

“*Biblica animatio totius actionis pastoralis*”
Origins and Perspectives

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Dear Friends of the Catholic Biblical Federation.

Thank you sincerely for the invitation to speak with you this morning during this international Biblical Pastoral Congress devoted to “The Bible and Life: the Biblical Inspiration of the Entire Pastoral Life and Mission of the Church (VD 73)”. I have been asked to develop some reflections concerning the origins and perspectives of the vision of Biblical Pastoral ministry which is encompassed by the Latin expression found in *Verbum Domini* n° 73: *Biblica animatio totius actionis pastoralis*, and which to one extent or another stands behind the subtitle of this congress. If I accept this challenge then it is as a direct and indirect witness of the continuing efforts within the CBF to seek, experience, reflect upon and evaluate ways of reading the Scriptures with concrete men and women in today’s world in the hope that God’s Word might become a source of life for them. It is in this perspective that I have been involved actively in various capacities in the work of the CBF since 1991 and, to a certain extent, have been a sort of “mid-wife” in the development of the vision of biblical pastoral ministry that the expression “*animatio biblica totius actionis pastoralis*” attempts to capture.

I. “Biblica animatio totius actionis pastoralis” : a key expression in Verbum Domini

a. *Verbum Domini* 73 invites us to intensify the Biblical apostolate or Biblical pastoral ministry, not as one pastoral department or concern among others, but as the *animatio biblica totius actionis pastoralis*, the Biblical inspiration of all pastoral activity. Here the term “inspiration” is to be understood not some much as providing a model to be repeated but rather in the etymological sense of the word, of giving breath and life to something, giving it a soul [anima], making it capable of movement and activity)¹. Pope Benedict expresses this concern already at the very beginning of this document when he speaks of his profound desire for the “rediscovery of God’s Word in the life of the Church as a wellspring of constant renewal” and his “hope that the word will be ever more fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity” (*magis magisque cor fiat omnis ecclesialis operae*) (VD 1). In this regard, the document speaks of the personal encounter with Christ who communicates himself in the word; it speaks of the necessity of helping the faithful “to know the Bible in accordance with the Church’s faith and based upon her living tradition” and of the necessary preparation of clergy and laity in this regard, particularly in light of the growing influence of sectarian movements. The document also proposes to contribute to the development of small communities, “which can help to promote formation, prayer and knowledge of the Bible in accordance with the Church’s faith”.

The two-fold repetition of the expression “in accordance with the Church’s faith” (*secundum fidem Ecclesiae*) points to a certain “malaise” with the Christian community that goes beyond the mere question of the “sectarian” interpretation of the Bible. *Verbum Domini* 45 speaks more generally of a necessary dialogue and even bond between pastors, theologians and exegetes. Who is responsible for the “authentic” interpretation of the Scriptures: pastors and more specifically the magisterium, theologians or exegete?

¹ Pope Leo XIII speaks of the use of the Divine Scriptures theology as its “soul” *Providentissimus Deus* (1893) [par. 16]: *Illud autem maxime optabile est et necessarium, ut eiusdem divinae Scripturae usus in universam theologiae influat disciplinam ei usque prope sit anima.*

To which extent are small Christian communities responsible for their reading, understanding and living of the Scriptures?

b. The problem is not new and is still perceptible more than 50 years after the promulgation of Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* in 1965. In this document, and particularly in chapter 6 on "Holy Scripture in the Life of the Church", the Council Fathers elaborated a vision for the renewed presence of the Bible as nourishment for the life of the faithful. In the 1985 synthesis of the Bishops synod for the "Celebration, verification and promotion of the Second Vatican Council", Cardinal Danneels characterized this problem in a rather peculiar manner, at least in the French text, when he wrote that *Dei Verbum* had been "perhaps neglected, a little too much", even if Paul VI had renewed the appeal in *Evangelii nuntiandi*. Cardinal Danneels insisted:

In particular, the exegesis of the original meaning of Sacred Scripture, most highly recommended by the Council (cf. DV 12), cannot be separated from the living tradition of the Church (cf. DV 10).

The false opposition between doctrinal and pastoral responsibilities must be avoided and overcome. In fact, the true intent of pastoral work consists in actualizing and making concrete the truth of salvation, which is in itself valid for all times. As true pastors, the bishops must point out the right way to the flock, strengthen the faith of the flock, keep dangers away from it.

c. To which extent can the vision of "biblica animatio totius actionis pastoralis" help the Catholic Church to transcend the sometimes conflicting hermeneutical positions and responsibilities for the interpretation of the Scriptures that take diverse forms in the mission of pastors, of theologians, of biblical scholars and of concrete Christian communities and allow the Bible to become not only the soul of theology but the heart and soul of the entire pastoral life and mission of the Church? In my reflections I shall attempt to trace the origins, the development and the reception of this key expression of *Verbum Domini*, before proposing a formulation of the principal options of this vision of Biblical pastoral ministry and advancing some accents concerning Biblical spirituality, which might help the Scriptures to progressively take root in our Christian communities and in all the pastoral life and mission of the Church.

d. Before taking up this ambitious project in the 45 minutes with which I have been allotted, it is necessary to point out some translation issues that render our reflections complicated. The title of VD 73 in English "Letting the Bible inspire Pastoral Activity" renders the Latin: "Biblica animatio actionis pastoralis", while the phrase "letting the Bible inspire all pastoral work" translates the Latin "animatio biblica totius actionis pastoralis" (in French: *l'animation biblique de toute la pastorale*, in Spanish: *animación bíblica de toda la pastoral*, in Italian: *animazione biblica dell'intera pastorale*, in German: *die Bibel ... als Seele der ganzen Pastoral*, in Swiss German: *die biblische Beseelung der gesamten Pastoral*²).

First of all, in English and Latin the term pastoral (pastoralis) is an adjective and not a noun, and thus requires that a noun be added to the expression: in Latin "actio pastoralis", in English "pastoral activity" or "pastoral work". In Italian, Spanish and French and German ..., the term "pastorale" in Italian, "pastoral" in Spanish or "pastorale" in French and "Pastoral" in German, may be employed as a noun, thus more encompassing than activity or work or ministry ... Secondly, the noun "animatio" may be used in the

² Dieter Bauer and Peter Zürn, "Für eine biblische Beseelung der gesamten Pastoral", Schweizerische Kirchenzeitung 40/41 (2009), 685-688 and <http://www.bibelwerk.ch/upload/20091127104705.pdf>.

Latin languages: “animation” in French, “animación” in Spanish, “animazione” in Italian. In English, however, the term “animation” refers to cartoons, dessins animés, ... ; in German “Animation” is used for organized activities for vacation groups and for converting individual images into “Zeichentrickfilms”. This explains the various difficulties in translating “animatio biblica totius actionis pastoralis” into other languages and subsequently the identification of the expression as a key vision for Biblical pastoral ministry or not. It is well known: somethings are lost in translation, while others are gained, specified perhaps more than necessary. In any event, whether we like it or not: “traduttore traditore”.

2. The origins, development and diffusion of the expression

a. Proposition 30 of the Bishops’ Synod (2008)

The direct source of the expression translated into Latin as “*Biblica animatio totius actionis pastoralis*” (VD 73) is certainly to be found in proposition 30 elaborated during the Synod of Bishops on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church (2008), following up on the intervention of archbishop Raymundo Damaceno Assis, archbishop of Aparecida and president of the Confederation of Latin American Bishops Conferences (CELAM) at the time:

Proposition 30

Biblical pastoral ministry

“*Dei Verbum*” exhorts that the Word of God not only be made the soul of theology but also the soul of the whole of pastoral care, of life and of the mission of the Church (cf. “*Dei Verbum*,” 24). Bishops must be the first promoters of this dynamic in their dioceses. To be a herald and a credible herald, the bishop must first nourish himself with the Word of God, so that he can sustain and make ever more fruitful his own episcopal ministry. The synod recommends increasing “biblical pastoral ministry” not in juxtaposition to other forms of pastoral care but as biblical animation of the whole of pastoral care.

