which begin the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, the Fathers of that Sacred Synod remind us of two activities which form the foundation of the great work of evangelization: first the Church is called to listen attentively to the Good News of eternal life, and then she shares with all mankind the word spoken to her, "so that by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may believe; by believing, it may hope; and by hoping, it may love" (*ibid.*). You, the members of the *Catholic Biblical Federation*, seek to make a special contribution to the Church, so that she may ever more effectively fulfill her role in God's saving plan through her preaching of "the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15). I extend to you a warm welcome today, and I assure you of my prayerful good wishes that your efforts will be made fruitful by a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

2. Your Federation was founded in order to help implement the directives of the Second Vatican Council

concerning Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church, and it finds the basic elements of its program in the sixth chapter of *Dei Verbum*.

There the Council Fathers express a particular concern that "easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful" (n. 22), for "in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets his children with great love and speaks with them" (*ibid.*, n. 21). To provide the members of the Christian community with the Scriptures and to open their minds to what the Spirit says there to the churches (cf. Rv 2:7) are perennially necessary means for building up the Body of Christ...

3. In the task of advancing the reading and study of the Bible, there is wide scope for *ecumenical cooperation*. Belief that the Lord continues to speak to his disciples through the inspired text has a special power to strengthen the fraternal bonds between Catholics and members of other Churches and ecclesial communities; and in our dialogue, as the Council says, "the sacred utterances are precious instruments in the mighty hand of God for attaining that unity which the Saviour holds out to all men" (*Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 21).

It is in the force and might of God's Word, and not in any earthly power, that the Church finds support and energy, the strength of her faith and the food of her soul (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n. 21). Through the intercession of Our Lady Queen of Apostles and Prophets may you find renewed strength to do your part in assisting the faithful to hear the word of God and to keep it (cf. Lk 11:28).

I cordially impart to you my Apostolic Blessing.

L'Osservatore Romano N 25-23 June 1993

Common Bible Work The Catholic Biblical Federation and United Bible Societies

*On the basis of
the New Ecumenical Directory*

The information below is quoted from the Directory of the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, under the subtitle "Common Bible Work"; therefore it is of particular interest to the Catholic Biblical Federation and its members. The directory was revised and published on March 25, 1993 by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. For the first time in an official Vatican document the Catholic Biblical Federation is referred to "as an international Catholic organization of a public character to further the pastoral implementation of *Dei Verbum*, Chapter VI". Explicitly, the document underlines the relations between the Catholic Biblical Federation and the United Bible Societies and praises "this collaboration has already yielded good results".

From the Preface

The search for Christian Unity was one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. The Ecumenical

Directory, called for during the Council and published in two parts, one in 1967 and the other in 1970, has given a most valuable service in directing, coordinating, and developing the ecumenical effort.

This Directory has just been revised to take into account the development of the situation over the past years. Indeed, "the breadth of the ecumenical movement, the multiplication of dialogue statements, the urgent need that is felt for a greater participation by the whole People of God in this movement, and the consequent necessity of accurate doctrinal information, in view of a proper commitment, all of this requires that up-to-date directives be given without delay" (John Paul II).

Common Bible Work

183. The Word of God that is written in the Scriptures nourishes the life of the Church in manifold ways (DV, Chapter VI) and is "a precious instrument in the mighty hand of God for attaining to that unity which the Saviour holds out to all men" (UR 21). Veneration of the Scriptures is a fundamental bond of unity between Christians, one that holds firm even when the Churches and communities to which they belong are not in full communion with each other. Everything that can be done to make members of the Churches and ecclesial communities read the Word

of God, and to do that together when possible (e.g., Bible Weeks), reinforces this bond of unity that already unites them, helps them to be open to the unifying action of God and strengthens the common witness to the saving Word of God which they give to the world. The provision and diffusion of suitable editions of the Bible is a prerequisite to the hearing of the Word. While the Catholic Church continues to produce editions of the Bible that meet its own specific standards and requirements, it also cooperates willingly with other Churches and ecclesial communities in the making of translations and in the publication of common editions in accordance with what was foreseen by the Second Vatican Council and is provided for in the Code of Canon Law (CIC, can 825,2 and CCEO, can 655,1). It sees ecumenical cooperation in this field as a valuable form of common service and common witness in the Church and to the world.

