

Turning Points in the Teaching of Sacred Scripture at the University of Santo Tomas (1965 – 2021)

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Abstract: This paper reflects the paradigm shifts experienced in teaching the Sacred Scripture at the University of Santo Tomas from 1965 – 2021. The context of the teaching of Sacred Scripture at the University of Santo Tomas from 1965 to the present (2021) is the several, significant, and fast-paced changes in the Church locally, and in Asia, internationally. The Ecclesiastical Faculties of the University of Santo Tomas did not experience any turbulence during this period. However, the Faculties made changes. Sometimes we went ahead of changes in the “first world” Churches, as when we helped produce the first five Inter-confessional translations of the Bible (Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilokano, Hiligaynon and Waray) with the Tagalog being published in time to be presented to Pope John Paul II during his first visit to the country in 1980, and we collaborated in the building up of the first National (Inculturated) Catholic Catechism (1992-1997). Our Faculty of Sacred Theology also gave prominence to Mary in Scripture when, by the second half of the 1960s, careful attention was given to the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke, and the Marian texts of John 2:1-11 and 19:25. Pastorally, our Theology students were encouraged, as early as 1983 to have devotion to “Our Lady of the Bible” whose presence and words had something to do with the first miracle of Jesus at Cana in Galilee.

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This exposition reflects the paradigm shifts experienced in teaching the Sacred Scripture at the University of Santo Tomas from 1965 – 2021, of which for the most part, I became a witness not only as a student but also as a faculty. The context of the teaching of Sacred Scripture at the University of Santo Tomas from 1965 to the present is the several, significant, and fast-paced changes in the Church locally, in Asia, and internationally. For the local context, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) in 1991 and the Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC) in 1997 were evident. In Asia, the first Asia-wide meeting of Bishops was held with Pope Paul VI in Manila in 1970, and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences met for the first time in Taipei in 1974. In international context, there were fifteen (15) Ordinary Synods of Bishops (1967-2018), eleven (11) Special (1980-2019), three (3) Extraordinary (1969, 1985, 2014) – the Word of God being the subject matter in the 12th Ordinary Synod in 2008. The New Code of Canon Law came into effect in November 1983. The Catechism of the Catholic Church was published in 1992. Our Popes issued “ecclesial climate changing” Encyclicals like “*Populorum Progressio*” (1967), “*Humanae Vitae*” (1968), “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*” (1975), “*Laborem Excercens*” (1981), “*Fides et Ratio*” (1998), and “*Laudato Si*” (2015).

It is important to note that the Catholic Church spent three years of preparation for the Third Millennium: 1997 was dedicated to Christ, the Word of God, Incarnate by the Power of the Holy Spirit; 1998 to the Holy Spirit; and 1999 to God the Father. Each year commenced on the Advent Season.

The Ecclesiastical Faculties of the University of Santo Tomas did not experience any turbulence during this period; however, the Faculties made changes. Quiet changes. Sometimes we went ahead of changes in the “first world” Churches, as when we helped produce the first five Inter-confessional translations of the Bible (Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilokano, Hiligaynon, and Waray) with the Tagalog being published in time to be presented to Pope John Paul II during his first visit to our country in 1980, and we collaborated in the building up of the first National (Inculturated) Catholic Catechism (1992-1997 in the making). Most often we loyally kept our eyes on the guiding lights provided by dependable Theologian-innovators like Pierre Benoit, O.P., Dominican Professor at the Ecole Biblique (founded by Marie-Joseph Lagrange, O.P. in Jerusalem, 1890), Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P. (+1990), Yves Congar, O.P. (+1995), Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P. (+2009), our Bishops, and our Popes.

Prominence Given to Papal Encyclicals

In 1958, the medium of instruction used at the University of Santo Tomas, Faculty of Theology was Latin. Our Bible was the Latin Vulgate; we could consult the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine translation although it was still incomplete at that time; there was an almost complete edition called the Family Bible.¹ For the complete Bible in English we relied on the Douai-Rheims translation. There was no complete Tagalog Bible, but for the New Testament we had the Trinidad translation from the Vulgate.²

We had no textbook for our course *Introduction to Sacred Scriptures* because there was no local importer of books in Latin published abroad. I later found out that what we heard from our professor, Fr. Jesus Merino, O.P., was mostly in two textbooks.³ This situation lasted until it was my turn to teach the course, having finished my Theological and Scriptural studies in Rome and Jerusalem in 1965. By that time, the Second Vatican Council was in its last Session and on the verge of sharing *Dei Verbum* (November 18, 1965) with the world. That year, the Faculty of Theology gave the professors the option to continue teaching in Latin or to shift to Spanish or English; the academic year started before June 12. I opted for English.

I took my topics from the two textbooks already mentioned; but sad to say, we still did not have a local bookstore that imported Latin books, so my students depended completely on what I taught them. So that we would be looking at the same text, I decided to take up the Papal Encyclicals on Scriptures. Fortunately, these were already easy to access in 1965.

This was a big turning point because we owe so much to those Encyclicals, particularly to *Providentissimus Deus* (Leo XIII, November 18, 1893) and *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (Pius XII, November 18, 1943).⁴ With the help of the Encyclical

¹ The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, USA (CCD) Bible translation was commissioned by the USA Bishops and was in the works from 1941 to 1970 when it was supplanted by the New American Bible.

² The first Filipino priest to receive a doctorate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome was Father Juan Trinidad S.J. When he died he left behind in manuscript his Tagalog translation of the Bible. The Old Testament was unfinished but the New Testament was complete. Father Ledesma edited and published this in 1953 as “*Ang Bagong Tipan, isinalin ni R. P. Juan Trinidad S.J., Doctor sa Banal na Kasulatan.*” See <https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2005/09/05/295139/father-juan-ledesma-sj-100-years-old>. Msgr. Jose C. Abriol translated the Bible to Tagalog from 1953 to 1963. Bishop Manuel Yap of Capiz and later Bacolod came up with his Cebuano translation in 1959.

³ These two textbooks that I later found in Rome were: Hadriano Simon, C.S.S.R.; *Propaedeutica Biblica sive Introductio ad Universam Scripturam*, completed and edited by Jose Prado, 1938 ed.; Hildebrand Höpfl, *Introductio generalis in Sacram Scripturam: tractatus de inspiratione, canone, historia textus, hermeneutica*, edited by Benno Gut: (1934?)