Under the guidance of pastors, all the baptized participate in the mission of the Church. The synodal fathers wish to express their most profound esteem and gratitude, as well as to encourage the service of evangelization that so many lay people, especially women, offer with generosity and commitment in communities spread throughout the world, following the example of Mary Magdalene, first witness of paschal joy.

Pastorale biblica

La *Dei Verbum* esorta a fare della Parola di Dio non solo l’anima della teologia, ma anche l’anima dell’intera pastorale, della vita e della missione della Chiesa (cf. DV 24). I Vescovi devono essere i primi promotori di questa dinamica nelle loro diocesi. Per essere annunciatore e annunciatore credibile, il vescovo deve nutrirsi, lui per primo, della Parola di Dio cos da sostenere e rendere sempre più fecondo il proprio ministero episcopale. Il Sinodo raccomanda di incrementare la “pastorale biblica” non in giustapposizione con altre forme della pastorale, ma come animazione biblica dell’intera pastorale.

Sotto la guida dei Pastori tutti i battezzati partecipano alla missione della Chiesa. I Padri sinodali desiderano esprimere la più viva stima e gratitudine nonché l’incoraggiamento per il servizio all’evangelizzazione che tanti laici, e in particolare le donne, offrono con generosità e impegno nelle comunità sparse per il mondo, sull’esempio di Maria di Magdala prima testimone della gioia pasquale.

b. 5th General Conference of CELAM, Aparecida (2007): Final Document 247-248

This proposition reflected the option adopted in the final document of the 5th General Conference of CELAM, held in Aparecida, synthesizing as it were the experience of the Latin American Church over decades:

247. We encounter Jesus in Sacred Scripture read in the church. Sacred scripture, “Word of God written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit,” is, along with tradition, source of life for the Church and soul of its evangelizing action. To be ignorant of scripture is to be ignorant of Jesus Christ and to fail to proclaim him. Hence Benedict XVI’s invitation:

*At the beginning of this new phase that the missionary Church of Latin America and the Caribbean is preparing to enter, starting with this Fifth General Conference in Aparecida, an indispensable pre-condition is the profound knowledge of the word of God. To achieve this, we must train people to read and meditate on the word of God: this must become their staple diet, so that, through their own experience, the faithful will see that the words of Jesus are spirit and life (cf. Jn 6:63). Otherwise, how could they proclaim a message whose content and spirit they do not know thoroughly? We must build our missionary commitment and the whole of our lives on the rock of the word of God.*³

248. It thus becomes necessary to offer the Word of God to the faithful as a gift of the Father for the encounter with the living Jesus Christ, path of “authentic conversion and of renewed communion and solidarity”. This proposal will mediate the encounter with the Lord if the revealed Word contained in Scripture is presented as source of evangelization. Disciples of Jesus yearn to be nourished with the bread of the Word: they want to have access to proper interpretation of the biblical texts, to use them as mediation of dialogue with Jesus, and that they be the soul of evangelization itself and of proclamation of Jesus to all. **Hence, the importance of a “biblical pastoral ministry” [pastoral bíblica] understood as “the biblical inspiration of pastoral work” [animación bíblica de la pastoral], that serves as a school of interpretation or knowledge of the Word, of communion with Jesus, of prayer with the Word, and of inculturated evangelization or proclamation of the Word. This demands that bishops, priests, deacons, and lay ministers of the Word approach Sacred Scripture in a way that is not merely intellectual and instrumental, but with a heart “hungry to hear the Word of the Lord” (Am 8:11).**⁴

It is interesting to note how this commitment in the Aparecida document lead to the widespread renaming of centers or departments of “Pastoral bíblica” in Latin American Dioceses and Bishops’ conferences: progressively more and more centers received the name “Departamento/Comisión, etc. de Animación bíblica de la pastoral”⁵. A first use of this designation for an institutional preoccupation is mentioned in an article published in 1995 by Fr. Fausto Franco, summarizing and uniting previous articles by Rosana Pulga and Marcelino Ramos, with the editorial title “*Animación bíblica de la pastoral en Brasil: ‘Servicio de Animación bíblica-SAB’ y ‘Centro Ecueménico de Estudios bíblicos-CEBI’*”⁶. The existence of the *Serviço Animação Bíblica (SAB)* dates back to 1987, if my information is correct. The mission of this “pastoral” institution is to promote the dynamic and liberating reading of the

³ 247. Encontramos a Jesús en la Sagrada Escritura, leída en la Iglesia. La Sagrada Escritura, “Palabra de Dios escrita por inspiración del Espíritu Santo”¹⁴⁰, es, con la Tradición, fuente de vida para la Iglesia y alma de su acción evangelizadora. Desconocer la Escritura es desconocer a Jesucristo y renunciar a anunciarlo. De aquí la invitación de Benedicto XVI: *Al iniciar la nueva etapa que la Iglesia misionera de América Latina y El Caribe se dispone a emprender, a partir de esta V Conferencia General en Aparecida, es condición indispensable el conocimiento profundo y vivencial de la Palabra de Dios. Por esto, hay que educar al pueblo en la lectura y la meditación de la Palabra: que ella se convierta en su alimento para que, por propia experiencia, vea que las palabras de Jesús son espíritu y vida (cf. Jn 6,63). De lo contrario, ¿cómo van a anunciar un mensaje cuyo contenido y espíritu no conocen a fondo? Hemos de fundamentar nuestro compromiso misionero y toda nuestra vida en la roca de la Palabra de Dios.*

⁴ 248. Se hace, pues, necesario proponer a los fieles la Palabra de Dios como don del Padre para el encuentro con Jesucristo vivo, camino de “auténtica conversión y de renovada comunión y solidaridad”. Esta propuesta será mediación de encuentro con el Señor si se presenta la Palabra revelada, contenida en la Escritura, como fuente de evangelización. Los discípulos de Jesús anhelan nutrirse con el Pan de la Palabra: quieren acceder a la interpretación adecuada de los textos bíblicos, a emplearlos como mediación de diálogo con Jesucristo, y a que sean alma de la propia evangelización y del anuncio de Jesús a todos. Por esto, la importancia de una “pastoral bíblica”, entendida como animación bíblica de la pastoral, que sea escuela de interpretación o conocimiento de la Palabra, de comunión con Jesús y oración con la Palabra, y de evangelización inculturada o de proclamación de la Palabra. Esto exige, por parte de obispos, presbíteros, diáconos y ministros laicos de la Palabra, un acercamiento a la Sagrada Escritura que no sea sólo intelectual e instrumental, sino con un corazón “hambriento de oír la Palabra del Señor” (Am 8, 11).

⁵ Cf. la Comisión nacional de la Animación bíblica de la pastoral de la Conferencia episcopal de Chile ; Comisión de Animación bíblica de la pastoral de la Diócesis San José Diócesis de Mayo (Uruguay) ; Canarias, Plan diocesano de pastoral : « Nuestra parroquia acoge y anuncia la Palabra » : La animación bíblica de la pastoral ...

⁶ *Revista Misiones extranjeras*, No 145 (1995), 34-48.

