

IICM Syllabus
ARE102 Inductive & Relational Bible Study & Teaching

The Bible in Colors

Inductive Bible Study Manual

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Introduction

For many years, my passion for the Bible led me to conduct a series of training seminars in Bible study. Often the participants asked me to recommend manuals that would guide them in their study approach.

My responsibilities as the head of the Sabbath School Department of the Franco-Belgium Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church encouraged me to pursue my thoughts in this area. For almost ten years, each quarter, this department published a companion book to the Adult Sabbath School Lessons. This photocopied publication stimulated a great number of Sabbath School teachers and members to practice the biblical study method advocated in this manual, not only in their personal study but also in their study groups.

At the request of the department and in accordance with the *Vie et Sante* Publishing House and the Euro-African Division of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the journal *Le Moniteur* introduced the column *Analysis* intended for adult Sabbath School teachers. Different volunteers from Belgium, France and German-speaking Switzerland wrote this column. The teachers appreciated this column because it enabled a great spreading of the use of this study method.

Today, I am motivated to finishing the writing of the manual, which was in the pipeline for many years, thanks to the formal request of Pastor Daniel Belvedere, Sabbath School Director of the Euro-African Division.

My wish is that this humble manual will be a stimulant and an encouragement for all those who desire to read the Bible and live a life in harmony with its teachings.

Why Study The Bible?

A. Goals

The beginning of Psalms 78, verses 1-8, sum up the objectives of Bible study.

Teach...so that they will

- Put their trust in God
- Not forget the works of God
- Obey His commandments

1. Teach (Repeat, Make Known)

We find this invitation in the Scriptures. Before leaving the earth, Jesus admonished his disciples to “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” (Matthew 28:19-20)

2. Not forget the works of God

This allows a daily, permanent and continuous, persevering and faithful study of the Word of God. Personal reading, group reading, and systematic teaching of the Scriptures contribute to the acquiring of knowledge. It is particularly an exercise of the intellect, of the mind.

3. Put their trust in God

This is the desired effect of the teachings. Biblical knowledge acquired should lead to a person’s total commitment to a relationship with God: his conversion. Conversion is freedom from fear, selfishness, pride, internal tensions, negative thoughts and actions, frustration and complexes.

The main objective of Bible study is to learn to know Jesus in an existential way because He is the sole source of freedom and life in this world. It first proceeds from the heart, from an experienced trustworthy relationship.

4. Obey His Commandments

This is the consequence of the relationship of the heart with God, nourished by regular study. It is a matter of attitude represented by the hand.

B. Tools

(Note to the IICM teacher: The author of this syllabus is French-speaking, so French-language Bible study tools are presented. Adapt this section to the language of your students.)

1. The Bible

It is obvious that the Bible is the essential and indispensable tool.

Many good translations of the Bible are available in various languages.

It is always good to compare different translations of the Bible, for a better understanding the texts involved, if you have no knowledge of its original languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

a. Dynamic or Functional translations

When reading, it is expedient to refer to dynamic and functional translations, those seeking to express the meaning of the text according to the sole nature of the contemporary language of the reader. The translator makes the necessary effort to fill the gap that could exist between ancient text and the contemporary reader. The most important French translations are:

La Bible en Français Fondamental (The Old Testament's Word of Life) - The French Bible Society will soon publish this complete Bible. A team of inter-confessional women, Catholics and Protestants, made this Bible, destined for readers whose mother tongue is not French. It purposely uses a limited vocabulary of 3,500 words.

La Bible en Français Courant (new revised edition, published by the French Bible Society in 1997) - A team of five specialists, Catholics and Protestants, did this translation using scientific studies on the techniques of translation. It was first published in 1982. Its 1997 revision takes into account suggestions made by Adventist specialists particularly concerning the translation of Daniel 8:14.

La Bible du Semeur - This translation, essentially done by Alfred Kuen, was published in 1992, in the publications of the International Bible Society. He wrote this book in response to the dissatisfaction of the evangelistic environment due to the introduction of biblical books contained in this last translation.

b. Classic Translations

For the study, it is important to refer to recent translations, closer to the perception of the original languages, done by specialists. These Bibles take into account the most current researches made on the ancient manuscripts and the most recent archaeological discoveries.

La Traduction Oecumenique de la Bible (TOB, edited by the French Bible Society and the Cerf Publishing House), is the result of long years of work by teams of Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants. Its 1988 revision harmonized the translation of this remarkable work. The publication “*integrale*” gathers an important amount of documentation. The introductive texts in the different sections and books of this Bible represent the majority point of view in contemporary biblical theology and require analytic reading.

La Bible de Jerusalem, edited by the Cerf Publishing House, is the result of the work of Catholic scholars of the Bible school of Jerusalem. This translation dates from 1956 and stands out for its literary quality. Its texts were revised in 1973 and its notes in 1998.

La Bible Segond is a remarkable work done by the liberal protestant theologian, Louis Segond, and published at the end of the last century. It is self-imposed as the reference Bible among Protestants. Its 1910 revision is still very currently used. In 1975, the Geneva Bible Society revised it, and in 1978, the French Bible Society revised it in a publication known as *la Colombe*. (The *Thompson Bible*, published by the Vida Publishing House, used some of its texts). We expected the new Segond, entirely revised, from the introduction to the notes to come out in 2000. This is the result of the collaborated work of protestant specialists including the Adventist theologian Jean-Claude Verrechia.

La Bible Osty - This translation done by Catholics, Emile Osty and Joseph Trinquet, was revised in 1973 and now represents one of the best French translations of the Bible. The Seuil Publishing House published it.

La Bible de la Pleiade. This famous literary collection group wanted to publish the Bible in a translation done by un-churched specialists, the Old Testament

under the direction of Edouard Dhorme and the New Testament under Jean Grosjean. Two volumes, containing documents that allow students studying the Bible to better understand the history and literary of the biblical writings, enriched this collection; the Bible, inter-testimonial writings (Qumran and pseudo-epigraphs of the Old Testament) and the Bible, Christian apocryphal writings.