⁴ See Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,” *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, 1993, 3-11.

of Leo XIII, our Theology students opened their eyes to the great importance of the *Historico-Critical* study of the Bible. Then the Encyclical of Pius XII made our students eager to study the *Literary Genres* of the Biblical books and look into their historical and cultural context. Most of all, “Both (Encyclicals) reject a split between the human and divine, between scientific research and respect for the faith, between the literal sense and the spiritual sense. They thus appear to be in perfect harmony with the mystery of the Incarnation.”⁵

Special mention is to be made for the Encyclical of Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis* August 12, 1950, in connection with the Darwinian teaching about human evolution and the teaching about human origins in the book of Genesis. Pope Pius XII acknowledged that biological evolution was compatible with the Christian faith, although he argued that God’s intervention was necessary for the creation of the human soul. Pope John Paul II would later go further in an address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on October 22, 1996, saying: “New scientific knowledge has led us to realize that the theory of evolution is no longer a mere hypothesis.”⁶

Meanwhile, in the United States, there was the controversy about the teaching of evolution in public schools that attracted much attention in the Scopes Trial in the State of Tennessee and elsewhere in the United States in 1926. At that time, the Philippines was a colony of the United States; hence, the controversy affected this country.⁷ Since, we, at the Faculty of Sacred Theology at the University of Santo Tomas, were guided by the Magisterium of Pope Pius XII, our students walked in the right path avoiding the theories of *Creationism* and *Intelligent Design* proposed by American Protestant professors.

Pontifical Biblical Commission Document: *Instructio De Historica Evangeliorum Veritate* (1964)

The Papal Encyclicals opened a wide field to progressive Catholic Biblical scholars, but some priests and Bishops were wary that heresy was creeping in. So the Pontifical Biblical Commission was receiving complaints which pushed it to prohibit Fr. Stanislas Lyonnet, S.J., and Fr. Max Zerwick, S.J., from teaching their courses on

⁵ Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,” 5.

⁶ He continues: “It is indeed remarkable that this theory has been progressively accepted by researchers, following a series of discoveries in various fields of knowledge. The convergence, neither sought nor fabricated, of the results of work that was conducted independently is in itself a significant argument in favor of this theory” (see address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on October 22, 1996).

⁷ As late as 2007, a survey found that only about one in three public high school biology teachers presented evolution consistently with the recommendations of the nation’s leading scientific authorities. And about 13% of the teachers emphasized to their students that creationism was a valid scientific alternative to modern evolutionary biology.

the New Testament at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. Adverse reaction began to pour in, and cooler heads at the Commission wisely saw the time was ripe to take the side of people like Fr. Lyonnet but in a way that also assured the conservatives that the work of the critical scholars will benefit the ordinary catholic believer to understand the Bible better. That was the thrust of the document, *Instructio de Historica Evangeliorum Veritate*, in English, “Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels.” The main issues clarified were: the apparent use by certain Catholic scholars of Rudolf Bultmann’s Demythologization (not mentioned in the Instruction);⁸ Can one apply “Form Criticism” to the Gospels?⁹ Can one still recognize the real Jesus when one admits that the words and works of Jesus underwent stages of adaption from the original setting in life (German “*Sitz im Leben*” – not used in the Instruction) to the setting of different early Christian communities and the setting of the final writer or writers?¹⁰

The document was approved by Pope Paul VI, who ordered it published on April 21, 1964. One should note that here in the Philippines it was vacation time when the document was published; any immediate impact it had on our Faculty of Theology would be seen only in the next school year, which began in the first week of

⁸ Rudolf Bultmann, in full Rudolf Karl Bultmann, (born August 20, 1884, Wiefelstede, Germany - died July 30, 1976, Marburg, West Germany), leading 20th-century New Testament scholar known for his program to “demythologize” the New Testament—i.e., to interpret, according to the concepts of existentialist philosophy, the essential message of the New Testament that was expressed in mythical terms.

⁹ Form criticism is a method of biblical criticism that seeks to classify small, medium or large units of Scripture into literary patterns such as hymns, poems, parables, sayings, moral rules, controversies, etc., and then attempt to trace each type to its period of time and place. Form criticism was developed by Herman Gunkel and first applied to the Old Testament but it became a matter of great concern when German authors like Martin Dibelius (1883-1947) and Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) used it to study the New Testament particularly the Gospels. Form critics isolate each unit of text or ‘pericope’ and try to reconstruct from its form its *Sitz im Leben* (its origin, literally its “setting in life”) in different stages from top to bottom, that is, from its setting in the written Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, to its use as a floating unit in early Christian preaching or exhortation, or worship or discussion with Jews or unbelievers, and finally to Jesus’s own life situation if possible. The big issue is that the “Christ of faith” seems to disappear when scholars use Form Criticism and they come up with a very minimal “Jesus of history.”

¹⁰ The interpreter is given explicit authority to make use of the method of form-criticism (methodus historiae formarum) in order to gain a fuller understanding of the Gospels. It is recognized that, in the hands of some scholars (probably Bultmann is chiefly in mind), “the method in question is found alloyed with principles of a philosophical or theological nature, which are quite inadmissible;” others have been led astray by “rationalistic prejudices,” or “have as their starting-point a wrong notion of faith, taking it that faith is indifferent to historical truth, and is indeed incompatible with it.” Others underestimate the authority of the apostles, and correspondingly overestimate “the creative capacity of the community itself.” All this sums up with insight and accuracy the tendencies of some recent criticism and theological speculation in relation to the historical element in the Gospels. These “aberrations” are rejected as not only opposed to Catholic doctrine, but as also “devoid of any scientific foundation, and ... foreign to the genuine principles of the historical method.” – Francis Wright Beare, “Historical Truth of the Gospels: An Official Pronouncement of the Pontifical Biblical Commission,” https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/cjt/11-4_231.pdf.

June. However, one does not find any immediate change or adjustment made. It was two years later that something happened, when I was already teaching in the Faculty of Theology. I was asked to give a conference on the Form Criticism of the Gospels by the Priest's Alumni Association at their Homecoming, and it was well appreciated. The editor of the Archdiocese's Weekly Newsletter at that time, *Filipinas*, was in the audience and later asked me for a copy of the conference for publication, and I obliged. Nothing more happened in the next few days but a month later, the Rector of the University, Fr. Jesus Diaz, OP, called me to his office. He told me that one of the Bishops complained to him about the article published in *Filipinas*. In answer, I told him that the article reflected the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and the small book Cardinal Agustin Bea, S.J. wrote to explain it. That put the matter to rest.

In subsequent years, another of our teaching staff had to face challenges to remarks he made that were in conformity with the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission but were strange to some of our priests and seminarians and the students (Religious Sisters) in our Sisters Institute of Theological Formation including one or two of their superiors. After clarifications were made, no further controversies arose.

It should be noted that the gist of the document was adopted by the Second Vatican Council in *Dei Verbum* particularly in n. 19, which, however, omits the terms "Form Criticism" and "Sitz im Leben" as well as "Christ of Faith and Jesus of history," but a knowledgeable reader can easily see that guidance is being given regarding these matters.¹¹

***Dei Verbum* of the Second Vatican Council (November 18, 1965)**

The Second Vatican Council's document on Revelation, had a great impact on our Faculty of Theology mainly for three reasons: first, it shed the dry style of former Church documents that were attuned to the Council of Trent (1545 – 1563), the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) and Canon Law (1917, revised in 1983) and used a pleasant, almost conversational style that flowed with the literal meaning¹² of numerous biblical quotations; second, it accepted Père Benoit's

¹¹ "The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels, selecting some things from the many which had been handed on by word of mouth or in writing, reducing some of them to a synthesis, explaining some things in view of the situation of their churches and preserving the form of proclamation but always in such fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus." Previous to these lines the document asserts the "historical character" of the four Gospels. It does not find the new perspective from "that clearer understanding which (the Apostles) enjoyed after they had been instructed by the glorious events of Christ's life and taught by the light of the Spirit of truth" to be an impingement on the historical accuracy of what they handed on about the words and works of Jesus.