Bible by the common people (“*promover una lectura popular, dinámica y libertadora de la Biblia*”), in the line of the methodological and hermeneutical options of the “mother” institution, CEBI, founded by Father Carlos Mesters in 1978. His model of Bible sharing had been circulating in Europe since at least the early 1980’s, as the German publication, *Vom Leben zur Bibel, von der Bibel zum Leben* (1983)⁷, attests. His influence on the CBF, also in Europe, is not to be underestimated.

c. « *Les orientations de la pastorale biblique à la fin du 20^e siècle* »

The earliest official appearance of the expression that became “*biblica animatio totius actionis pastoralis*” is found in a document, written originally not in Latin but in French, in view of a symposium of the “Bible Bishops” of the *Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae* (*Conseil des Conférences épiscopales européennes*), held in Freising near Munich, from February 16-19, 1994. The document, entitled « *Les orientations de la pastorale biblique à la fin du 20^e siècle* », was elaborated within the Latin European subregion of the CBF precisely as a “position paper” in view of the above-mentioned symposium which was supported by Cardinal Martini, who had introduced us to his *Scuola de la Parola* during a CBF subregional meeting in Milan in 1991. At the same time, this reflection was strongly influenced by the discussions and the final document of the CBF Bogotá Plenary Assembly held in 1990. Fr. Carlos Mesters was the main redactor of this document, entitled, in English, “The Bible and the New Evangelization”. Clearly the experience and commitment of the biblical apostolate in Brazil were major sources of inspiration for this reflection, in particular of the dialogue between the Scriptures and concrete human life. A first draft of the Latin European position paper was elaborated on the basis of discussions within the subregion, notably during its Malta meeting in 1992, submitted to the members of the subregion for their reactions and reworked during a meeting in Luxembourg (February 7-10, 1993).

It was during this meeting or in its aftermath, at which Fr. Ludger Feldkämper svd, General Secretary of the CBF, Fr. Santiago Guijarro Oporto, Latin European Subregional Coordinator and I myself, as “*responsable*” of the *Service biblique diocésain* in Luxembourg, took part, that the notion of “*l’animation biblique de toute la pastorale*” was inserted into the text. Brother Marcel Durrer, ofm.cap., from French-speaking Switzerland, must receive credit for its first formulation. In his response to a survey on Biblical pastoral activity in the member countries of the CBF Latin European subregion, he named as one of the primordial necessities for the future of Biblical pastoral ministry “*parvenir à une animation biblique de toute la pastorale*”, in English “to arrive at the biblical inspiration of all pastoral ... work, activity, endeavors ...” which noun should we choose? For the record, his Fax was sent on Jan. 17, 1993 at 11.36 AM. The final document, of which I completed the redaction in mid-April 1993, was then translated into English, German and Spanish and published in the various language issues of the *Bulletin Dei Verbum*, No. 28,3 (1993), p. 4-8.13-17. Here is the original text, an extract of paragraph 1.2, entitled “ ‘*Pastorale biblique*’ ou ‘*animation biblique de la pastorale de l’Église*’ ”:

§ 1.2 "Biblical pastoral ministry" or "biblical animation of the Church's pastoral ministry?"

It is within this context that a discussion of "biblical apostolate" or "biblical pastoral ministry" might take place. Emphasis is placed first on efforts to make the Holy Scriptures better known - through the distribution of Bibles, and through the organization of courses or conferences on biblical subjects. In this regard, one may say that biblical pastoral ministry concerns one aspect of the Church's life, namely its founding texts. Biblical pastoral ministry, however, is not considered to be concerned with only one particular sec-

⁷ Carlos Mesters, *Vom Leben zur Bibel – von der Bibel zum Leben : Ein Bibelkurs aus Brasilien für uns.* – Mainz : Grünewald ; Munich : Kaiser, 1983. - 2 vols.

tor of the life of the Church; indeed, the reference to the biblical text and to its Good News must be the foundation of the entire pastoral and missionary activity of the Church.

Moreover, in its quality of witness to God's presence in the life of the faithful communities of the first and second covenant, the Bible is, with the living tradition of the Church, especially a word which is spoken to us today and not only a word which was spoken in the past. This word can help us to be healed and freed from the forces which enslave us, to read the signs of the times, and to find our way in this world.

In this regard, it might be better to speak of "biblical animation" of the entire pastoral and missionary activity of the Church. We must assure that the biblical message in its full depth is one of the fundamental references in our search for the Word of God for our Christian community and for our contemporary world, or, in other words, that this message animates and inspires our Christian involvement in everything we attempt to live.

Biblical animation cannot be appeasing [content] with the repetition of biblical history and biblical stories, nor with the propagation of a biblical language; it must enable God's word to come into contact with the men and women of our time, with their joys and pains, with their hopes and sadness. Within this vision of biblical pastoral ministry, it is clear that Christian communities cannot be simple "consumers" of the Word prepared and served by a group of experts; on the contrary, these communities, in communion with the universal Church, bear the primary responsibility for the hearing of the Word and for its contact with the concrete life of the world today, in all of its complexity. It is only in this confrontation between biblical message and real life that the Word of God can rise up in and for our world.

§ 1.2 « Pastorale biblique » ou « animation biblique de la pastorale de l'Église » ?

C'est dans ce contexte global qu'il faut situer « l'apostolat biblique » ou « la pastorale biblique ». D'abord, l'activité pastorale ou missionnaire consistait à mieux faire connaître l'Écriture sainte et son message par la distribution de Bibles ou par l'organisation de cours ou de conférences sur des thèmes bibliques. Dans ce sens, on pouvait parler de la pastorale biblique comme concernant un aspect particulier de la vie de l'Église, à savoir ses textes fondateurs.

Pourtant, la pastorale biblique n'est pas à considérer comme couvrant uniquement un secteur particulier de l'Église, puisque la référence au texte biblique et à sa Bonne Nouvelle devrait sous-tendre l'ensemble de la pastorale et de la mission de l'Église. Plus encore, en tant que témoin de la présence de Dieu dans la vie des communautés de la première et de la seconde alliance, la Bible est, avec la Tradition vivante de l'Église, une des références principales de la vie chrétienne, non seulement comme « parole » du passé, mais aussi et surtout comme parole qui nous est adressée dans notre temps. Elle peut encore aujourd'hui nous aider à guérir, à nous libérer des servitudes qui nous accablent, à lire les « signes du temps » et à trouver notre voie dans ce monde.

À cet égard, il vaudrait peut-être mieux parler de « l'animation biblique » de l'ensemble de la pastorale et de la mission de l'Église. Il s'agit de veiller à ce que le message biblique dans toute sa profondeur soit une des références fondamentales dans la recherche de la Parole de Dieu pour la communauté chrétienne et pour le monde contemporain ou, en d'autres termes, à ce qu'il anime ou inspire notre engagement de chrétiens dans tout ce que nous essayons de vivre.

L'animation biblique ne peut donc se contenter de répéter l'histoire ou des histoires bibliques ou de propager un langage biblique; elle doit permettre à cette parole venue de Dieu d'entrer en contact avec les hommes et les femmes de notre temps, avec leurs joies et leurs peines, leur espoir et leur tristesse. Dans cette vision de la pastorale biblique, il est évident que les communautés chrétiennes ne peuvent pas être de simples « consommateurs » de la Parole qui leur serait servie par quelques experts ; au contraire, ce sont ces communautés qui, en communion avec l'Église universelle, portent en premier lieu la responsabilité de l'écoute de la Parole et de sa mise en contact avec la vie concrète d'aujourd'hui, dans toute sa complexité. Ce n'est que dans cette confrontation entre la Parole biblique et la vie réelle que peut surgir la Parole de Dieu pour notre monde.