2. Other Instruments

Concordances: In a concordance, the words used in the Bible are presented in alphabetic order, not to define them as in a dictionary, but to give the biblical references in which these words are used. The use of a concordance allows one to better understand the meaning of a word by gathering all its uses and facilitate a study on the subject. The most used in the French language are:

La Concordance des Saintes Ecritures, based on the versions of Segond and Synodale (edited by the auxiliary Bible Society of Canton de Vaud, Lausanne)

La Concordance de la Bible TOB, a complete concordance published by the Cerf Publishing House and the French Bible Society in 1993, which enables the research of not only the French words of the TOB, but also the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words they translate.

Biblical Dictionaries: There are many biblical dictionaries. The following are examples available in the French language:

This *Dictionnaire encyclopedique de la Bible*, prepared by an important team of specialists of different confessions, among which are Adventists, under the direction of the Information Center, and the Bible of the Abbaye de Maredsous, was published at the Brepols Publishing house in 1987.

The Emmaus Publishing House published the *Nouveau Dictionnaire Biblique* in 1961 under the direction of Rene Pache. Alfred Kuen revised it in 1992.

The Cerf Publishing House published the *Vocabulary de Theologie Biblique* in 1981 under the direction of Xavier Leon-Dufour.

The Moulin Publishing House published the *Dictionnaire Biblique* of Bernard Gillieron in 1985.

Atlas: Biblical atlases offer maps representing biblical countries at different periods of their history. French-language atlases are:

James B. Pritchard, *Atlas du monde biblique*, France Loisirs Publishing House, Paris, 1990.

John Rogerson, *Nouvel Atlas de la Bible*, Brepols Publishing House, Turnhout, 1985.

H. H. Rowley, *Atlas de la Bible, Géographie, Histoire, Chronologie*, Centurion Publishing House, Paris, 1969, revised in 1984.

The **Introductions** to the books of the Bible are important in order to understand the context in which they were written. They are found in some editions of the Bible, in biblical dictionaries or in some specialized works. For example, the following are available in French:

Gleason L. Archer, *l'Introduction à l'Ancien Testament*, Emmaus Publishers, Saint-Legier, 1991.

Alfred Kuen, *l'Introduction au Nouveau Testament*, Vol. 1, Les Lettres de Paul, Emmaus Publishers, Saint-Legier, 1982.

Alfred Kuen, *l'Introduction au Nouveau Testament*, Vol. 2, Evangiles et Actes, Emmaus Publishers, Saint-Legier, 1990.

Alfred Kuen, *l'Introduction au Nouveau Testament*, Vol. 3, Les Epitres Générales, Emmaus Publishers, Saint-Legier, 1996.

Henri Cazelles, Augustin Georges, Pierre Grelot, *Introduction à la Bible*, New Edition, Desclée Publishing House, Paris, Vol. 2

Henri Cazelles, Augustin Georges, Pierre Grelot, *Introduction à la Bible: L'Ancien Testament*, Desclée Publishing House, Paris, 1973, Book 2.

Henri Cazelles, Augustin Georges, Pierre Grelot, *Introduction à la Bible: Le Nouveau Testament*, Paris, 1975-1977, Vol 1-5.

Commentaries: There are many Bible commentaries representing all the tendencies

of its interpretation. The Catholic magazine *Cahiers Evangiles*, published at the Cerf Publishing House by the Evangile et Vie biblical service, constitute an interesting and very reasonable collection of small works (60 pages), of many books and biblical themes.

All these instruments are valuable in obtaining biblical, historical, geographical, cultural or theological knowledge. They enhance the comprehension of the text.

In no way must they replace personal study. It is by attentive personal study that we cultivate our critical thinking, and that we learn to respect biblical texts, and give them the priority of our personal opinions or those of others.

Methods of Studying the Bible

A. Some features of the Bible

1. The Bible is a collection of two inspired books.

The Old Testament regroups writings that both the Israelites and Christians recognize as inspired from God.

The New Testament regroups writings that the Christians recognize as inspired testimonies of God's supreme revelation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is therefore advisable to read these writings

- By first seeking to discover in them the person and the message of God,
- By considering its entirety.

2. Humans wrote the Bible.

It leans on a true story, experienced by humans with all their sublimity and misery. Some stories it relates are not automatically approved by God. These writings reflect a past period in history and a geographical setting different from that of most readers today.

One must therefore read the Bible while

- Taking into account the culture of its writers and that of its first readers (history, geography, language, manners and customs, mentality, world vision, etc.).
- Attempting to fill the gap that separates the contemporary reader of these texts with the entire discoveries of human science that concerns them.

3. The Bible redeems

The Word of God is destined to redeem the reader from the painful environment in

which he lives. It drives him to a total change of life involving his head, heart and hand at the same time. Therefore, he must

- Seek the practical application of its teaching, suitable to the reader's situation,
- Be ready to examine himself when faced with the will of God.

4. The Bible expresses itself in an oral and Semitic manner.

People orally transmitted the essence of knowledge thanks to the help of an extremely concrete language. Its written form uses a number of mnemonic procedures: facilitating memorization. It resorts to different kinds of expressions: poetry, law, story, epic, parable, speech, genealogy, etc.

It is therefore important to read the Bible while

- Taking into account the literary genres of the studied passages,
- Searching for mnemonic procedures (parallelisms, chiasms, concentric parallelisms, oppositions, repetitions, etc.) that highlight the essential message of every text,
- Reminding oneself of the importance in using a concrete language to express abstract notions: figures of language, symbolism, hyperbole

B. The Deductive method

This method is used when a person who understands a topic explains it to another person who ignores it. This method could be represented by a centrifugal movement. It begins with the solution to a problem and then present arguments that justify the solution.

We can compare it to a puzzle: you have to reconstitute a pictorial image from scattered pieces. Thus, you begin with knowledge of a theme or biblical text and then search the Bible or the text for elements justifying this understanding. Once obtained, they represent the idea designed to be demonstrated.