184. The Catholic Church is involved in this cooperation in many ways and at different levels. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity was involved in the setting up, in 1969, of the **World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate** (now **Catholic Biblical Federation**), as an international Catholic organization of a public character to further the pastoral implementation of *Dei Verbum*, Chapter VI. In accordance with this objective, whenever local circumstances allow, collaboration at the level of local Churches as well as at regional level, between the ecumenical officer and the local sections of the Federation should be strongly encouraged.

185. Through the **General Secretariat of the Catholic Biblical Federation**, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity maintains and develops relations with the United Bible Societies, an international Christian organization which has published jointly with the Secretariat *Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible* (New revised edition 1987 of the first 1968 version). This document sets out the principles, methods and concrete orientations of this special type of collaboration in the biblical field. This collaboration has already yielded good results. Similar contacts and cooperation between institutions devoted to the publication and use of the Bible are encouraged on all levels of the life of the Church. They can help cooperation between

the Churches and ecclesial communities in missionary work, catechetics and religious education, as well as in common prayer and study. They can often result in the joint production of a Bible that may be used by several Churches and ecclesial communities in a given cultural area, or for specific purposes such as study or liturgical life (In accordance with the norms laid down in the Decree of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *Ecclesiae Pastorum de Ecclesiae pastorum vigilantia circa Libros*, 19 March 1975). Cooperation of this kind can be an antidote to the use of the Bible in a fundamentalist way or for sectarian purposes.

186. Catholics can share the study of the Scriptures with members of other Churches and ecclesial communities in many different ways and on many different levels. This sharing goes from the kind of work that can be done in neighborhood or parochial groups to that of scholarly research among professional exegetes. In order to have ecumenical value, at whatever level it is done, this work needs to be grounded on faith and to nourish faith. It will often bring home to the participants how the doctrinal positions of different Churches and ecclesial communities, and differences in their approaches to the use and exegesis of the Bible, lead to different interpretations of particular passages. It is helpful for Catholics when the editions of the Scriptures that they use actually draw attention to passages in which the doctrine of the Church is at issue. They will want to face up to any difficulties and disagreements that come from the ecumenical use of the Scriptures with an understanding of and a loyalty to the teaching of the Church. But this need not prevent them from recognizing how much they are at one with other Christians in the interpretation of the Scriptures. They will come to appreciate the light that the experience and traditions of the different Churches can throw on parts of the Scriptures that are especially significant for them. They will become more open to the possibility of finding new starting points in the Scriptures themselves for discussion about controversial issues. They will be challenged to discover the meaning of God's Word in relation to contemporary human situations that they share with their fellow Christians. Moreover, they will experience with joy the unifying power of God's Word.

Translating the Bible

A Difficult Task:

One example: Mon-Khmer

Bible translators are often confronted with a series of problems. Translation work can be somewhat difficult within the same culture context, just imagine how difficult it is to express biblical concepts in a language from a totally different culture. The linguistic possibilities of expression are insufficient and may give rise to misun-

derstandings. For example, how can one speak about forgiveness in a culture where the concept of forgiveness is unknown? Fr. François Ponchaud was the motivating force to complete a New Testament translation in the Mon-Khmer language. Here he shares some difficulties the translating team encountered. Other translators will be able to relate with the challenges and even those not involved in translation work will be able to appreciate and see how important it is to support (even financially) this thankless-difficult task in order that "easy access to Sacred Scripture be provided for all the Christian faithful" as recommended by the Second Vatican Council.