This document was presented to the CBF Executive Committee during its meeting in Nemi, 15-21 June 1993. It was discussed, in particular, in the enlarged sub-regional meeting in Toulouse (1-3 October 1993); the vision of the "animation biblique de toute la pastorale" was the object of reflection, as the contribution of the sociologist Jean Joncheray indicated.

d. European Bible Bishops Meeting in Freising, near Munich, 16-19 February 1994

This document and this fundamental option, which was translated in English as the "biblical animation" of the entire pastoral and missionary activity of the Church, was received into the final document of the Bishops' symposium in Freising, the original of which was in German.

The address reads: “An alle Bischofskonferenzen und Bischöfe, an alle, die in der biblischen Animation der Verantwortung tragen” (“To all Bishops Conferences and Bishops, To all who have responsibility for the pastoral application of Scripture”). Paragraph 4 (“Die Verwurzelung allen pastoralen Handelns in der Botschaft der Hl. Schrift”) repeats the fundamental option, though without the specific expression:

“uns ist neu bewußt geworden, “daß jede kirchliche Verkündigung und die christliche Religion selbst sich von der heiligen Schrift nähren und an ihr orientieren” muß (DV 21).

...

4.2 Die “Bibelpastoral” soll aber nicht ein Spezialgebiet neben anderen sein, sondern dazu führen, daß die gesamte pastorale Planung und Praxis in der biblischen Botschaft verwurzelt ist. Dazu muß auf allen Ebenen, angefangen von den Laien in den Ortskirchen bis hin zu den Kirchenleitungen, immer wieder geprüft werden, ob unsere pastoralen Aktivitäten sich am Evangelium orientieren.”⁸

English translation

4. The need for all pastoral activity to be inspired by the Word of God.

We noted again how, „Like the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and ruled by Sacred Scripture” (DV 21).

...

4.2 The biblical apostolate should not be simply one particular activity alongside other pastoral activities. Rather, it ought to promote a situation where all pastoral strategy and praxis is drawing its inspiration and values from the Word of God. To this end, there is an ongoing need to assess pastoral planning and activity at all levels of the Church's life to see whether or not it is rooted in the values of the gospel.

e. La Bibbia della vita della Chiesa: Nota pastorale, Commissione episcopale per la dottrina della fede e la catechesis della CEI (1996)

The Italian Bishops' Conference, member of the CBF since 1988, was one of the first Bishops' conferences to publish a pastoral document on the Word of God in the life of the Church. Number 7 of this document, published in 1996, echoes the terminology of this expression:

Ma è soprattutto con il Concilio Vaticano II che le nostre comunità ecclesiali sono state spinte a riscoprire decisamente la centralità dell'incontro comunitario e personale con la sacra Scrittura per la loro vita e per la loro missione. La Bibbia è così divenuta elemento determinante del rinnovamento della catechesi e della liturgia; fonda e anima il progetto pastorale della Chiesa italiana, espresso nei diversi documenti programmatici, fino all'ultimo Evangelizzazione e testimonianza della carità (1991); si trova all'origine e nel cuore della vita di associazioni, gruppi e movimenti ecclesiali contemporanei; ispira e sostiene il dialogo ecumenico.

Guidate provvidenzialmente dallo Spirito, le Chiese in Italia sono impegnate ad **animare con la parola della Bibbia tutta la loro azione pastorale**, in maniera sempre più consapevole, estesa e condivisa.

f. “La Biblia en la vida de la Iglesia” (Santiago Guijarro), Vida nueva, (1994) and Biblia y pastoral (Cesar Mora Paz) (1998)

The expression then began to make its way through the CBF network. A brief article in 1994 in the Catholic review *Vida nueva*, published by the *Propaganda Popular Católica (PPC)* (Madrid), written by Santiago Guijarro, informed the Spanish speaking world of the Bishops' Symposium in Freising and in particular of the options “*animación bíblica de toda la pastoral*” and “*Lectio divina*”, discussed during that meeting and adopted in its final statement⁹. This article was quoted in Cesar Mora Paz' book *Biblia y pastoral* (1998), the first

⁸ *Bulletin Dei Verbum*, No. 32/3 (1994) is devoted to the Bishops' Symposium in Freising. The final message, signed by Archbishop Henryk Muszynski and Bishop Wilhelm Egger, is found on p. 7-8 in the various language editions.

⁹ Santiago GUIJARRO OPORTO, “La Biblia en la vida de la Iglesia”, *Vida nueva*, 1994 (16 de abril 1994), 23-29.

more in-depth discussion of the option and an effort to further develop the concept within the context of a “pastoral de conjunto”, and this in an official CELAM document.¹⁰

g. CBF Plenary Assemblies in Hong Kong (1996) and Lebanon (2002)

The concept was shared officially with the delegates of the CBF Plenary Assembly held in Hong Kong (July 2-12, 1996) in the report of the activities and reflections of the Latin European subregion, submitted in writing by the outgoing coordinator, Santiago Guijarro, who was not physically present at the assembly.¹¹ Though the expression as such did not appear in the Hong Kong final statement, drafted by Sr. Maria Ko, it made its way into the final statement of the Lebanon Plenary Assembly in 2002. The drafting committee of this document, which I had the honor of chairing, specified a number of options for the reading of Scripture, essential to the work of the CBF. The CBF commits itself, in line with both Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* and the Pontifical Biblical Commission's *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993),

- to an attentive and respectful reading of the biblical text;
- to the recognition of the Bible as a pluralistic phenomenon, which must and may be read with the use of a plurality of methods and approaches;
- to reading the Bible and celebrating the Word in community;
- to reading Scripture in the life context;
- to proposing an "inculturated" reading of the Scriptures;
- to reading the Bible from the perspective of the poor and adopting an option for the poor;

¹⁰ Cesar MORA PAZ, *Biblia y pastoral: La Sagrada Escritura en la vida pastoral de la Iglesia* / presentación de Jorge E. Jiménez Carvajal, Secretario general CELAM. – Santafé de Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Consejo episcopal Latinoamericano, 1998.

Cf. the title of the first point of the introduction, “Necesidad de reflexión sobre el ser y quehacer de la animación bíblica de la pastoral” and of the second point, “La animación bíblica de la pastoral”, which quotes a first time the article of the review *Vida nueva*, written by Santiago Guijarro (n. 11). Mora Paz discusses Santiago's reflections at length in the same article (p. 31-33). He concludes by adopting himself the expression “animación bíblica de la pastoral”, before numerous other expressions (movimiento bíblico, pastoral bíblica, apostolado de la Biblia, apostolado bíblico, dimensión bíblica de la pastoral: “Nosotros, en la presente obra, preferimos llamarle, con Santiago Guijarro, ‘animación bíblica de la pastoral’, concibiendo ésta como un proceso de la Iglesia local, en torno al Obispo, de acuerdo a un plan. En esa animación estamos empeñados todos, para animar toda la vida eclesial y no deberá confundirse con la tarea de equipo promotor” (p. 33).

¹¹ *Parole de Dieu – Source de Vie : Cinquième Assemblée Plénière, Fédération biblique catholique, Hong Kong, 2-12 juillet 1996*, version française par R.-F. POSWICK, T. OSBORNE et J. STRICHER, *Bulletin Dei Verbum*. – Édition spéciale, p. 110-112 :

3. L'animation biblique de la pastorale

En 1992, nous nous sommes retrouvés à Malte. Les résultats de l'évaluation dont il vient d'être question, nous ont conduits à deux constatations importantes: 1) toutes les activités qui font appel à la Bible ne peuvent être, à proprement parler, qualifiées de bibliques; 2) il est nécessaire de passer d'une "pastorale biblique" à une "animation biblique de la pastorale de l'Église".