This method is very effective in presenting the results of a personal research to someone who did not do the same research. It is used extensively in doctrinal exposes of biblical faith. Nevertheless, it does not enable the study of Bible texts.

Indeed, it includes an important risk. The student already has his own idea of the text or the studied subject, and risks using the Bible to confirm it. In applying this study method, we have the tendency to interpret the Scriptures according to our own ideas received.

C. The Inductive Method

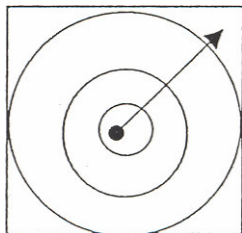
This research method seeks to make way into a topic. It can be represented by a centripetal movement: one leaves from the visible, the contexts, and searches for different aspects of the topic to arrive at a central point.

We can compare this method to the discovery of a fruit. You look at it from the outside. To understand its nature, you have to cut it open: a fruit with a nut or seed, juicy or compact flesh, color, perfume, etc. In short, you have to eat it to know the flavor.

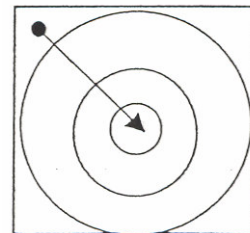
It is a stimulating method because it begins with the unknown, but it includes the risks of not obtaining at a solid solution.

One can illustrate these two methods with the following drawings:

Deductive method



Inductive method



Circle 1: Annex or contexts problems (historic, cultural, and textual)

Circle 2: Vocabulary definitions, themes, structures (plan, repetitions, and contradictions)

Circle 3: Basic problems, main ideas,

Center: Solution, main point,

It is this inductive method that we recommend for personal Bible study.

“In searching the Scriptures you are not to endeavor to interpret their utterances so as to agree with your preconceived ideas,” Ellen White, Counsels one Sabbath School Work, p.26.

The Inductive Method

The inductive method begins with a particular idea, a biblical text and ends with a general idea, i.e. the teaching it gives, which could also be that of other texts. It analyzes before synthesizing. It requires a serious and respectful examination of the text, before inserting commentaries, reaction, discussion of its comprehension, and before leading to a commitment to practice what has been understood.

A. Discerning

This is the first phase. It is indispensable and necessitates more time and attention than one supposes in general. This phase is about trying to describe

- What the text says
- And how it is said

B. Apprehending

This is the second phase of the study. It dwells on the results of first phase. The more the observations are careful, precise and complete, the more it will be easier to obtain a strong and credible comprehension. In this second phase, it is about wondering

- What the text implies?

C. Application

Without this third and last phase, the reading of the Bible will remain pure knowledge. It is indispensable that a person applies what he learns from the text in his personal life and in the collective life of the group and that of the church. The essential questions are as follows:

- What does this text reveal to us today?
- What does this text disclose to me in particular?

Discerning

This is the first phase. It is indispensable and necessitates more time and attention than one supposes in general. This phase is about trying to describe

- What the text says
- And how it is said

In order to facilitate learning this experience of text observation, we will break down the procedure into questions we need to ask ourselves. For every question, we will explain what the student needs to do, advise him on how to proceed, and propose one or several examples.

A. What are the limits of the text?

1. Projected Task

The examination of multiple, variable indications of every text allows one to precisely define the limits of the text to study, according to the limits made by the writer (punctuation, linking and splitting words, time measure, place, topic, stage entrance or exit of people, change of literary genres, etc.).

One cannot always trust the partition of the text into chapters and verses. One must sometimes mistrust reading habits, sometimes deeply anchored, but not still justified.

2. Illustration

a. Genesis 1:1-2:3

The first story of Genesis ends at the close of verse 3 of Chapter 2 and not at the end of Chapter 1. The mention of the seventh-day in the first paragraph of the second chapter refers to days 1 to 6 mentioned in the first chapter.

One could doubt the first sentence of the fourth verse of the second chapter: “*These are the generations of the heavens and the earth.*” This sentence could be understood as the conclusion of the first story and echoed at the beginning, “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,*” or the title of the story that follows immediately after.

b. Exodus 20:2-17

The twentieth chapter of the book of Exodus opens with these words: “*And God spoke these words saying...*” The word “*And*” refers to a situation that establishes the context in which these words were spoken. Therefore, the preceding sentences, Chapter 19, constitute the context. However, it is clear that God's words begin right after the word “*saying.*”

Verse 18 shows the reaction of the people to the words that God spoke. It begins with a description of the situation that followed God's declaration, what we refer to as the *Ten Commandments*.

Anyone wanting to study the texts on the Ten Commandments must study verses 2 to 17 and not begin his study at verse 3, as it is sometimes the case.

c. Revelation 14:6-13

This text describing the vision of the three angels starts with the expression: “*I saw*” (v.6). This expression or a similar expression is found in the beginning paragraphs that precede and follow. (See Chapters 13:1, 11; 14:1, 14; 15:1, 4)

Verse 12 starts with the expression, “*Here is,*” also found in Chapter 13:18 and in Chapter 17:9. This expression seems to be a call to attention, introducing an explanation of something, which challenges the comprehension of the text. It could be located in the conclusion of a vision or during an exposé.

Verse 13 begins with the expression: “*And I heard*” (as in Chapter 16:1). It introduces an audition, or hearing, and not a vision. However, this audition, Chapter 16:1, is not the beginning of a new development. It is rather an explanation and commentary of a vision previously presented.

It is therefore wise to do a study of the three angels taking into account the whole text: vision, call to attention or a hearing. By stopping at verse 12, as it is often the case among Adventists, one risks distorting the understanding of whole study.

B. What is the literary genre of the text?

1. Projected Task

By examining the vocabulary used and the structure of the sentences in a text, the reader knows if it is about a letter, a parable, a prophecy, a poem, a narration, a

dialogue, a law or another type of text.