¹² Previously, the Accommodated sense and the *Sensus plenior* were copiously used.

explanation of biblical inspiration and inerrancy and Karl Rahner's proposal of "social inspiration" although not quoting these authors;¹³ and third, in its Chapter VI, *Scriptures in the Life of the Church*, it gives us the Magna Charta of the Biblical Apostolate, which will be discussed more completely in the last part of this paper.

The Jerusalem Bible in English (British and American Editions): 1966

From the time of Pope Pius XII, in 1943, Roman Catholics have been encouraged to translate the Scriptures from their Hebrew or Greek texts following the best available manuscripts discovered after the Latin Vulgate translation completed by St. Jerome in A.D. 405. The *Ecole Biblique et Archeologique* founded by Père Lagrange, O.P., and run by the French Dominicans in Jerusalem, undertook the project of translating the entire Bible into the French language. Each book was assigned to an expert who will not only translate the Biblical text but also provide it with textual and brief explanatory notes. Besides, each book will be provided with a scholarly introduction. As one could imagine, the result was a collection of "fascicules," published between 1948-1956; it filled an arms-length shelf. The publisher was *Editions du Cerf*, founded in 1929 by Fr. Marie Vincent Bernadot, O.P., owned by the French Dominicans in Paris. The publisher had the bright idea of reducing all those booklets into just one volume, and the Bible du Jerusalem was born in 1956. A group of translators working with Fr. Alexander Jones, came up with the English "Jerusalem Bible" in 1966 and F. Henry Wansbrough, OSB became the general editor of the New Jerusalem Bible in 1985.¹⁴

The one volume Jerusalem Bible in French in 1956 was a milestone in Biblical Studies for two reasons. First, in Catholic circles, it was the first time that the complete Bible with the Deuterocanonical books was translated not into Latin (now a dead language) but into French, a modern living language, from the best available manuscripts of Hebrew and Greek, which were not available at the time of the Rheims New Testament, (1582), Douai Old Testament (Vol. 1, 1609; Vol. 2, 1610) and King James (1611), translations.¹⁵

¹³ Pierre Benoit, *Exégèse et théologie* (Exegesis and Theology), editions du Cerf, Paris, 4 vol. (1961-1982); ISBN 2-204-01813-9 for vol. IV; Karl Rahner, *Inspiration in the Bible* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963).

¹⁴ Henry Wansbrough, claims the Jerusalem Bible of 1966 "was basically a translation from the French *Bible de Jérusalem*, conceived primarily to convey to the English-speaking world the biblical scholarship of this French Bible. The translation of the text was originally no more than a vehicle for the notes." He also writes: "Despite claims to the contrary, it is clear that the Jerusalem Bible was translated from the French, possibly with occasional glances at the Hebrew or Greek, rather than vice versa."

¹⁵ The King James translation of the New Testament was based on the Textus Receptus published by Desiderius Erasmus in 1516; its Old Testament was based principally on the Massoretic Text. Modern translations are done from the "Critical texts" which are obtained by applying a series of rules to the various manuscripts that have been found; using these rules, scholars decide what was likely added, removed, or changed, and therefore what's likely original.

Secondly, “the intention of the Jerusalem Bible was to keep abreast of theological thinking taking into account modern scholarship and archaeological and textual discoveries. The annotations and historical background, variant readings and linguistic considerations make it a very considerable work of scholarship, arguably more extensive than any other modern translation.”¹⁶

Moreover, the English Language Jerusalem Bible has been provided with an Index of Biblical Themes “for those who are not studying one single book or passage but wish to find out what the Bible as a whole has to say on a particular theological idea... this index will be a guide to the historical development of biblical revelation, a pointer to the raw material of a dynamic biblical theology.”¹⁷

*Relationship of Our Faculty of Theology with the École Biblique de Jerusalem
(founded 1890)*

At this point it seems appropriate to recall briefly the relationship of our Faculty of Theology with the École Biblique de Jerusalem established by *Père Marie-Joseph Lagrange, O.P.* in 1890 and the *Revue Biblique* launched in 1891. The first “contact” in a broad sense, was through Cardinal Ceferino Gonzales, O.P. (1831–1894), who taught at our Faculty of Philosophy (1854-1859) and Theology (1859-1867). He went back to Spain and in 1867, became Bishop of Cordoba 1875-1883, he became Archbishop of Seville 1883-1885; of Toledo 1885-1886; then back to Seville 1886-1889; after retirement he died in 1894; while he was Archbishop of Seville he was made Cardinal in 1884.¹⁸ He was a great Thomist, “self made” in the Philippines although “refined” when he went back to Spain. Among his works was *La Ciencia y la Biblia*, a book that was “associated to two encyclicals, which had significant effects on the Church, namely *Aeterni Patris*, which effectively restored Christian philosophy, and *Providentissimus Deus*, which encouraged the study of

¹⁶ Hilary Day, <http://tyndale.org./tsj06/day>, accessed 24.09.21. One can give two examples. First, note (a.) to Luke 3:1. “At that time, Jesus was at least 33 years old, possibly 35 or 36. The indication of v. 23 is approximate, and perhaps it only means that Jesus was old enough to exercise public ministry. The mistake in calculating the ‘Christian era’ results from taking 3:23 as an exact figure: the 16th year of Tiberius was 782 ‘after the foundation of Rome;’ Dionysius Exiguus subtracted 29 full years from this, thus arriving at 753 for the beginning of our era. Actually it should have been 759 or even 746.” Second example: Note (n) to Acts 2: “The content of the earliest apostolic preaching (the ‘kerygma’) is here summarized for the first time... The gospels, which are developments of the primitive preaching, adopt the same scheme.”

¹⁷ Alexander Jones, Editor’s Foreword to the Jerusalem Bible, 1966.

¹⁸ See Fidel Villaroel, *A History of the University of Santo Tomas*, Vol. II (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2012), 63; Levine Andro H. Lao, “The Nineteenth-Century Thomist from the Far East: Cardinal Zeferino González, OP (1831–1894),” *Philippiniana Sacra*, vol. 61, no. 167 (January-April, 2021): 287.

the Holy Scriptures in terms of history and archaeology.”¹⁹ Père Lagrange quoted this book in his Preface to the first issue of the *Revue Biblique*, a preface which he expressly wanted to be a statement of the publication’s program.²⁰ Père Lagrange said, “I felt my lack of authority too deeply not to cite someone of unquestioned importance. I had recourse to the recently published book by Cardinal Gonzalez, theologian and philosopher – there can be no distinction between the spirit of orthodoxy and the spirit of science in the Order of St. Dominic – *The Bible and Science (Madrid 1891)*.”²¹

The Scripture professors of our Faculty of Sacred Theology who preceded me and my present colleagues were Fr. Narciso Dominguez, O.P.,²² Fr. Jesus Merino, O.P.,²³ and Fr. Mario Baltazar, O.P.²⁴ All of them studied at least two years at the *École Biblique*, and obtained their Licentiate from the Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC), established by Pope Leo XIII in 1902 (not to be confused with the Pontifical Biblical Institute (PBI) run by the Jesuits, established by Pope Pius X in 1909).²⁵ Fr. Regino Cortez, O.P. and I traversed the same path.²⁶ Both of us went back to our alma mater when month-long conferences were held to mark the 100th year of the *École*’s existence in 1990.

The Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1946-1947); Excavation of the Essene’s Community Center (1951); Controversy about the Teacher of Righteousness (1970)

The publication of the Jerusalem Bible added much to the influence and prestige of the *École*’s *Biblique* that reached our Faculty of Theology at the University of Santo Tomas, yet one should not forget that in the two decades that preceded, there were events that contributed to its good name, events wherein the

¹⁹ Lao, “The Nineteenth-Century Thomist,” 288.

²⁰ See Père Lagrange, *Père Lagrange Personal Reflections and Memoirs* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 30-31.

²¹ Lagrange, *Père Lagrange Personal Reflections and Memoirs*, 33.

²² He taught Fr. Regino Cortez, O.P., Fr. Orlando Aceron, O.P., and the Dominicans enrolled in Theology at UST from 1960 to 1964 and then went back to Spain.

²³ He taught me, Fr. Leonardo Legaspi, OP and Fr. Orlando Aceron, OP General Introduction to Scriptures in 1958-59; he taught the books of the Old Testament to all Dominicans who studied Theology at UST from 1959 until a year or two before his death in 2009.

²⁴ After Fr. Mario De Leon Baltazar, O.P. (+2012) was made Prelate of Batanes-Babuyan in November 1966, I started teaching the Synoptic Gospels, and later also Acts and The Letters of St. Paul.

²⁵ The Pontifical Biblical Commission granted the Licentiate in Sacred Scripture for the first time in 1907 to Fathers Abel, Colunga and Mainage, Dominicans who studied at the *École Biblique* and in the future will be noteworthy exegetes (see Lagrange, *Père Lagrange Personal Reflections and Memoirs*, 133).

²⁶ Those who obtained the Licentiate from the Pontifical Biblical Institute (PBI) are Fr. Angel Aparicio, O.P., Fr. Clarence Marquez, OP, and Fr. Wenifredo Padilla III, O.P.

second generation of its professors from the time of its establishment were involved, notably Père Roland De Vaux, O.P. One refers first to the discovery of the Qumran caves manuscripts popularly known as the Dead Sea Scrolls (1946-47), then the excavation of Khirbet Qumran in 1951, as well as Wadi Murabba'at in 1952, and at 'Ein Feshkha, a few kilometers south of Qumran, in 1958, while returning regularly to Tell el-Far'ah (north) from 1946 to 1960.²⁷ The manuscript discoveries brought a small group of young scholars of Hebrew to work on them. These scholars, some of whom worked on their allotted scrolls for decades, included Józef Milik, John Marco Allegro, and John Strugnell.²⁸ The BBC Broadcasts of Prof. Allegro claiming that the Teacher of Righteousness, who was martyred, so he claimed, and about whom much is written in the Community Rule Scroll, was a kind of proto-type of Jesus Christ, caused a bit of a stir in our Faculty of Theology in 1970, as it did in other parts of the academic world.²⁹

²⁷ The first three scrolls to be found turned out to be the book of Isaiah, a Habakkuk Commentary, and the Community Rule. A Bedouin shepherd boy who went searching for an errant goat found them by chance in a cave (now called Cave 1) some time in 1946. His elders sold the scrolls to an antiquities dealer in Bethlehem who brought them to the École Biblique for assessment. Nobody there could believe what initial tests were telling them, namely, that the manuscripts were more than a thousand years old, and so they were rejected as fakes. But the antiquities dealer and others with him were persistent in showing the manuscripts to experts until these, led by John C. Trever, of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) admitted their antiquity. Meanwhile, more manuscripts were discovered by the Bedouins. Gerald Lankaster Harding, the director of the Jordanian Antiquities Department, contacted Père de Vaux in 1947 to explore the caves near the Dead Sea. They decided to befriend the Bedouins and together, scour the caves around the Dead Sea for more fragments of manuscripts, until a total of 11 caves (out of about 50) yielded what we now call the Qumran or Dead Sea Scrolls. With Ibrahim El-Assouli, caretaker of the Palestine Archaeological Museum, Père de Vaux excavated Khirbet Qumran and found the ruins of a Community Center. After careful study, Père de Vaux concluded that the manuscripts belonged to a group of Essenes who set up a monastic community in Khirbet Qumran and hid the scrolls when they learned that Roman would march against them; they hoped to come back when times would be more peaceful but this failed to materialize.

²⁸ "Within a year Allegro began writing a book on the scrolls, gradually but increasingly convinced that there was a direct relationship between the scrolls and Christianity. In his words, Christianity was nothing more than "a kind of neo-Essenism stemming directly from the people of the scrolls." Similar views were propagated by several other scholars, most notably the French academician André Dupont-Sommer, and more popularly by the immensely influential critic Edmund Wilson in *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea*, based on his articles in *The New Yorker*. But it was not a view shared by his fellow scholars on the publication team (nor by scholars today). Moreover, Allegro adopted a more public stance than the other members of the team, lecturing, writing and speaking to the press" (<https://www.baslibrary.org/biblical-archaeology-review/32/5/12library.org/biblical-archaeology-review/32/5/12>).

²⁹ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_M._Allegro.

*Père Pierre Benoit, O.P., Lectures at the University, 1977*³⁰

Père Pierre Benoit was invited to give lectures on Pentecost and related topics at our University in 1977. The Charismatic Movement was then recently introduced in the country and so his lectures were well attended not only by the seminarians but also by the lay professors and students.³¹

Pontifical Biblical Commission Document: The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church (1993)

It might seem that there is a big gap in the development of Biblical Studies at our University between the second half of the 1970s and the second half of the 1990s (1975 – 1995), but that is only because during the said period, attention shifts to the Pastoral Use of the Bible, which will be discussed in the last part of this paper.

Bible experts worked on the above-mentioned document intermittently for four years³² with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, under whose wing the Pontifical Biblical Commission was placed since 1971.