Cette dernière constatation supposait un changement de perspectives considérable dans la façon d'envisager notre travail. La prise de conscience de la place centrale de la Parole de Dieu dans la vie de l'Église était née d'une intuition fondamentale. Si la Parole de Dieu est la source et le sommet de la vie de l'Église, de sa proclamation de la Bonne Nouvelle, de ses célébrations, etc. ..., alors la lecture de la Bible ne peut être une activité de plus à côté des autres, mais elle doit être située au cœur de toutes les activités et de tous les aspects de sa vie.

Par conséquent, cela implique d'abandonner le modèle de la "pastorale biblique" comme secteur particulier de la pastorale et de passer à "l'animation biblique de l'ensemble de la pastorale", de telle sorte que la Bible puisse retrouver sa vraie place dans la vie de l'Église.

Dans ce contexte, nous sommes revenus sur la question de la lecture croyante de la Bible, des principes qui peuvent l'inspirer et des méthodes aptes à la guider. Tel serait le thème principal de nos futures rencontres.

- to cultivating the prayerful reading of Scripture.

The conclusion to this section of the Lebanon final document, of which Fr. Ludger Feldkämper was the redactor, reads as follows:

The mandate of the Catholic Biblical Federation is the biblical apostolate, the biblical pastoral ministry, the biblical “animation” of the pastoral life of the Church, providing the Church with spiritual nourishment, indeed with its very soul (*anima*). Its objective and mandate is “that the Word of God may become more and more the spiritual nourishment of the People of God, the source for them of a life of faith, of hope and love – and indeed a light for all humanity” (IBC, Introduction B). Its objective is “to make known the Bible as the Word of God and source of life” (IBC, IV.C.3).¹²

h. The VIth FEBIC-LAC Cono Sur Encounter in Santiago de Chile and La Palabra Hoy (2003-2004)

In the aftermath of the CBF Lebanon Plenary Assembly, the expression continued to resonate in the centers of *pastoral bíblica* in Latin America. Contributions of Jesús Antonio Weisensee, Santiago Silva Retamales and Angel Mario Caputo in *La Palabra hoy*, n. 110¹³ in 2003 characterized the VIth FEBIC LAC Cono Sur Encounter held in Santiago de Chile in September-October 2003, encounter which was devoted to the theme of “animación bíblica de la pastoral”. Pedro OSSANDÓN’s contribution, entitled “La Pastoral Orgánica y la Animación Bíblica de la Pastoral: Un diálogo creciente”, was published in 2004 in *La Palabra hoy* 111¹⁴. The vision expressed in these contributions centered on an “escuela de interpretación”, an “escuela de oración” and an “escuela de evangelización”. Jesús Weisensee, in his introductory remarks to this meeting, provided a more global vision of this paradigm: “La lectura de la Biblia a la luz de la propia vida y la interpretación de la propia vida a la luz de la Biblia es el presupuesto, para que la Sagrada Escritura se convierta en nutritiva Palabra de Dios, para que pueda apagar el hambre.” The dialogue between the Bible and human life is essential to what *La Palabra hoy* calls on the issue’s cover “la animación bíblica de las pastorales” and in the individual articles “la animación bíblica de la pastoral” and even “‘la animación bíblica’ de la pastoral” and “la animación bíblica de toda la pastoral”.

i. The International Congress on Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church (CBF), Rome 2005

A next milestone in this development was Cardinal Martini’s conference during the International Congress on Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of *Dei Verbum*, which the CBF organized in Rome, September 14-18, 2005: “Il ruolo centrale della Parola di Dio nella vita della Chiesa: L’Animazione biblica dell’esercizio pastorale”¹⁵. During the papal audience in Castelgandolfo at the conclusion of this congress, Pope Benedict announced the upcoming Bishops’ Synod dedicated to the Word of God in the

¹² “The Word of God: A Blessing for all Nations: Final Statement of the Sixth Plenary Assembly” [Lebanon, September 3-12, 2002], *Bulletin Dei Verbum* [English Edition] N° 64/65 (2002, 3-4), p. 9-16.

¹³ La périodique de FEBIC-LAC *La Palabra hoy* témoigne de la réflexion sur l’animation biblique de la pastorale à partir de 2003: vol. XXVIII, n° 110 (2003): Jesús Antonio Weisensee, “Replanteamiento de la Pastoral bíblica, p. 11-21; Santiago Silva Retamales, “Animación Bíblica de la pastoral: Identidad y misión”, p. 23-32; Angel Mario Caputo, “Animación Bíblica de la pastoral: La Palabra de Dios, escuela de evangelización”, p. 33-36, 69-90.

¹⁴ Pedro OSSANDÓN B., “La Pastoral Orgánica y la Animación Bíblica de la Pastoral: Un diálogo creciente”, VI Encuentro FEBIC LAC Conosur, 29 Septiembre al 3 de Octubre 2003 – (Santiago) Chile, published as well in *La Palabra hoy*, vol. XXIX, n° 111 (2004), p. 25-30.

¹⁵ Cardinal Martini’s conference was published in the various language editions of the *Bulletin Dei Verbum*, nos 76-77 (2005), p. 33-38, under the titles: “La place centrale de la Parole de Dieu dans la vie de l’Église : L’animation biblique de toute la pastorale”, “La Palabra de Dios en la Vida de la Iglesia : L’animación bíblica de toda la pastoral”, “The Central Role of the Word of God in the Life of the Church : Biblical Inspiration of the Entire Pastoral Ministry”, “Die Heilige Schrift im Leben der Kirche : Treibkraft der Pastoral”.

Life and the Mission of the Church. Further steps along the way, as we have already noted, were the Aparecida Conference of CELAM in 2007 and, of course, the Bishops' Synod (2008) and the subsequent Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (2010). In the wake of these major Church events, numerous publications on the subject appeared, not only in Latin America.¹⁶ An ever-growing bibliography on the subject has been made available on the CBF website¹⁷.

j. Continuing activities and continental and national congresses and scientific encounters