The majority of biblical texts are classed into two big categories: narrations and speeches.

Narrations are based on facts or events. They are written according to the rules of narration. The progression is generally done according to the following diagram: initial situation, intrigue, ending, final situation. Today the rules of narrative reading are assembled together in a science called narratology.

Speeches relate ideas. They are written in order to convince the reader. One must study them using a rhetoric rule, which is the science of the persuasion by speech.

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2. Illustration

a. Genesis 11:1-9

This text is a narration. It relates a series of human actions (verses 2-4), and then a series of divine actions (verses 5-8). Verse 1 describes the initial situation with verbs in the imperfect tense. Verse 9 describes the final situation. By reading it attentively, one notes that it explains the significance of a geographical name, *Babel*, thanks to the narration that precedes it. It is therefore an etiological narration, i.e. destined to explain the origin of the story.

On the other hand, the text that precedes Genesis 10 comprises of a list of names of people and their descendants. This Chapter is called the table of Noah's descendants. The text that follows, from Chapter 11:10, is a genealogy: It presents a lineage enabling the inclusion of the link between Noah and Abram, who will become the main character of the next section of the book of the Genesis.

b. Luke 16:19-31.

This text is a narration. It tells a story. An initial situation is told using imperfect verbs (verses 19, 20), then events (verses 22, 23) followed by a dialogue in two phases (verses 24-26, then verses 27-31) which end each with a lecture (verse 26 and verse 31). The language used here is figurative: bosom of Abraham, eyes, finger, tongue, flame, hell. It is a parabolic story.

On the other hand, the texts that precede and follow this parable are words or sentences spoken by Jesus (Chapter 16:18 and 17:1, 2) that were *logia* (Greek word meaning speech).

C. Who are the people involved?

1. Projected Task

The examination of proper nouns, common nouns, pronouns and possessive adjectives of the text allows the reader to know who the characters are in the text, the actors and the extras, those with initiatives and those who react, those who contribute to the solution and those who oppose to it, etc. Here, the focus will be on the role of God and that of man.

The simplest way to do this is to highlight, using the same color, all words that are proper nouns, common nouns, pronouns and possessive adjectives relating to the same person. Thus, the characters of a given text will obviously stand out with the use of different colors.

2. Illustration

Exodus 20:2-17

God is present in this text.

- His personal name, YAHWEH, is mentioned regularly in verses 2 to 12; then it is no longer used.
- In verses 2 to 6, God speaks of himself in the first person singular (I, me, my).
- Then, in verses 7-12, God speaks of himself in the third person singular (He, His, Him).
- Finally, God is absent from the text. He is not mentioned by name, personal pronoun, or by speech.

The people of Israel are also present.

They are always mentioned in the second person singular (you, your, yours).

Verse 3 mentions the other gods and verses 4-5 talk about the images before which people were bowing.

The other human characters are:

- *Those who hate God, fathers and children, to the third and fourth generation (verse 5);*
- *those who love God, up to a thousand generations (verse 6) ;*
- *your son, your daughter, your servant, your maid servant, the stranger that is within your gates (verse 10);*
- *your father, your mother (verse 12);*
- *Your neighbor, his wife, his servant and his maidservant (verses 16, 17).*

Note that when God speaks of himself in the first person singular, the other gods and the next generations are the only other people compared with him and His people. When he speaks in the third person singular, the other people mentioned are close, those who belong to the household. Moreover, when God disappears from the text, the neighbor then becomes important.

D. What do they do?

1. Projected Task

Taking a look at the verbs in the texts allows the author to discern between ending and beginning situations, actions and their succession, events, important and secondary interventions.

The simplest manner to proceed consists of framing all verbs corresponding to a particular topic with one color.

2. Illustration

Psalms 23

God is the subject of most of the verbs.

- The Lord is my shepherd (verse 1). Abstract verb
- He maketh me to lie down (verse 2)
- He leadeth me (verse 2).
- He restoreth my soul (verse 3).
- He leadeth me (verse 3).
- Thou art with me (verse 4). Abstract verb
- Thou preparest a table before me (v.5).
- Thou annointest my head with oil (v.5).

The psalmist is the subject of four verbs:

- I shall not want (v.2). This is not an action, but a state.
- Yea, thou I walk (verse 4). - It is a hypothetical action.
- I will fear no evil (verse 4). It is a verb of sentiment.
- I will dwell (verse 6) – action verb.

Other verbs with objects or notions as subjects:

- Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me (verse 4).
- My cup runneth over (verse 5).
- Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me (verse 6).

God is the one with initiative in these psalms by His being, His actions, by the actions of objects belonging to Him, and notions derived from His actions. Man profits from a material and moral security owed to God's initiatives. He could have a bad initiative (hypothesis). He has a final positive initiative.

E. When is it done?

1. Projected Task

Examining the verb tenses and the chronological indications, (adverbs of time, the lengths, the speeds, the successions, etc.), allows the reader to reconstitute the temporal dimension of the text. Summarizing the text by reconstituting the chronological order of stories told would very well allow you to see the reflux and the anticipations that could break the succession of the stories in the text, as well as the simultaneous or contemporary actions that influence them.

2. Illustration

Exodus 20:2-17

The oldest series of actions mentioned in the text is that of verse 11 where the verbs are in the past tense and refer to the creation; then comes along God's redeeming act concerning his interlocutor. (Verse 2)

The only verbs in the present tense are:

- Those that describe the situation: In the heavens above...in the earth beneath....the water (verse 4). The seventh day is the Sabbath (verse 10)
- The character or the project of God: I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities....showing mercy... (verses.5, 6), the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee (verse 12).
- Man's behavior before God: that hate me..., that love me and keep my commandments (verse 6).
- Two positive imperatives: Remember (verse 8); honor (verse 12).
- That which expresses the objective of these imperatives (be long...verse 12).