It appears to be a challenge to translate the Word of God, written within a Judeo-Greek cultural context, in a way which can be understood without too many misinterpretations by readers imbued with Asian-Buddhist culture. Since 1923, a team of American Protestant missionaries has been working on a translation of the New Testament into Mon-Khmer language. Now, the challenge has been taken by a small team of Catholics, and the new translation is scheduled to be published in the spring of 1993.

The first difficulty is a considerable one: How to refer to God? In the course of history, the Khmer people have known several religious expressions which have superposed as geologic strata. Consequent to the original peasant animism in the country, protector spirits have superposed brahmanism with a multitude of deities. Since the 13th century, the ancient Buddhism, that is of a stricter observance, has emerged by reinterpreting and socializing the various religious forms of the past.

When the Good News of Jesus Christ is announced to an enlightened Buddhist, we discover that for him "religion" is a "moral teaching" and holds no relationship with a superior being. Buddha is but a master who led the way. So, in Mon-Khmer there is not one word that describes a one and only God, the origin of all life with whom man can deal in a personal relationship. Believing in the existence of a superior being is granted to the ignorance of popular credulity inherited from animism and brahmanism.

Common Cambodian cosmology, even among the people, is inspired from brahmanism and consists of two large spheres: the *world* and the *world beyond*. The world is made up of three levels: the *lower* where the spirits and demons dwell, the *middle* where both human and animal life dwell, and the *upper* or the *heaven* (sthan suor) where the deities live among whom is Brahma "creator of the worlds". Beings living in these three worlds *transmigrate* at the end of their life from one to the other according to their acquired merits, until they are absolutely purified from any *attachment*. As to say, the world beyond is *Nirvana*, the extinction of any attachment. Before escaping from the "world" to the "world beyond", to become awakened, the Buddha, Gautama Siddharta, knew five hundred purifying existences.

In this context where is God to be placed? How is he to be called? Formerly, the Catholic missionaries, present in Cambodia since 1555, referred to God as the Chinese referred to him: *illustrious Master of the heaven*; however, in that context, it was like placing God in the changing world of transigrations. God was made to be very much inferior to Buddha and prone to passions! Were the American Protestant missionaries conscious of the difficulty? It is not sure, for most of their vocabulary, inspired by that of Catholics, was altered a little bit. They referred to God as the *illustrious*, (*Preah*, from the same root as the Latin word *vir*) a name the common people use to speak of Buddha.

To take it one step further, God remained in the heaven of impermanence. Another attempt, recorded in the dictionary, defines God as the *illustrious First One of the deities*; but, by this definition, Khmer people refer to God

as an often wrathful deity. Thus, our team chose a middle of the road approach: *the illustrious who is Master* with no further qualification. The phrase is precise enough to give the idea that God is someone powerful and different from men, but the phrase is sufficiently vague to make it impossible for the people to situate God in the impermanent world. In the beginning, to designate **heaven**, we left the original word, used during that time, denoting the upper level of the world and the dwelling place of the deities; however, that term plunged God back into impermanence and did not correspond to the ultimate destiny Khmer people are longing for. We then chose a more neutral expression: *the place of beyond the bliss*. This term is precise enough to clarify that heaven is a place of infinite beatitude which cannot fall into a Cambodian categorization.

Whichever word is to be chosen, fortunately, the reality remains a scandalous one for a Khmer: how can this *illustrious who is Master* in his *place of beyond the bliss* bind himself through love to mankind to the point of becoming a man? Buddha is called the Compassionate: he *shares compassion* and leads the way; but, he bears no relation with humankind except through his teaching. To say that God **loves** is to say he *binds himself* to so for one who has a Buddhist mentality, God is not perfect, he needs the other. The term *compassion* may have been used to refer to the agape of God. Some have tried to use the same term in the past but we preferred to use the word "bind" to retain the extraordinary nature of God's love for humankind. God "committed" himself to humankind unto death. In the Bible, doesn't God venture to speak in a human language?