¹⁶ Enrique García AHUMADA, F.S.C., *La animación bíblica de nuestra pastoral*, Roma: Hermanos de las Escuelas Cristianas, 2007 (Cuadernos MEL ; 33); Enrique García AHUMADA, F.S.C., « Animation biblique de notre pastorale », traduction : Pierre MOURIER, Rome: Frères des Écoles chrétiennes, 2007 (Cahiers MEL; 33); *La Palabra hoy*, vol. XXXII, n° 126 (2007) porte le titre : « Animación Bíblica de la Pastoral en Aparecida » et comporte notamment l'article de Santiago Silva Retamales, « Animación Bíblica de la Pastoral del Pueblo de Dios : Identidad y misión », p. 77-101 ; José Miguel Gómez Rodríguez, « Reflexiones sobre la Animación Bíblica de la Pastoral », *La Palabra hoy*, vol. XXXIII, n° 127 (2008), 107-116 ; Santiago Silva Retamales, « La Palabra de Dios en los Caminos de la Iglesia : La animación bíblica de la pastoral del Pueblo de Dios », *La Palabra hoy*, vol. XXXIII, n° 127 (2008), 5-106 ; Anne FORTIN, De l'animation biblique de toute la pastorale », *Cahiers de spiritualité ignatienne* 125 (2009), 51-66, cf. also *Sémiotique et Bible*, n° 147 (2012), p. 4-18; Santiago SILVA RETAMALES, *La animación bíblica de la pastoral : Su identidad y misión*, Bogotá: CELAM : San Pablo, 2010 (Animación bíblica); Gabriel NARANJO SALAZAR, *De la pastoral bíblica a la animación bíblica de la pastoral*, Bogotá: CELAM : San Pablo, 2010 (Animación bíblica); Corrado PASTORE (ed.), « *Viva ed efficace è la Parola di Dio* » (Eb 4,12) : *Linee per l'animazione biblica della pastorale : Miscellanea in onore di don Cesare Bissoli*, Leumann : Elledici, 2010; Corrado PASTORE, «La Biblia en América Latina hoy. La pastoral bíblica y la animación bíblica de la pastoral», *ITER* 2010, 125-154 ; Alexander SCHWEITZER [and T. OSBORNE], «The Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* and the Catholic Biblical Federation», published in Italian: «L'Esortazione apostolica *Verbum Domini* e la Federazione Biblica Cattolica», *Ascoltare, rispondere, vivere: Atti del Congresso Internazionale "La Sacra Scrittura nella vita e nella missione della Chiesa" (1-4 dicembre 2010)*, a cura di Ernesto Borghi, Edizioni Terra Santa, 2011, p. 189-194; Florencio ABAJO NÚÑEZ, "La Pastoral bíblica: historia y perspectivas", conference February 8, 2011 (<http://sagradabibliacee.com/ponencias/141-florencio-abajo-nunez>); Jean-Louis DUCASSE, « 'Animation biblique de toute la pastorale' et avènement du corps promis », *Sémiotique et Bible*, N° 147, septembre 2012, p. 39-58; Javier VELASCO-ARIAS (ed.), *La Biblia compartida. Biblia y Pastoral* (Conocer la Biblia), Madrid: San Pablo, 2012; Victor Hugo PALMA PAÚL, « La Exhortación apostólica *Verbum Domini* y el Ministerio episcopal : Aplicaciones y perspectivas para la Animación bíblica de la Pastoral », *BDVdigital (edición española)*, 2012, n. 1, 14-23; Victor Hugo PALMA PAÚL, « L'Exhortation apostolique *Verbum Domini* et le ministère épiscopale : Applications et perspectives pour l'animation biblique de la pastorale », *BDVdigital (édition française)*, 2012, n. 1, 14-23 ; ,... *da schickte Gott einen Wurm ...* : *Modell zur biblischen Beseelung der Pastoral*. – Zürich : Schweizerisches Katholisches Bibelwerk. Bibelpastoralstelle, 2012 ; Thomas P. OSBORNE, « Animatio biblica totius actionis pastoralis » (VD n° 73). – « *Animatio biblica totius actionis pastoralis* » (*Verbum Domini* n° 73) : *Actes de la VIII^{ème} Assemblée plénière, Kachebere, Malawi, 17-23 septembre 2013* / Biblical Centre for Africa and Madagascar (BICAM). – Accra : BICAM Publications, 2014. – p. 79-85; Thomas P. OSBORNE, « *Biblica animatio totius actionis pastoralis* » : origin, meaning and perspectives opened by Pope Benedict XVI's *Verbum Domini* (73) and its implications for a renewed Biblical spirituality », paper presented at the 17th Interdisciplinary Theological Session 205 of the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa: «The Faculty of Theology at CUEA: 30 Years of Service to Church and Society (1984-2014) in the Light of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*», 25-27 February 2015. The present paper is a revised version of a conference presented at the Biblical Congress in Malawi, September 2013; Quique Fernández Manzano, «Escuela de animación bíblica: un proyecto de animación y renovación en la palabra», *Biblia y pastoral, Reseña bíblica*, N° 83 (2014), p. 23-32; Jan J. STEFANÓW, «Hermenéutica bíblica o inculturación del Evangelio», *Biblia y pastoral, Reseña bíblica*, N° 83 (2014), p. 41-49; François-Xavier Amherdt, *L'animation biblique de la pastorale: 120 propositions pratiques (Pédagogie pastorale, n. 12)*, *Namur: Lumen vitae*, 2017; *Iniciación Cristiana y Animación Bíblica de la Pastoral*, Medellín : Biblia, Teología y Pastoral para América Latina y El Caribe, vol. 42, n. 166, 2016. – In particular:
- Guillermo Acero Alvarín, «La animación bíblica de la iniciación a la vida Cristiana», p. 599-627,
- Gabriel Mestre, «El Papa Francisco, Evangelii Gaudium y la Animación Bíblica de la Pastoral : 'La libertad inferrable de la Palabra' (EG 22)», p. 629-646,

In 2012 the Catholic Biblical Federation forwarded a message to the Bishops Synod on the New Evangelization and the Transmission of the Christian Faith in this regard.¹⁸ The concerns reflected in this document were taken up in one way or another in Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*.¹⁹ Several continental and national meetings within the CBF family have been devoted to this theme: Latin America (Bogotá, Colombia, 2009), Brazil (Goiânia, 2011), BICAM Plenary Assembly (Malawi, 2013), Latin America (Quito, Ecuador, 2016).²⁰ In 2016, the CELAM Department of Vocations and Ministries and the CBF published *Orientaciones de Animación Bíblica de la Pastoral para América Latina y El Caribe*²¹; an English translation is also available with the title: "Guidelines for Biblical Inspiration of the entire Pastoral Life of the Church for Latin America and the Caribbean". Academic symposiums (Luxembourg, 2016 and 2017) and research activities in Rome, in Luxembourg, in Latin America, in Switzerland and in Quebec (Université Laval) have brought this vision of Biblical pastoral ministry and biblical pastoral ministry itself, as a *locus theologicus*, into the domain of academic theological reflection²². In recent years the Brazilian Church has further developed this vision of Biblical Pastoral ministry, "Animação Bíblica da Vida e da Pas-

- Patricio Merino Beas, "Escuela Bíblica al servicio de la Animación Bíblica de la Pastoral en América Latina y El Caribe", p. 669-695,

- "‘Vayan y hagan que todos los pueblos sean mis discípulos’ : Experiencias de animación bíblica en Chile", p. 735-746;

François-Xavier Amherdt (éd.), *L'animation biblique de la pastorale, Lumen Vitae* 2017/4:

- François-Xavier Amherdt "Un 'style' biblique et évangélique de la pastorale"

- Christophe Rimbault, "Laisser la Parole de Dieu faire son travail: un défi pour le lecteur des Écritures"

- Daniel Laliberté, Origine, perspectives et défi de la formule 'l'animation biblique de la pastorale'"

- Thomas P. Osborne, "‘L'animation biblique de toute la pastorale’: vision, option et défis en vue d'une pastorale biblique renouvelée"

- Yves Guérette, "La formation des intervenants en vue de l'animation biblique de toute la pastorale"

- Matteo Crimella, "Une Église à l'écoute de la Parole"

- Grazia Papola, "Selon l'Écriture"

- André Fossion et Jean-Paul Laurent, "Lire pour vivre"

- Catherine Chevalier, "‘Lire la Bible’: Un projet de lecture communautaire de la Parole, en Brabant Wallon"

- Christophe Salgat, "‘Mettre la Parole au centre’: l'expérience naissante d'une région de Suisse romande"

- Fidèle Mabundu, "La lecture populaire de la Bible, source de vie ecclésiale en Afrique".

¹⁷ <https://c-b-f.org/en/Materials/Biblical-Pastoral-Resources/BATAP-Bibliography>

¹⁸ Message of the Catholic Biblical Federation to the Synod of Bishops on "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith", [redaction by Thomas P. Osborne], *BDVdigital* (English Edition) 2012,4, p. 7-17. - Published also in French, German and Spanish.

¹⁹ *Evangelii gaudium*, 174-175 ; see also the reflections on the preparation of the homily, 145-155.