All the other verbs are in the future tense, particularly all the verbs announcing prohibitions. They are twelve in number. Two orders are given in the future tense (you will work... you will do... verse 9) and the announcing of the consequence of the disobedience of a prohibition (will not hold him guiltless...verse 7)

F. Where are they?

1. Projected Task

The reader represents the time to which the text refers by examining the geographical names, topographic notions, indications of movement (verbs, prepositions, directions, etc.). Represent this observation by one or several graphics.

2. Illustration

Daniel 3.

- v.1: in the plain of the province of Dura: geographical location of the event
- v.1: set: vertical movement toward the top.
- v.2: sent: centrifugal horizontal movement.
- v.2, 3: to reassemble..., reassembled themselves: centripetal horizontal movement.
- v.5: you shall fall down: vertical movement toward the bottom
- v.6: will be thrown out: constrained vertical movement toward the bottom
- v.7: whipped: vertical movement toward the bottom.
- v.8: came near: directional horizontal movement.
- v.13: to bring..., were brought: directional horizontal constrained movement.
- v.15: will fall down..., will be cast: vertical constrained movements toward the bottom
- v.15: I have made: local situation of power.
- v.20, 21: to bind up, bound: circular movement of imprisonment.
- v.21: were cast into: vertical constrained movement toward the bottom.
- v.23: fell: vertical movement toward the bottom.
- v.24: rose up: first vertical movement about Nebuchadnezzar who until then had remained seated.
- v.25: challenge: circular movement of liberation.
- v.25: walk: horizontal movement not directional.
- v.26: approached: first horizontal directional movement of Nebuchadnezzar who until then had remained immobile and in the center of the action.

Summary: Nebuchadnezzar is at the dormant center of this story until verse 24. The movement is around him and willfully belittles all the others in the story. From verse 24, the center of the narration displaces him. Nebuchadnezzar finally moves. Someone freed the men who he had imprisoned and threw in the fire. They are now free and moving about.

G. What is it about?

1. Projected Task

It is now time to examine the vocabulary and regroup the words by themes or lists of languages. It brings out the main theme of the text.

2. Illustration

Psalm 23

The vocabulary in verses 1 to 3 is that of a language of the life of a shepherd and his herd. The emphasis is put on the care given to the herd, on the direction given and finally on the security provided.

The words in verses 5 and 6 refer to the protective hospitality of an important person with respect to an endangered weaker person. Emphasis is put on protection and the generosity of the reception, ending with the opened desire of the beneficiary to make good use of this hospitality.

H. What are the writing styles used?

1. Projected Task

The reader discovers literary styles set up in the text and the message they emphasize by examining the repetitions and oppositions.

2. Illustration

Revelation 14:6-13

The vision is divided into four parts. The number of angels seen marks the first three parts. Each part has a description and a speech relating a message from each of these angels. The fourth part is different. It has an assessment of the spectator (verse 12 - Here is...) and a sound (v.13 - I heard...).

The notion of worship is found in the messages of the first (verse 7: worship...) and third angels (verse 9 -11: if any man worship..., those who worship...). The *wine of wrath* is found in the messages of the second (verse 8: wine of the wrath of Babylon) and third angels (verse 10: wine of the wrath of God).

The messages of the third and fourth angels speak of rest (verse 11: they have no rest...) and in the fourth part (verse 13: they may rest). Thus, the message of the third angel is the core, having a verbal relation with each of the other parts of the text.

The message of the third angel (verse 9-11) is written according to this model of concentric parallelism.

- A. *If someone worships... and receives the mark*
- B. *he will drink the wine of the wrath...* (Refer to the second part)
- C. *and he shall be tormented...*
- D. *before the holy angels and before the Lamb*
- C'. *The smoke of their torment...*
- B'. *They have no rest...* (refer to the fourth part)
- A', *those who worship... and whoever receives the mark...*

The entire text is built on these key points: holy angels and the Lamb. It is clearly shown by the repetition of words. The grammar distinctly confirms it.

- Everything preceding this central point is written in the singular form with the main verbs in the future tense (a warning).

- Everything that follows is written in the plural form with the main verbs in the present (an observation).

I. What is the literary context of this text?

1. Projected Task

By examining what follows and what precedes a chosen text, the reader situates his observations on a larger scope (section of a book, a book, a collection, the entire Bible), to specify, confirm them or either invalidate them. You may examine the text during the observation exercise but must enable verifications in the end.

2. Illustration

Revelation 14:6-13

Thanks to the observation its context, we are able to set wisely the limits of the paragraph while including it. Verse 12 constitutes a call to vigilance concerning the reaction of the one who sees vision (compared to the use of the expression “*Here is*” in Chapter 13:8 and Chapter 17:9). Verse 13 relates to a sound (*I heard*) in comparison to the neighboring paragraphs that all begin with the mention of the vision (Chapter 13:1, 11; Chapter 14:1, 14; Chapter 15:1, 4:- *I saw, I looked*).

Once again, it is the observation of the context that enables the reader to clarify

- the immediate context that would identify the beast and the mark (Chapter 13)
- a larger context that would identify Babylon, Lord, the hour of the judgment of God, the wine of the wrath, the holy angels, the fury, the holy angels.

J. Are some of the texts parallel?

Some projected work and illustrations taken from the Gospel are developed in a separate Chapter in this manual.

Apprehending

This is the second phase of the study. It dwells on the results of first phase. The more the observations are careful, precise and complete, the more it will be easier to obtain a strong and credible comprehension. In this second phase, it is about wondering

- What the text implies?

A. Projected Task

1. In this phase, the reader takes the time to grasp the meaning of the words used in the text by

- verifying the original vocabulary (if he has access to the biblical languages),
- consulting other translations of the Bible,
- consulting a concordance to see the other uses of that vocabulary in the Bible,
- consulting dictionaries and commentaries.

2. The understanding of the text will be facilitated by research on the period to which the text alludes. For that, one will use encyclopedias, atlases, specialized books on lifestyles, manners and customs.

3. However, the focus will be the research of the author's incentives and objectives pursued as they appear in the composition of the text and vocabulary used.