The following are the highlights of the document:

1. Its spirit of openness. “The methods, approaches and interpretations practiced today in exegesis have been examined, and, despite occasionally serious reservations which must be stated, one acknowledges in almost every case, the

³⁰ At the École Biblique Pierre Benoit was a specialist in the New Testament. For the French Jerusalem Bible he did the translation and notes on the Gospel of Matthew as well as the Epistles to the Philippians, Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians. He directed the institute between 1964-1972, as well as its journal, the *Revue Biblique*, from 1953 to 1968. Pierre Benoit was also the author of a four-volume work entitled *Exegesis and Theology*, published between 1961 and 1982 at Éditions du Cerf. In 1971 he became the publication director for the Qumran Manuscripts acting as chairman of the international committee in charge of publishing a great part of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Pierre Benoit took a close interest in the historical topography of Jerusalem, making detailed visits to the excavations. In the 1970s he became more deeply involved in the archaeological research of Christian sites in Jerusalem. One of his most extensive pieces of work in this field was the thorough and definitive assessment of previous excavations done by others at the site of the Antonia Fortress, and the surrounding area. An expert on the Second Vatican Council, he became a member of the Pontifical Biblical Institute and of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. He taught until 1984 and died in 1987.

³¹ Marker at the Central Seminary Garden: “The Way of the Cross in This Garden was blessed by Pr. Pierre Benoit, O.P., Professor of the Ecole Biblique of Jerusalem who lectured in our Faculty of Theology on July 18 to August 30, 1977.”

³² “The fruit of a collegial work undertaken on Cardinal Ratzinger’s initiative, and perseveringly continued over several years,” Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church”, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993 (Henceforth IBC), 7.

presence of valid elements for an integral interpretation of the biblical text.³³ The “methods, approaches and interpretations” covered by the document were:

- A. (1) The Historical-Critical Method³⁴
- B. New Methods of Literary Analysis:
 - (2) Rhetorical Analysis
 - (3) Narrative Analysis
 - (4) Semiotic Analysis
- C. Approaches Based on Tradition:
 - (5) The Canonical Approach
 - (6) Approach through Recourse to Jewish Traditions and Interpretations
 - (7) Approach by the History of the Influence of the Text (Wirkungsgeschichte)
- D. Approaches that Use the Human Sciences
 - (8) The Sociological Approach
 - (9) The Approach through Cultural Anthropology³⁵
 - (10) Psychological and Psychoanalytical Approaches
- E. Contextual Approaches
 - (11) The Liberationist Approach³⁶
 - (12) The Feminist Approach
- F. (13) Fundamentalist Interpretation³⁷

2.1 It is characterized by its balance and moderation. It harmonizes the diachronic and the synchronic (methods) by recognizing that the two are mutually complementary and indispensable for bringing out all the truth of the text and for satisfying the legitimate demands of the modern reader.

2.2 The Catholic exegesis accepted by this document does not focus its attention on only the human aspects of biblical revelation, which is sometimes

³³ IBC, 13.

³⁴ “The historical-critical method is the indispensable method for the scientific study of the meaning of ancient texts” IBC, p. 34; on the other hand, the document strongly opposes “fundamentalism.” See IBC, 69-72.

³⁵ Considering the *Weltanschauung* or Worldview of each book of the Bible falls under this approach. This is done in *The Holman Illustrated Study Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 2006), 1 etc. One started taking this into consideration in the study of the Old Testament from Joshua to 2 Maccabees in 2021.

³⁶ This approach is used in the footnotes of the *Christian Community Bible* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1990). Tagalog Inculturated Translation: *Biblia ng Sambayanang Pilipino*. Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1995).

³⁷ Flatly opposed by the document, 69-72.

the mistake of the historico-critical method, or on only the divine aspects, as fundamentalism would have it; it strives to highlight both of them as they are united in the divine “condescension” (*Dei Verbum*, n.13), which is the basis of all Scripture.

3. The document stresses the fact that *the biblical word is at work speaking universally, in time and space*, to all humanity.³⁸

In view of this, the interpretation of the Bible has aspects that go beyond the analysis of texts. One has to consider also the following:³⁹

3.1 The work of Actualization

3.2 Inculturation

3.3 The Use of the Bible

3.3.1 In the Liturgy

3.3.2 In Lectio Divina

3.3.3 In Pastoral Ministry

3.3.4 In Ecumenism

The impact of the document on the study and teaching of Scriptures in our University can be seen in the diversity of topics that have been admitted for theses and dissertations since 1993. It should also be noted that our Faculty of Theology organized a Colloquium on Inculturation in 1979. Besides, through my humble efforts, our Faculty of Theology has participated in the ongoing buildup of Asian Theology by the Office of Theological Concerns (OTC) formerly Theological Advisory Committee (TAC) from 1992 to 2005; papers produced by the FABC-TAC/OTC were published in the series “For All the Peoples of Asia” (FAPA).⁴⁰ One of the notable papers is “Asian Christian Perspectives on Harmony” on which I did some work.⁴¹

Engagement in Biblical Pastoral Work 1965-2021

As discussed in part III above, the reasons why the Second Vatican Council’s document on Divine Revelation had a great impact on the teaching of Scripture at our university is that its Chapter VI, Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church, provides us with a Magna Carta for the Biblical Apostolate. This is what I now wish to discuss in the last part of the paper, after a few preliminary observations.

³⁸ IBC, 13, 14, 15.

³⁹ IBC, IV.

⁴⁰ Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences, *For All the Peoples of Asia, For All Peoples of Asia*, vol. I (1970-1991) (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1992). Followed by volumes II-V to date, cited as FAPA I, II, etc.

⁴¹ FAPA II (1992-1996), “Asian Christian Perspectives on Harmony,” 229-298.

Preliminary Observations

Even before Vatican II, our Scripture professors practiced a Biblical ministry beyond the halls of our university. All our professors named in N. 4 (see p. 1235 above) of this paper taught also outside of UST. In my case, it was the force of circumstances that led me to teach at San Carlos Seminary in Guadalupe, Manila; at Naga City in Camarines Sur; at St. Alphonsus Seminary in Lucena, Quezon; and at the St. Joseph Regional Seminary in Jaro, Iloilo. I taught at the defunct Sisters' Summer Institute in Baguio; at the Santa Catalina Novitiate also in Baguio; at The Sister's Formation Institute (Betania) at N. Domingo, Quezon City; at the Assumption Sisters' Formation House, and at the Blessed Sacrament Sisters' Formation House.

We reached out to parish priests located all over the Philippines through our weekly homilies⁴² published in the *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* and occasionally written articles in the same publication. When the *Philippiniana Sacra* began its life in 1966, we contributed articles. It sponsored an International Colloquium on Inculturation; the papers presented in it, including mine, were published in a special issue.⁴³

The Daughters of St. Paul in the Philippines wanted to give a new format to their Correspondence Course and I helped them transform it into "Good News" monthly (1971-72), as a pilot project. The three Sunday Readings were presented in Question and Answer form. The project had a good following, but it had to close down due to personnel and financial problems.

Radio Veritas 846 started when the University of Santo Tomas ceded its franchise for DZST, the university's radio station founded by Fr. Antonio Piñon O.P. in the 50s. The transfer was done through Republic Act 3129 approved by President Carlos Garcia.⁴⁴ In recognition of this generosity, the University of Santo Tomas was to have one hour of prime time every day for the programs of its various Faculties and Colleges. The Faculty of Medicine, the College of Education, and the Conservatory of Music availed themselves of this opportunity to serve audiences all over the Philippines. In 1971, on behalf of the Faculty of Theology, I was asked to air a Bible program that I called *Biblia at Buhay*. It aired weekly for about ten years but the restrictions of martial law finally stifled it in 1982.