²⁰ I Encuentro Latinoamericano de Animación Bíblica de la Pastoral : "La Palabra de vida, fuente de discipulado y misión" (Bogotá, 2009); Gabriel Mestre, "En ti está la fuente de la vida" (Sal 36,10) : La animación bíblica de la pastoral en la Argentina, *Vida Pastoral*, N° 301, Nov. 2011; *Animação Bíblica da Pastoral*, Comissão Episcopal Pastoral para a Animação Bíblico-Catequética, Brasília, Edições CNBB, 2012, Acts of the I Congresso Brasileiro de Animação Bíblica da Pastoral (Goiânia, 8-11 October 2011) (cf., in particular, the contributions of Jacinto Bergmann, "A Animação Bíblica da Pastoral" and of Katiuska Cáceres Pavez, "Em que consiste a animação bíblica da Pastoral, como é possível organizá-la e implementá-la"; *The VIII BICAM Plenary Assembly, Kachebere, Malawi, 17-23 September 2013* in Malawi; II Encuentro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de responsables Animación Bíblica de la Pastoral (Quito, 2016).

²¹ *Orientaciones de Animación Bíblica de la Pastoral para América Latina y El Caribe*. – Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, Departamento de Vocaciones y Ministerios, 2016. This document is also available in an English translation: *Guidelines for the Biblical Inspiration of the Entire Pastoral Ministry of the Church for Latin America and Caribbean* (CBF Documents, 1), translation: María Díaz James, Sankt Ottilien: Catholic Biblical Federation, 2017.

²² Publications include: *Animatio biblica totius actionis pastoralis : Bible – Pastorale – Didactique = Bible - Pastoral - Didactics*. - [Bruxelles, etc.] : Peter Lang, April 2019. - (Dieux, Hommes, Religions).

toral”, and made it one of the major dimensions of its five year plan: 2015-2019²³.

3. Perspectives and Challenges in view of the “Biblical Inspiration of all pastoral ministry, of the entire life and mission of the Church”

a. The expression, originally in French, “animation biblique de toute la pastorale, de la vie et de la mission de l’Église”, which was received in *Verbum Domini* in Latin as “biblica animatio totius actionis pastoralis” and which has been translated into English as “Letting the Bible inspire all pastoral activity or work” or “the Biblical Inspiration of all pastoral activity”, has its origins in the experience of reading the Scriptures in groups of human beings of widely various origins and life contexts, in groups of “animation biblique” or in “Bible sharing groups”, as they were called in English.

The origin of the expression “animation biblique” may be traced back to the work and vision of the *Animation biblique oecuménique romande*, in French-speaking Switzerland. The 3rd edition of the “Boîte à outils pour l’animation biblique: Fiches méthodologiques pour l’animation de groupes bibliques” dates back to 1991, the second edition to 1988 and the first edition probably to 1987 and reflects a development which goes back to the early and mid 1970’s²⁴. The title and subtitle of the “Tools book”, to which I just referred, provides us with the link between “l’animation de groupes bibliques” and “l’animation biblique”. In the introduction of this pamphlet (3rd edition), we read: For several years now in French-speaking Switzerland, group leaders or facilitators (animatrices et animateurs) have organized Bible sharing groups making use of the approach called “animation biblique”. Biblical animation links a group dynamics approach (animation) and exegetical work. This approach makes use of techniques of group dynamics and various methods of engaging Biblical texts²⁵. The “animation biblique” approach comprises three fundamental stages: a “projective” moment, during which the participants express their individual understanding and reaction to the particular text; an “analytical approach”, during which the text is read and studied in its otherness, in search of its meaning for the first communities for whom the text was originally intended; a third moment of “appropriation”, during which the group is invited to experience the text and its message in a present and existential manner, opening oneself to the text as God’s word, challenging human beings today ...²⁶: Ecumenical groups, reading the Scriptures actively and interactively, making critical use of a variety of methods, functioning according to the rules of group dynamics that respect and take into account the processes of communication be-

²³ Cf. <https://pt.slideshare.net/josevieira68/diretrizes-da> ; <http://www.cnbb.org.br/animacao-biblica-da-vida-e-da-pastoral-sera-linha-norteadora-do-regional-em-2018/>

²⁴ According to Marcel Durrer, this approach was the result of an initiative taken by the Pastor Uli Ruegg who, together with some ministers and lay persons, had the idea of combining the reading of the Bible with active methods (painting, role plays, photolanguage, etc.) and the group dynamic methods popular at the time (“Gruppendynamik” in German, “animation de groupes” in French).

²⁵ “Depuis quelques années en Suisse romande, des animatrices et des animateurs ont proposé une lecture de la Bible en groupes dans une approche appelée ‘animation biblique’. L’animation biblique allie l’animation et le travail exégétique. Elle fait donc appel aux techniques d’animation de groupe et aux diverses méthodes de lecture des textes bibliques”.

²⁶ Elle procède par trois étapes successives: l’étape projective, qui permet au groupe d’exprimer sa propre compréhension du monde et du texte; l’étape analytique, qui lit et étudie le texte dans son altérité pour découvrir le sens qu’il avait pour la première communauté destinataire; l’étape d’appropriation, qui invite le groupe dans son ensemble à faire sien, de manière actuelle et existentielle, le message du texte, de se mettre à son écoute comme “parole de Dieu”, interpellant l’être humain aujourd’hui ...

tween human beings, with the help of one or more facilitators, assuming responsibility for their work on the Biblical text and its appropriation in their lives, as persons and as a community. In this process, the group members may give expression to their personal encounter with the Scriptures, not only intellectually and verbally, but also with the help of role-playing, creative arts, etc., thus allowing the entire human person (intellect, emotions, ...) to be animated by the word shared in community. Marcel Durrer presented an analysis of this approach to a Biblical pastoral project during the meeting of the Latin European Subregion that took place in Malta in 1992. Two significant phrases in his analysis specify that the project of “animation biblique” goes beyond the limits of a “groupe biblique” (a Bible study group) to the level of the “animation biblique paroissiale” (the Biblical animation of parish life as a whole), possibly transforming habitual pastoral practices in view of the “Biblical animation of the whole parish” (“en vue de l’animation biblique de toute la paroisse”). It was a small step, though quite ambitious and full of hope, to formulate the desire to “parvenir à une animation biblique de toute la pastorale” in January 1993²⁷.

Participants in these groups brought with them their human experience and their existential search for meaning in their lives, for concrete orientation in their “negotiation” of the meanderings and fundamental questioning with which life confronts all of us. They discover in the reading and sharing of the Scriptures within these groups a context in which they may speak with others about their joys and hopes, their sadness and difficulties. Sometimes they discover in these groups a faith community in process and in the dialogue with the Scriptures both a mirror, reflecting the complexity of human life, and a compass, showing the way forward ... In this context of respectful listening, both to the Scriptures and to life’s experience, prayerful discernment can help individual persons and communities to open themselves to discovering the word which God addresses to them today. In this context, the sharing of the Word of the Scriptures and the sharing of life can become a power of personal and community formation, transformation and conversion, animating these persons and their communities to a responsible engagement in the life of the Church and in society at large, with all of their challenges.