Here, the reader attempts to answer these questions: why and for what reason did the writer write? He will look for the causes and consequences of the text: thus its goal. He will extract teachings about God, man, evil, salvation, man's mission, which is the message of the text.

The best way to proceed is to make an inventory of the observation. It allows the reader to see what is important to the writer and discern the goal he sets while writing his text.

4. Finally, to verify the basis of his understanding, the reader will compare it with

- Biblical parallels: using the Bible to explain itself (analogy of faith),
- Other extra-biblical texts dealing with the same subject.

5. Extracting the message of the text should lead to the forming of independent principles of time and places evoked in the text. (This rich and solid core will be the basis for applying the text).

It is important at this stage to summarize and synthesize.

All books consulted in this study phase should be subject to critical examination. The quality of observation made earlier is the best guarantee that one would not be influenced by the opinions of a commentator, which could be in conflict with the text.

B. Illustration

Exodus 20:2-17

1. Verification of the vocabulary:

a. *In vain* (verse 7): this expression doesn't have anything in common with the famous text in Ecclesiastes and which is customarily translated as vanity or vanities, which is linked to the Hebrew root word meaning *mist* or *ephemeral, evanescent*. The expression in Exodus is derived from a root word meaning *to wrong, to harm*. Thus, French translations using the expression *to harm* are more relevant than those who continue to use the classical expression *in vain*.

A concordance that does not take into consideration Hebrew or Greek words translated in French as *vain, vanity* can prove to be deceiving the study of such an expression. It is therefore better to trust a concordance that refers to the vocabulary of the original languages.

b. *Thou shall not kill* (verse 13). Several Hebrew verbs can mean *to kill*. The one used here seems to designate the act of assassination. Therefore, it cannot be taken in the strictest sense and it could lead one to think that there is no contradiction between this phrase from the Ten Commandments and the practice of the death penalty after a normal and non-abusive judicial procedure.

2. Study of the environment mentioned in the text:

a. Religious environment - It generally has a polytheist atmosphere (verse 3 - other gods), with idolatrous practices (verse 4, 5 - to bow down and worship images)---in opposition with the recognition of one God, called YHWH, active, deliverer (verse 2), creator (verse 11). It claims exclusivity (verse 3 - no other gods before me), (verse 6 - jealous God), refusing to be represented (verse 4) and see His name used in vain (verse 7), exercising justice and mercy (verses 5, 6), not asking for cultural rituals, but a moral commitment.

b. Socio-economic environment: people freed from slavery in a foreign country (verse 2),

called to live in his country (verse 12), in the cities closed by gates (verse 10), where everyone has his own house (verse 17) and his domestic animals (verses 10, 17).

- c. Politico-juridical environment: moral prohibitions (murder, adultery, theft) demanding a penal code and a judicial process before which one can be called to testify (verse 16).

3. The message of the text

a. We can divide the text into three sections.

1. In verses 2-6, God, called by His name, YAHWEH, speaks in the first person (I) to the people in the second person (you). The only other people mentioned are other gods and the next generations in verses 3, 5 and 6.
2. In verses 7-12, God, still being called by His name, YAHWEH, speaks in the third person (He). Close relatives are also mentioned (children, household employees and strangers residing among the people).
3. God is completely absent from verses 13-17, whether by name or by a personal pronoun. The presence of other people is grasped in the expression: *your neighbor* (verse 16, 17) and take up all the space.

A strong teaching derives from this progression: obedience to God must result in showing respect to others. God unselfishly gives of Himself to profit humanity. Serving man is to obey the fundamental will of God.

b. The middle of the text emphasizes God's rest. Indeed, the central part of the text verses 7-12, the only one that contains positive orders (verse 8: remember, you will work, you will do; verse 12: honor), is set up in a concentric way.

Verse 7: you will not take the name in vain...because...

verse 8... *day of rest...sanctified...*

Verse 9a... *six days...*

Verse 9b... *all your work...*

Verse 10a: rest of YAHWEH your God

Verse 10b...*No work...*

Verse 11a... *six days...*

Verse 11b... *day of rest...sanctified*

Verse 12: Honor..., so that...

By being placed in the middle of the central part of the text, much emphasis is on the word "rest". It is therefore the main message of the text. It echoes the presentation of God who spoke these words (verse 2), "I have brought thee out of the house of bondage." God has little intention of imposing Himself, insisting on His authority, but presents Himself as a deliverer, desiring to give rest to His people. Even if this text is formulated with

prohibitions and orders, it is above all, a text of freedom. Each prohibition or order in the text should be understood as a means to preserve the freedom offered and avoid falling again into a new form of slavery.

c. These formulations privilege the future and contain no particular circumstance. The God who speaks is therefore not comparable to a police officer setting ambush, ready to seize any man caught in the act of disobeying, but rather an educator who warns of future dangers that man could encounter.

The future is also a promise that there will come a day when no member of the people will transgress these orders and prohibitions. God is going to create a new world where all alienations derived from disobedience to His words will have disappeared definitely.

d. It is now time to detail the meaning of each of the sentences of the text. This is not the place to do it, not in this methodological example.

4. Verification of the message discovered

a. The entire Bible confirms that God does not wish that men worship Him with correctly defined and accomplished rituals if their commitment towards Him is not manifested, above all, by a moral conduct that consists of respecting others (for example Isaiah 1:10-20, Amos 3-6, 1 John 4:20). Jesus and the apostles summarized the law by the commandment of love (for example, Matthew 22: 36-40, Romans 13:9, 10, James 2:8).

b. James, the brother of Jesus, understands the Decalogue as the law of liberty (James 1:25; 2:8-12).

c. The entire Bible agrees with the promise of a new world where righteousness will dwell (2 Peter 3:13), where there will be no harm or injury (Isaiah 11:9; 65:25) and where suffering and death will have disappeared (Revelation 21:1-4).

There is therefore a consensus of all the biblical authors with the message discovered in the text of the Ten Commandments.