⁴² The ministry of the Word, in which the liturgical homily must hold the foremost place, is to be nourished by the word of Scripture in the same way as sacred theology (see DV, 24). Priests, deacons, and catechists must share the abundant wealth of the divine word especially in the sacred liturgy (DV, 25).

⁴³ "Towards a Filipino Theology," *Philippiniana Sacra*, vol. XIV, no. 40 (Jan-Apr 1979): 59-77.

⁴⁴ <https://www.ust.edu.ph/radio-veritas-celebrates-50-years-of-establishment-apostolic-nuncio-leads-thanksgiving-mass-at-ust/>.

Veneration of the Bible; Bible Enthronement (Dei Verbum 21 & 26)

“The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord” (DV, 21). Glorify the Word of God; “we may hope for a new stimulus for the life of the Spirit from a growing reverence for the word of God, which ‘lasts forever’ (Is 40:8; cf Pt 1:23-25).”⁴⁵

Whenever I show slides of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in session, I tell my students to take a close look at what is in the middle of the St. Peter’s Basilica, transformed into a session hall of the Council Fathers. It is an enthroned Bible. I also show pictures of the daily para-liturgical Rite of Enthronement at the Council, which normally included a minister (deacon or priest) of one of the Catholic Eastern Rite Christians participating in the Council, because they were the ones who have kept this rite alive.

Bible Enthronement is just a little way of venerating the Word of God; the deeper way of venerating it is to accept it as the inspired Word of God which, together with Sacred Tradition, constitutes the Supreme Rule of Faith.⁴⁶ In practice, one venerates the Bible when one accepts it as the Book of Encounter with God.⁴⁷

Rites, however, are expressions of what one feels deeply; they are, as well, modes of instruction for beginners in the Christian way of life, like persons young and old who are learning the Catechism. Hence, I encouraged my students to begin seminars, conferences, recollections, retreats, and so on, with a para-liturgical rite of Bible Enthronement.⁴⁸ I also pointed out that a Bible can be enthroned permanently at home or in the office. And why not consider a Bible as a beautiful gift for bride and groom on their wedding day? This has now become a common practice in our country.

⁴⁵ *Dei Verbum*, 26.

⁴⁶ *Dei Verbum*, 21.

⁴⁷ “For in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets his children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith of her sons and daughters, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life” (*Dei Verbum*, 21).

⁴⁸ Our liturgical rite of Bible Enthronement is the Entrance Procession of the Holy Mass with the deacon carrying the Book of the Gospels and placing it on the altar, to be taken later to the Lectern, and after the Reading of the Gospel, it is offered to the Presider to be kissed. Outside the Mass the rite of Bible Enthronement is “para-liturgical;” one has encouraged one’s students to use a cultural dance in a festive para-liturgical Bible Enthronement.

The Word of God is Living and Active and Has Power to Build You Up (Dei Verbum, 21)

“The Word of God is living and active” (Heb, 4:12) and “it has power to build you up and give you your heritage among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32; cf 1 Thes 2:13).⁴⁹

Lectio Divina

The Bible is not just a book to be memorized. I have never tried to impress my students by showing them that I have memorized the Bible. But I do require my students in General Introduction to Sacred Scriptures to have a one year plan to read the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation including the Deuterocanonical books. They are to submit an accomplishment report of their daily reading while they are taking up the course. This report will include verses they have identified as most appropriate for Lectio Divina⁵⁰ and their short reflection on these verses. As for my students taking up the Historical Books of the Bible,⁵¹ they have to reread the sixteen books between Deuteronomy and the Wisdom books within the three months of the course; their accomplishment report should also identify verses for Lectio Divina but they are not required to submit their reflections so as not to over burden them since they have to submit homilies and also character Studies of selected biblical personages.

Bibliarasal⁵² and Joy of Discovery

Prodded by *Dei Verbum* n. 21-26 (that is, by Ch. VI), I developed the weekly, liturgy-oriented, small group bible study, sharing and praying meeting that is known in our country as **Bibliarasal**. I coined this word from four Tagalog words, namely, *Biblia* (*Bible*), *Aral* (*Study*), *Dasal* (*Prayer*) and *Asal* (*Conduct, Behavior*), combining them. This form of Lectio Divina goes through Seven Steps, namely: (1) Invite the Lord with a song or Responsorial Psalm, or a prayer with one’s spontaneous words; (2) Read aloud a selected text; (3) Choose a word, phrase or sentence from the text saying it aloud; and then keeping silent for a few minutes. Volunteering

⁴⁹ *Dei Verbum*, 21.

⁵⁰ The IBC discusses *Lectio Divina* in IV, C, 2.

⁵¹ First and Second Samuel up to Second Maccabees; Tobit, Judith, and Esther are also taken up as “examples of free composition – the religious novel used for purposes of edification and instruction” as the *New American Bible* Introduction says. Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, though not really “historical” books are included in the course, otherwise they will not be covered by any regular course offering.

⁵² Much indebted to the Seven Steps of the Lumko Missiological Institute of South Africa, at Germiston, Gauteng, SouthAfrica (see “A Brief History of the Lumko Institute,” <<https://www.researchgate.net> > publication > 327630871_>; Lumko Institute, “Towards Building a Participatory Church,” <<https://www.academia.edu> > Lumko_Institute_Towards...>; LUMKO Missiological Institute, “HPRA,” <<http://historicalpapers-atom.wits.ac.za> > lumko-missiological Institute>).

participants take turns in doing this; (4) By keeping silence prayerfully, the participants allow God to speak to them; (5) Allow now the volunteer participants to share to the group why a word, phrase or sentence in the text is very significant.

Speakers are urged to avoid just sharing ideas; they are to tell their story of a word-event (*dabar*) in their life that shows truly that “the word of god is living and active”. This is *the heart of bibliarasal*. The three rules for this step are: (A) Do tell what God has done for you; how you have been touched by a word-event (*dabar*) that transpired, or how you have been changed or challenged. (B) Do not bring up anything for discussion; questions are to be entertained only after the seventh step. (C) Do not “preach,” that is, tell what other people are to do.

The sixth Step (6) is to return to the text to choose a word, or phrase or sentence taking account of what has been said so far. This word is to be “taken home” or “taken to heart” as a word that will empower oneself to do what God wants to be done. For the seventh step (7), the participants, for the third time recollect themselves in prayer,⁵³ this time to show their caring for the needs of their fellow participants. Thus the meeting ends with the participants praying. After the prayer, if there are questions and someone is present who is competent to answer, the exchange can be done privately.

I started *Bibliarasal* in our country in 1978, when I was Executive Secretary of the newly formed Episcopal Commission for the Biblical Apostolate (ECBA) of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). It has spread throughout our islands in such a way that by 2012, it was included in the CBCP’s “Basic Ecclesial Community – Gospel Sharing Methods.”⁵⁴ I take the opportunity of using Facebook to spread *Bibliarasal* Resources, Video Episode 1 Commentary, Video Episode 2 Sharing, and Readable Episode 1 and 2.