Similarly, how can we say **holy** to qualify God? The problem is not a specific one of Mon-Khmer. The earlier translation used the word "pure", following well the Buddhist moralizing line but giving up an important semantic content. After several attempts and even deep tensions, once more the team chose a middle of the road approach: *unadulterated*, a word which has slightly similar assonance as *pure* as well as *exceptional* in Mon-Khmer. An imperfect solution but in the absence of a more precise vocabulary, we chose the best.

The fact remains that the problem is primarily about the **level of language**. Mon-Khmer involves three levels: the religious one used by the monks that form the "illustrious community" and by those who go to them; the royal level used in court and for everything which concerns more or less the "illustrious person" of the king; the ordinary level used by the common people which are vastly divided into social classes and according to the formality of the persons speaking. Referring to God, only one level is presently possible: the royal language, heritage of Brahmanism and also Buddhism, since Buddha was a king.

On the other hand, with regard to Jesus, there is a real risk in using the royal language, Jesus is made to be a half-god and his incarnation is concealed. The Catholics feared this. If a common language is used, even if it is a higher level, doesn't the risk of concealing his divinity exist? The Protestants also feared this. Moreover, the Khmer people are offended when they hear a common

language of this higher level used for the "illustrious" Jesus so we had to choose another approach. When the narrator speaks of Jesus in the Gospels, a royal vocabulary is used, for the narrator wants to express the post-paschal faith in Jesus Christ, the King. On the other hand, when people address Jesus or when Jesus talks to the people, an ordinary-common language is generally used; however, it is difficult to precisely distinguish which language is to be used: when the Father's voice is heard at the baptism; when John asserts, "Behold the Lamb of God". We chose the royal vocabulary although with a lot of hesitation for it conceals too much of Jesus' humanity. When the text is revised, it's possible that the ordinary-common language will be used even if "this crucified man" shocks or especially offends. Hasn't God made him both "Lord and Christ"? Why shall we mitigate such a scandalous contradiction for anybody?

If the representation of the world by Khmer people is a source of problems, then Buddhist anthropology is equally such. For an enlightened Buddhist, strictly speaking, a human being does not exist, he is only an illusion. A human being is just a beam of vital energies which are united to form an impermanent transitory being without a real subject. During existence, this being loads his vital energies with "merits" and "demerits" according to good or bad deeds. After this existence, these vital energies will unite in another way to form another being whose existence will be more or less a good one according to the "karmic" load. That is to say the load by which merits should have affected the different energies. A lot of "aggregates" allow this transitory being to perceive sensations, thought, love, etc.

In this cultural context, how can one speak of life, everlasting life, resurrection without the fear to recall reincarnation? How can one speak of the soul, of the Spirit of the body and of the flesh with any chance of being understood? How can one speak of sin without risking a confusion with demerit?

Regarding **resurrection**, we again used a word from an earlier translation meaning *life a new* being well aware

that the word resurrection is nothing but a privileged form to talk of the Paschal Mystery. Formerly, some Catholics had this word, "life a new", preceded by another, indicating that Jesus "reached the term of his purification"; however, we did not use this expression in order to avoid any confusion with Buddhism, but it could be inspiration for us to give a concrete expression someday. We paid attention when translating the birth of Jesus to avoid high level words commonly used by the Khmer people but connote the idea of reincarnation. For **everlasting life**, we again used a term commonly used but which raised difficulties for the Khmer people, *the life-all-the-era-forever*. Although, Buddhism divides time into eras of five thousand years, we chose this translation because the term corresponds rather well to the Greek original. It is the very idea of time which endures beyond the "eras" which luckily leads to further inquiry, especially since for a Buddhist life is bad, only a deceptive appearance, and transitory.