5. Fundamental principles deduced from the text

Here are few examples of principles that one can deduce from observing the text of the Ten Commandments.

a. The commandments lean on the principle of freedom: polytheism, idolatry, making mental pictures that label people, using of religion to harm, laziness, work without rest, and disrespect of authority, murder, adultery, theft, lies and envies are sources of

alienation. While taking the opposite view, we avoid becoming slaves, and therefore we preserve our liberty and that of others.

- b. The will of God is to free, pardon, give and work towards establishing a world without any more form of alienation.
- c. The observation of the Sabbath is not a means by which God shows His authority, but rather His generosity. It therefore does not consist of an obligation to which one must be forced, for fear of being punished, but is a privilege one should not wish to be deprived of.
- d. The observation of the Sabbath must not be experienced as a defense of a selfish privilege at the expense of others and in particular close friends. It should lead to the sharing of the advantages of this gift with others.
- e. The training of the contentment and appreciation of who we are and what we are is the best antidote for envy, jealousy and lust.

Application

Without this third and last phase, the reading of the Bible will remain pure knowledge. It is indispensable that a person applies what he learns from the text in his personal life and in the collective life of the group and that of the church. The essential questions are as follows:

- What does this reveal to us today?
- What does this text disclose to me in particular?

In this phase, the approach consists of moving from principles taught by the text to studying the modalities of their application in the surroundings of the reader and in his personal life.

Here, the essential quality of the reader is honesty to himself and his sincere will to change. As a group, this is a time for testimonies and questions on different areas of possible applications, which would result in some precise, collective and individual decisions.

A. Comment

It consists essentially of studying the concrete situation of the church or the group to which one belongs, then one's personal situation, and seeing how, in these situations, one can apply these principles discovered in the study of the text.

To be efficient, it would be necessary that this research begins with progressive, precise, measurable and accessible life objectives, and that a system of assessment is set up to follow the application that has been decided.

B. Example

Exodus 20:2-17

Let us limit ourselves, for example, to an application of the command on the Sabbath.

1. What is the situation of the church or the group that studies this text? Is this practice of the Sabbath in conformity with what has been discovered by studying the text? Does the church favor the work and accomplishment of its members during the first six days of the week? Does it transmit, in its teaching, its practice, and its atmosphere the rest that God offers on the seventh day? Does it cultivate in

its members the profound desires to allow their relatives to benefit from this rest (family, colleagues, neighbors, etc.)?

With the hope of honestly responding to these questions and many more, the church must be able to set up some modalities of life that will enable it to do better than its doing presently.

2. What is my personal situation? Is my life actually, in accordance with what the text teaches? Was it ever better in the past? Can it improve in the future? What role could it have played or can it play to bring about a positive change? How can one cultivate the state of mind that would enable my Adventist relatives and non-Adventist relatives to benefit also from the Sabbath?

By asking myself these questions, I am becoming a more faithful overture to the will of God in my own life and in that of my family.

In order for my personal or our group reading of the Bible to become more pertinent, we must apply what we have learned. The joy obtained from its practice will be a supplementary stimulant to the pursuit of the reader and the study of the Bible.

Study of Genesis 11:1-9

Perhaps the depths of the work previously described in this manual have startled you. Yet, a profitable reading of the Bible is accessible to all. I propose that we share this experience together. Are you hesitating? Then form groups of twos or threes, or even more: whichever would be more stimulating.

A. Tools

For this experience, you will need the following:

- A photocopy of the biblical text to be studied (one copy per person if you are many). If you do not have a Bible, photocopy the next page of this manual. It is about one of the texts previously reviewed: the one about the tower of Babel, found in the first nine verses of Chapter 11 of Genesis. I chose this text from the “Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible” (TOB) because it is recent and is the results of the work of specialists having necessary scientific expertise and belonging to different horizons and therefore not biased.
- Color pencils, felts or better still, highlighters: 1 black, 1 red, 1 blue, 1 pink, 1 yellow, 1 green and 1 orange.
- A Ruler
- A good table
- Comfortable seats
- And good humor

B. The text

11¹ The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

²And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shi-nar; and they dwelt there. ³And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. ⁴And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

⁵And the LORD came down it to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. ⁶And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. ⁷Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. ⁸So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

⁹Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

C. Activity

We will try to:

- delimit the text
- know the literary genre to which it belongs
- draw up a plan
- study the important themes
- with the hope of discovering how it is of interest to us or concerns us today

D. The Approach

1. Delimiting the text

Read Chapters 10 and 11 of Genesis. Where does the text of the tower of Babel begin? Where does it end? Are there linking words in what precedes and in what follows?

2. Determining the literary genre

Reread the delimited text while asking you these questions: “Is this poetic or prose? Is it a speech, a regulation, a letter, a catalog, a narration, a recipe, an application method or another text genre? Is the vocabulary used concrete or abstract, or rather simple or technical?”

3. Drawing up a plan

This is a bit more complicated. Therefore, we are going to divide it into parts, and illustrate each part by using verses 8 and 9 as models.

a. Let’s look for linking words found in the beginning of the sentences and underline them in black.

Example:

⁸So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. ⁹Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

It is most likely that we will find these words well hidden in the text. (e.g. In verses 8 and 9 they are “So” and “Therefore.”) These words help us begin to break down the text into paragraphs.

b. Now, we will look for **people** who play a role in the text. **Highlight**, using the same color, all words relating to a particular person: name, titles, adjectives, pronouns, in:

- Blue, words relating to God
- Red, words referring to man
- Pink, words concerning an indefinite topic.

⁸So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. ⁹Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Looking at the results, can we specify the plan of the text by the appearance of the new colors?

c. Now, we will observe the activity of these people. We will highlight all the verbs of the text with the color that corresponds to their subject or in black if it is an impersonal subject.

We will begin with verbs of main and independent propositions that will help us find out who takes the initiative. Then we will highlight the verbs of subordinate propositions that bring out the relation between the person who takes the initiative and the other people of the text.