The “Joy of Discovery”⁵⁵ approach to Bible study has been used by Fr. Ermito de Sagon in the course of the Pastoral use of the Bible.

⁵³ “Let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that God and His human partner may talk together; for ‘we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine saying’” (*Dei Verbum*, 25).

⁵⁴ See Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, *May They Be One Bible* (Manila: Philippine Bible Society, 2012). After NT, p. 394 separate pages 1-31.

⁵⁵ The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study features a two-part approach to learning about the Bible. Part one is the Discovery Phase. See how to become a discoverer, observer, and interpreter of the text. Part two, the Expanding Phase, concentrates on how to approach the Bible in a more in-depth fashion including ways to summarize the text through charts and discussion. Learners will increase their understanding of the Bible and grow their faith (<https://www.logos.com/product/155217/the-new-joy-of-discovery-in-bible-study-newly-revised>, Accessed 09.10.2021).

*Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful.*⁵⁶

“Easy access” means that (1) the Bible is in one’s mother tongue. For the Philippines, this is a formidable task because “there are some 120 to 187 languages spoken in the Philippines, depending on the method of classification. There are four indigenous languages with approximately 9 million or more native speakers: Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon and 10 with 1 million to 3 million native speakers;”⁵⁷ (2) A Bible should not cost more than a minimum daily wage;⁵⁸ (3) One should be able to buy it at the nearest bookstore; (4) There should be special (electronic?) Bibles for the elderly who are hard of sight and hearing; and Bibles for adolescents and children.

Philippine Bishops realized quickly that the “easy access” desideratum of *Dei Verbum* n. 22 was an impossible task if they would attempt to do it alone. Hence it was imperative for them to approach the Philippine Bible Society (PBS) that had been doing Bible translation and distribution since 1899 when its parent, the Philippine Bible House (“Bible House”), was established by the American Bible Society (ABS) in this country.⁵⁹ Msgr. Mario Baltazar, O.P., already Prelate of Batanes-Babuyan, being the lone exegete in the CBCP at that time, was designated Chairman of a Bible Translation Committee that would work with the Philippine Bible Society while reporting to the Commission on Ecumenism. Msgr. Baltazar chose me as Executive Secretary. Thus did we began our warm fraternal relations with the Philippine Bible Society that has borne much fruit in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. Providentially, by 1968, the Vatican was already circulating its *Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible*.⁶⁰

After attending a month-long translation seminar conducted by Dr. Eugene Nida,⁶¹ I had to spend two years going to different dioceses in our country to see to

⁵⁶ *Dei Verbum*, 22.

⁵⁷ Waray, Bikol, Kapampangan, Pangasinan, Maranao, Tausug, Maguindanao, Chavacano, Karay-a, Surigaonon. One or more of these is spoken natively by more than 90% of the population (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_the_Philippines, accessed 08.10.21).

⁵⁸ Even this is already a steep price because it is supposed to feed a family of five persons.

⁵⁹ That was one year after the Treaty of Paris, December 10, 1898, whereby the Philippines became an American colony. Translation of the New Testament into minor Philippine languages has been done mainly upon the initiative of the Summer Institute of Linguistics which officially started work in the Philippines in 1952 after a formal agreement with the Department of Education; their initial contact in 1951 was Ramon Magsaysay, who later became President of the country (<https://philippines.sil.org/about/history/beginnings>, accessed October 9, 2021).

⁶⁰ *Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible* (<http://www.christianity.va/unitacristiani/dicastero>; accessed 10.09.2021). The Philippines was the first country to avail itself of these guidelines.

⁶¹ World renowned as the man behind the “Good News Bible” dynamic translation (meaning for meaning as against the formal word-for-word equivalence).

it that we would have at least one Catholic priest or qualified Catholic layman in each of the five translation projects we agreed to launch: Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilokano, Hiligaynon, and Samarenyo (Waray).

The pilot translation of Tagalog Mark was presented to Pope Paul VI during his visit here in 1970, and the complete Tagalog “Common Bible Translation,” *Magandang Balita Biblia* was presented to Pope John Paul II in 1981. It is the first Bible in history that displays the papal Coat-of-arms in its cover.⁶²

Catholic Biblical Federation (1990; Formerly World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate, 1969)

In 1968, the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity headed by Cardinal Augustine Bea, S.J., called a meeting of persons and organizations already known to be doing something in line with *Dei Verbum*, Ch. VI. The invitation to the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines was referred to its Bible Translation Committee. I was designated to represent the Philippines at the meeting in Nemi, Italy, wherein the “World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate” was organized in 1969; it decided to have its First Plenary Assembly in Vienna, Austria in 1972, which elected me as the Asian representative in the Executive Committee.⁶³

In line with the purposes of the Catholic Biblical Federation, I organized the *Catholic Bible Center in Manila* in 1971 and asked the Daughters of St. Paul to help me in its work. When the Episcopal Commission for the Biblical Apostolate (ECBA) was

⁶² *Magandang Balita para sa Ating Panahon*, Philippine Bible Society (United Bible Societies, 1980).

⁶³ The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) is a worldwide “fellowship” of administratively independent Catholic Bible associations and other organizations committed to biblical-pastoral ministries in 126 countries. It exists primarily to promote and coordinate the work of translating, producing, and disseminating Bibles among Catholic laity for devotional purposes. The Federation also encourages the formation of small study groups for Bible reading as well as the creation of educational tools for use in these settings. First organized under the name “The World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate” in 1969, the Federation shortened its name in 1990 at its fourth Plenary Assembly held in Colombia. With the support of Cardinal Augustino Bea, its establishment was made possible by several provisions concerning lay access to Bibles that were contained in Second Vatican Council documents, especially *Dei verbum*. That document called for “easy access” to the Bible for “all the Christian faithful” and opened the way to cooperation with the United Bible Societies, particularly in the work of translation. In 1972 the Federation moved its headquarters from Rome to Stuttgart and in 1986 began publishing the quarterly Bulletin *Dei Verbum*. In 2009 the General Secretariat was moved from Stuttgart to Sankt Ottilien in Germany.

Every six years the Federation holds a Plenary Assembly. The first was held in Austria in 1972 and the most recent from 19 to 23 June 2015 in Nemi. The appointment of Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila as its President was confirmed by the Vatican on March 5, 2015 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Biblical_Federation accessed 10.09.2021. – See Organizational Chart in <https://www.ecba-cbcp.com/aboutus.htm>).

organized in 1978, Msgr. Mario Baltazar, O.P., its first Chairman, designated it as the “National Catholic Bible Center” (NCBC). Subsequently, the word “National” was dropped because Manila’s Biblical Apostolate was entrusted to the National Capital Region Biblical Apostolate up to par with the other Regional Biblical Apostolates.