b. The expression “the Biblical Inspiration of the entire pastoral life and mission of the Church” was at its origin a heartfelt appeal to free the Scriptures not only from the departmentalization of pastoral sectors (catechesis, liturgy, sacraments, family, children, ministry, homiletics ... and biblical apostolate), but also from its “interpretation” solely by authorized ministers or academic scholars. In line with the Second Vatican Council’s *Dei Verbum*, the Bible should become accessible to all of the faithful, through translations in the vernacular languages and formation programs with the ultimate goal of allowing the Scriptures to contribute to the spiritual nourishment of all of the faithful. “Biblical apostolate” was devoted to the work of translation and distribution of Bibles and to Biblical formation, whereas the “formation”, often took the form of vulgarization of recent Biblical scholarship. In spite of the apparent desire of the Council Fathers and of the Church at various levels in the meantime to open the treasure of the Scriptures

²⁷ A further step in the development of the reflection on “animation biblique” was reached in the formulation of a “charte de la lecture biblique” (1996-1997). Five affirmations were made in this charter: 1. Nous visons à accroître l’autonomie du lecteur ou de la lectrice dans le face à face avec le texte; 2. Nous considérons que le groupe joue un rôle constitutif dans le travail biblique comme lieu d’élaboration de la lecture et comme confrontation avec la pluralité des lectures; 3. Nous engageons les compétences extérieures au service du groupe lecteur et non l’inverse; 4. Nous voulons être conscient des implications, des a priori et des visées des méthodes que nous appliquons; 5. Nous situons tout rapport avec les textes bibliques dans l’interaction d’une tradition de lecture et d’un contexte socio-culturel.

broadly to the Christian faithful, we remain fearful of the consequences of truly making the Scriptures and the reading of the Bible available to all of the faithful. We have developed mechanisms to ensure that the Scriptures and their interpretation remain under the guidance of a genuine hermeneutics according to the Catholic faith and that their understanding be in line with critical Biblical scholarship and its multiple theories. We provide the liturgy and theological reflection with a selection of scriptural passages, removed from their original literary context and dissected into compact texts that we may integrate into our systems and objectives. We are oftentimes more preoccupied with communicating the meaning of the texts rather than in allowing, motivating and accompanying people in their active and interactive reading of the Bible itself. In French I put it like this: “nous cherchons à définir le sens d’un texte plutôt que de nous mettre à la recherche de sens”. We attempt to apply or actualize the text in a particular situation or activity, but are we truly open to being formed by the Scriptures, to being animated by the frequent and regular contact with and engagement of the Scriptures? Are we open to the conversion, the transformation and the transfiguration that the permanent dialogue between life and the Scriptures offers and requires of us and to the responsible commitment within the Church and in human society?

c. In the efforts of the CBF to work towards “letting the active, interactive and responsible engagement of the Scriptures within the community as such inspire, animate and bring new life to the entire pastoral life and mission of the Church”, it shall not be possible to neglect responding humbly but clearly to at least two important challenges: the challenge of formation in Biblical spirituality and the challenge of a more in depth theology and pastoral practice of the “Sacramentality of the word”, which I should prefer to call the “Sacramentality of the word which is proclaimed, shared and ruminated within the community” (cf. VD 56).

- “*Biblica animatio totius actionis pastoralis*” has its foundation not in the objective application of particular Scripture texts in concrete pastoral activities. It begins with the *formation in Biblical spirituality* of persons and communities who then assume their responsibility in the Church and in the world. Biblical spirituality begins with an interest and fascination with the Bible that requires us to abandon our tendencies of fragmenting and segmenting Biblical texts and passages so that they fit our preconceived plans, theologies and priorities. Biblical spirituality demands not primarily that we memorize individual texts and passages, but that we follow the paths of the individual biblical writings, from the beginning to the end, and that we open ourselves to the dynamics of these scriptures which can only become visible when we follow Mark’s Gospel from its beginning with John the Baptist’s proclamation and search to understand who in fact this Jesus of Nazareth truly is²⁸. It is only after following in its entirety this Gospel to its end with the proclamation of faith, not of Peter, but of the Centurion and the mystery of the Resurrection, with all of its open questions, that we truly respect Mark’s Gospel and its catechetical and even mystagogical path. The same may be said, obviously, of the other biblical writings. This engagement of the Scriptures within a community and the automatic sensitivity to the existential interrogations and life stories of the participants awakens the spirit of the “readers” and opens them to the movement of the Spirit in the community and in the Biblical word, its individual writings and the multi-faceted and pluri-dimensional dialog within the canon as a whole. The personal and community for-

²⁸ If we take DV 12 seriously in its admonition to “carefully investigate the meaning the sacred writers really intended”, then we must recognize that the first intention of the Biblical authors was not to provide a source of liturgical readings or an anthology of “proof texts” put to propose writings, to be read or heard in the community, from the beginning to the end, in view of initiating the faithful ever more deeply into the Jewish-Christian faith.

mation in Biblical spirituality requires the prayerful engagement of the Scriptures. This entails not only *Lectio Divina*, but also the regular contact with and prayer of the Psalms, this prayer book par excellence of the Bible. The dynamics of the psalms, with their internal *parallelismus membrorum*, underscored in particular by the rhythm of Gregorian chant proposes not only a school of prayer, but also a formation in thinking and a respectful approach to faith and the realities of human existence, a school for learning the language of the faithful within the world, a school of humanity and of spirituality, certainly not to be identified merely with piety. The question not of training but of formation in Biblical spirituality includes both working on the Bible and allowing the Scriptures to work on us, individually and as a community. It includes concretely placing all of our pastoral planning, commitments and action under the guidance of the Scriptures, not as some mechanical application or actualization of a particular biblical text but as a life “inspired” and invigorated by the regular contact with the word.

- In response to the 2008 Bishops’ Synod’s proposition 7, requesting the promotion of theological reflection on the sacramentality of the word, Pope Benedict gave substantial impetus to this reflection in *Verbum Domini*, number 56, thus opening the way to a deeper understanding of the performative character of the word of God and its participation in the real presence of the Lord within the community. Indeed, this reflection on *the sacramentality of the word that is shared, studied and proclaimed within the Christian community* will certainly lead us to new challenges in biblical, theological, pastoral and liturgical research: a renewed biblical reflection on the word of God shared with the community both as proclaimed and written word, revealing God’s presence with his people; the valorization of communities in which the Scriptures are studied, shared in dialog with human beings and with the questions of human existence; the valorization and creative development of liturgies of the word in various forms, in their own right and not as competitive alternatives to the Eucharist in times of diminishing vocations to the priesthood; the recognition of the essential character of the “service of the word” within the community and the necessity of recognizing, mandating and forming “servants of the word”, men and women, capable of ensuring this service for and with the community of believers ...

4. Conclusion

The organizers of this CBF Congress on the Bible and Life have developed an inspiring logo for this celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Catholic Biblical Federation. Between two dates, 1969 and 2019, a tree: a living organism with roots and branches in the colors associated with the four official CBF languages (English, French, German and Spanish) and in one way or another with the far more diversified cultures and Church realities that comprise the federation. The primary fruit of this living organism, with its entwining roots and branches is the Bible, open and waiting to be read and shared, within the community of believers and with the world. Our research on the origins, reception and development of the expression “*animatio biblica totius actionis pastoralis*” have shown how the work of the various owners of this federation have worked together not only in doing biblical pastoral ministry, but also in reflecting on their experience within the theological and pastoral tradition of the Catholic Church and in proposing a renewed vision which will continue to challenge the CBF and the Catholic Church at large in the years to come. At the same time this tree reminds us that we are only one part of something much bigger, that we are servants of the source of life, God’s word in the Scriptures and in Jesus Christ, and that our service is dedicated to the coming of God’s kingdom and his justice, both in the ecclesial community and in society at large. It

is with humble astonishment and deep gratitude that the Catholic Biblical Federation may remain attentive to and animated by God's word that is at work in those who believe (cf. 1 Thess 2,13).

Thank you for your kind attention.