As for **soul**, we often translated it using *life* which is the meaning of the Greek original. Sometimes, when it is impossible to use the term *life* and when there is not a risk of confusion, we use the term *vital energy*, used generally by the churches before; however, few Christians know the exact meaning of the term. For **spirit**, we again used a term, for lack of a better one, used by the different churches before and refers to the aggregation of the senses which allow us to touch, taste, see, feel, hear, and move. Of course, our meaning is by far not the breath of life, but the term permits us to clarify that the Spirit gives taste to life, and sight, feeling and action for a new way. When spirit refers to thought or power of reflexion, then it is a notion of the term "heart minded" which corresponds best like "heart felt" which expresses the deep affection for another human being.

But surely, it is the translation of the word **sin** that causes the most difficulties. Provided that in Buddhist tradition, many words are found to speak of transgression, misdeed, fall but there is not one word that means to breach covenant with God. We chose a traditional Buddhist

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word used by the churches and means *burden, demerit* or the result of a misdeed. *Burden* affects the vital energies of those who act badly and sustains the cycle of the reincarnations. *Demerit* for a Buddhist, can be a result of almost anything: to be greeted by an elder, to kill an animal, to speak ill of others, not to fulfill rites in their entirety, etc. To acquire demerit is often something mechanical and does not involve one's will, and nobody can "take away" the demerit of another. To say that Jesus "takes away the sin of the world" is often mechanically interpreted, a way which does not require faith, and is open to a popular laughing stock.

What can we do? Demerit is used too much to be ignored but it bears a semantic connotation which surely generates confusion. The way in which the Christians use it is the only way the word will progressively fill with the intended meaning. Undoubtedly, this will need time. Regarding **forgiveness**, a nonexistent idea in Khmer culture, we chose a rather long but explicit term meaning *to take-away-anger-to escape-from-demerit*; thus, we think the connection between the notion of a personal relationship with God and the notion of demerit is made.

Another difficulty we were faced with is whether or not Buddhist words should be used. The Catholics were moderately in favor of it and the American Protestants were utterly opposed to it, for they feared a confusion that may lead to syncretism. For example, the word meaning "law" in Mon-Khmer also means world order and Buddha's wisdom and teaching. This word is one of a great many of abstract religious terms, for it seems quite appropriate to refer to the Pentateuch as a revelation of God and a set of religious regulations. We found it agreeable to use a term meaning "law room" for synagogue or "master-of the law" for the Scribe; but, for irenic reasons, we chose a somewhat incorrect term meaning "commandment" for law, "meeting room" for the synagogue, and "day off" for the Sabbath, disposing in fact any religious reference concerning the two latter words.

Additionally, there is not one generic term that refers to **prayer** in Mon-Khmer. For a Buddhist, prayer is reciting the law or listening quietly to the recital of it. For the deeply religious person, the different stages of meditation and concentration allow a progressive purification, permitting one to enter into illumination. Attempts were made to use Buddhist terms to refer to prayer, but all were made in vain.

Formerly, Catholics used a term meaning *to recite the law* which to some meant practice. This meaning was, to put it mildly, truly incorrect. The American Protestants used a word meaning *concentration* in an unambiguous way. We chose to search for more than a generic word and preferred to translate the different words expressing prayer according to the evoked attitude i.e. *to ask for, to implore, to concentrate, to praise*, etc.

The last difficulty is due to the concrete nature and simplicity of Mon-Khmer. This language has neither pronouns, tense, gender, nor plural, and it is sometimes difficult to convey all the subtleties of the Greek language. How do you translate "consciousness", "nature", "divinity"? We often used paraphrases. For the meaning of consciousness, we used a new Mon-Khmer word familiar to well read persons but not to the common people. Through the context, the common people will understand.

Undertaking a translation of the New Testament is exciting work and has allowed the team to get to know and appreciate each other better; but, above all, the work is an act of faith. May the Holy Spirit who inspired the sacred writers, inspire the readers. May he turn their hearts towards "the obedience of the faith", to the Lord Jesus Christ who came to "gather together in one all things under a same head". To him be glory and praise through all people of the earth, now and forever.

François Ponchaud
Aranyaprathet, November 27, 1992

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