One of the things we share with the Biblical Apostolate worldwide is *Bible Week* and *Bible Month*, but our observance is unique: we do it by *Presidential proclamation*; the Philippine Bible Society and the ECBA worked for this to happen for the first time when Ferdinand Marcos was President in 1982, and since then, every time there is a new President.⁶⁴

Synod on the Bible (2008); Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini (2010)

“The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church,” October 5 – 26, 2008; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* of The Holy Father Benedict XVI, September 30, 2010.

“The momentum generated by a Synod tends to stimulate discussion and action in the church even before popes reach final judgment.”⁶⁵ Surprisingly, for me at least, the Synod wanted more clarity regarding the Bible’s Inspiration and Inerrancy, and its normative force in relation to the Magisterium of the Church. In the Papal exhortation that followed, Pope Benedict “not only clearly and profoundly explains the vital principles of understanding God’s word, but presents how it penetrates and forms other areas of the Church’s life: her liturgy and her mission. You might say that the Pope’s understanding of the word of God is authentically ‘catholic’ regarding his teaching on the subject, in an all-encompassing, multi-dimensional approach.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ This annual event started in 1982 after former President Ferdinand E. Marcos signed Presidential Proclamation No. 2242 declaring a nationwide Bible celebration. President Marcos originally declared the first Sunday of Advent and the last week of November every year as National Bible Sunday and National Bible Week (NBW). The celebration in January came about during the term of President Corazon C. Aquino who issued Proclamation No. 44 in 1986 which transferred and made official the NBW celebration in the first month of the year. The proclamation was reinforced by President Fidel V. Ramos in Presidential Proclamation No. 1067 which urged that “national attention be focused on the importance of reading and studying the Bible in molding the spiritual, moral, and social fiber of our citizenry.”

⁶⁵ John L. Allen Jr., “Final Propositions. Synod of Bishops on ‘The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church,’” <https://www.ncronline.org/news/synod-final-propositions-synod-bishops-bible>, Accessed 11.10.21.

⁶⁶ Vincent Demeo, in *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* February 24, 2012, <https://www.hprweb.com/2012/02/pope-benedict-xvi-and-the-word-of-god-distinct-themes-of-verbum-domini/> Accessed 11.10.2021.

Structure of Domini Verbum

Introduction (N. 1-5); Part One: *Verbum Dei*, The God Who Speaks (N. 6-49); Part Two: *Verbum in Ecclesia*, The Word of God And The Church (N. 50-89); Part Three: *Verbum Mundo*, The Church's Mission (N. 90 – 120); Conclusion Come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:20) (N. 121 – 124).

Some Observations

Pope Benedict's Apostolic Exhortation covered much more than could be squeezed into Vatican II's *Dei Verbum*, as one could note just by looking at its structure; it has 41,000 words! It also pushes the advanced ideas of *Dei Verbum* a little more forward. For example, the concept of Revelation for Vatican I was the unveiling of dogmas of the faith; for *Dei Verbum*, it is the communication of God's self to the human being and of God's plan of salvation as well as the invitation to share in the divine nature; for the Synod and Pope Benedict, it is all of the above and also an ongoing 'dialogue of love' between God who reveals and the human being who responds in faith and love; it is an interpersonal 'encounter.'⁶⁷

On the issue of the inspiration and truth or inerrancy of Scriptures, *Verbum Domini*, Dei was a disappointment because it did not add more clarity to what *Dei Verbum* said; it only acknowledged “the need today for a fuller and more adequate study of these realities” (n. 19). This disappointment is somewhat diminished by what is said in numbers 15 and 16 “The word of God and the Holy Spirit;” and n. 17 “Tradition and Scripture.”⁶⁸

No. 33 of *Verbum Domini*, on the Church's living magisterium, recalling the Encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII, and Pope Pius XII, shows that our Faculty of Theology has taken the right track in giving prominence to Papal Encyclicals as mentioned in number 1 of this paper. Similarly, the closing lines of this number affirms the warm welcome our Faculty has shown to the Pontifical Biblical Commission's document, “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,” as explained above (see part V, see p. 1237 ff.)

Pope Benedict XVI is the first Pope to include, in a papal document on the Bible, first of all, an encouragement to scholars “to study the relationship between Mariology and the theology of the Word,” N. 27-28; and secondly, a reminder “of the inseparable bond between the word of God and Mary of Nazareth,” and urge the

⁶⁷ It is interesting to note that the words “encounter” and “dialogue” are used so frequently in the papal document and most significantly in the concluding lines of the last number (124).

⁶⁸ On February 22, 2014 the Pontifical Biblical Commission issued: “Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture.”

praying of the twenty mysteries of the Rosary, and the Angelus at sunrise, midday, and sunset (N. 88). He is the first and only Pope to conclude a document on the Bible by reflecting on Mary, “Mater Verbi et Mater laetitiae” in nineteen lines in the concluding number (124).

Our Lady of the Bible

Taking a cue from Pope Benedict XVI’s Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, I adopt a Marian flavor in the conclusion of this paper. At the Second Vatican Council there were debates on whether there should be a separate document on Mary, and those in favor of this were called “maximalists;” or rather, that the mind of the Council on Mary be part of the document on the Church, and those in favor of this were called “minimalists.” The minimalists won, and so, Chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964) is on “The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and the Church.” However, taking cognizance of what the maximalists wanted, Pope Paul VI issued the Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (February 2, 1974).⁶⁹ Our Faculty of Theology published this in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* with study questions.⁷⁰ A year later the Philippine Bishops issued the Pastoral Letter: “*Ang Mahal Na Birhen: Mary in Philippine Life Today.*”⁷¹

Our Faculty of Sacred Theology started to give prominence to Mary in Scripture when, by the second half of the 1960’s, a careful attention was given to the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke, and the Marian texts of John 2:1-11 and 19:25. A question on whether the woman in Revelation 12:1-6 (17) was Mary, was also included in the oral examination in view of the bachelor’s degree in Theology. Pastorally, our Theology students were encouraged, as early as 1983 to have devotion to “Our Lady of the Bible” whose presence and words had something to do with the first miracle of Jesus at Cana in Galilee; in 2002, this devotion was included by Pope John Paul II among the Mysteries of Light of the Holy Rosary.⁷²

As mentioned above, Pope Benedict XVI has asked scholars “to study the relationship between Mariology and the Theology of the Word,” N. 27-28.⁷³ As far

⁶⁹ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1974).

⁷⁰ Volume 48, no. 537. Being the Editor at that time, I did the Study Questions. See also Leonardo Legaspi, O.P., “*Marialis Cultus* and *Lumen Gentium* Ch. VIII: A Comparative Study,” *Boletín Eclesiástico* vol. 64, no. 708-709: 25-38.

⁷¹ Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, Pastoral Letter “*Ang Mahal Na Birhen: Mary in Philippine Life Today,*” (February 2, 1975). I was the consultant for the Scriptural part of this document, nos. 26-49.

⁷² Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002), 21.

⁷³ Pope Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010): 27-28.

as the study of Scriptures is concerned, accepting this challenge seemed to be an outcome of this conference.**PS**

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