⁸So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. ⁹Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Note that the verbs used here are action and state of being verbs. The different tenses in which these verbs are used allow us to chronologically specify the actions and situations.

What do you find? Do these verbs confirm the plan outlined in previous reports? We can now draw up a precise plan of this text.

4. Discovering the themes mentioned

We will attentively reread the text and highlight, using one color, all the words referring to a particular theme: synonyms, contrasts, words of the same family and those relating to the same topics. Rather than leave you hesitating, I will indicate the most important themes in this text. With a little practice, you will easily be able to detect them yourselves. The three main themes are communication, which we will highlight in yellow (word, language, noun); space, that we will highlight in orange (place, displacements); and construction (materials, to build), that we will highlight in green.

⁸So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. ⁹Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

5. Understanding the message of the text

It is rather easy to now follow the evolution of the situation in each of the domains they represent having found these themes. Moreover, is it by the examination of these transformations that the meaning of the text becomes clearer: who changes the situation, how and why? What can we learn from man and from God in this text? What relationship between God and man does this text promote?

We are all implicated in the domains mentioned in this text. Could we, thanks to this text, evaluate our position with comparison to that of God? Does this text call us to modify some of our ideas or our attitudes?

D. My results

What motivated me to proposing this precise and rigorous process was to avoid doing an imaginary reading of the text. Honestly, we tried giving priority to the text and it, in return, gives us the meaning.

I will therefore summarize what this text reveals to me, with the full knowledge that I may have made mistakes reading it, forgotten some elements or increasing others according to my own characteristics or ideas.

Look at my text as it appears after the work I did and compare your findings with mine.

11¹ The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

²And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain of land Shi-nar; and they dwelt there. ³And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime ⁴And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

⁵And the LORD came down it to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. ⁶And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. ⁷Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. ⁸So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

⁹Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

1. Where does this text begin and end?

The list of Noah's descendants ends in Chapter 10:32. The genealogy from Shem to Abram begins in Chapter 11:10. It is between these two passages that the story of the tower of Babel is inserted without any words linking it to what precedes it or to what comes after it. We therefore have a text that is very detached from its immediate literary context.

2. What is the literary genre of this passage?

A first fast reading of the text allows one to say that it is a story, because it is a question of what certain characters said or did.

3. Are there linking words found in the text that will enable one to separate it into paragraphs?

At the beginning of verse 2, the word "and" is underlined in black. This word is often used to announce a new fact that modifies an earlier situation described.

At the beginning of the verse 9 is the word "therefore." Going over the sentences that surround it, one notes that **therefore** is synonymous of **that is why**. It introduces the arrival of a consequence, of an effect whose cause is mentioned earlier.

We could propose to consider verse 1 as the introduction of the text, verses 2-8 as the body and verse 9 as the conclusion.

4. What characters intervene in this story?

We find three people: men who are present from beginning to end, God who appears in verse 5 and remains to the end, and an indefinite character who only appears in the conclusion.

Let us take a closer look at the highlighted words.

a. The men are indicated by a large variety of words:

- Singular nouns accompanied by an adjective meaning totality (the earth, the whole, a people, all the earth);
- Plural nouns defined by the article "they" and of which one is followed by a complement indicating the ancestral source (men, sons of Adam);

- Possessive adjectives and the personal pronouns (them, of which some are reflexive (himself, us) and others reciprocal (one to another, one another)).

All these words designate men, humanity as a whole. There is no indication that this involves a particular individual. The only proper name mentioned is that of Adam, the common ancestor of all. Even the reciprocal pronoun “one to another”, alone in the singular tense, does not emphasize individuals but a relation of valid reciprocity for all individuals of the group.

b. God is always designated by the same term: LORD. Notes from the translators of the T.O.B. (in French), printed on the bookmark that comes with all editions of this translation, specify that this term translated the Hebrew word YHWH, which is the proper name of God in the Bible. This is in total contrast to the way men are designated.

c. The indefinite pronoun *it* designates one or several people whose nature, kind, number and name are indefinite. It is perhaps a way of saying that the action of which *it* is the subject is valid to both men and God.

5. What is their activity?

a. In the introduction, the verb is highlighted in red. It is in the imperfect tense and has a pronominal form; it is therefore relating to a past incident that refers to relationships among men.

b. In Block A of the story, all verbs except for three are highlighted in red. The main verbs are in the past tense and describe actions of a precise period in the past. We can divide this block into three phases:

- The first is about actions, “...discover and dwell”;
- The second relates to words, “...they said one to another,” describing a project “...go to, let us make”, “...burn them”. Then they indicate a realization that goes beyond the expressed project. Not only are the bricks made, but a solution to replace the faulty mortar is found ;
- The third relates to new words, “...they said,” describing a new project; “...let us build”, “...let us make”, relate to the imposing measurements of the material, “...whose top may reach heaven”, while specifying the objective, “...in order to...”.

c. In Block B of the story, a variety of colors is used to highlight the verbs. However, the three main verbs, also in the simple past, are highlighted in blue and divide block into three phases:

- The first describes God’s action, “...descended”, and gives the goal, “...to see”;
- The second relates to words, “...said”, that one could break down into two groups:
 - One sentence uses the verb *to be* three times (state of being). It is therefore an observation of the situation of men
 - Another sentence contains three imperative verbs (let us go, let us descend, let us confound) that express God’s project parallel to the statements of man’s projects in block A; God’s project is specified by an exclamatory proposition, “...that they...!”;
 - The third expresses God's action and man’s action, consecutive to that of God: the “*and*” could be replaced by *so that*).

d. In conclusion, there are three important verbs. The first highlighted in red indicates the consequence of God’s intervention, the other two colored in blue refer to this divine intervention, one recalls the divine strategy and the other the action as mentioned.

6. What are the main themes of this story?

a. The well-known theme is that of **communication**:

The word **language** is used four times: twice with an indication of unity, “..the same language”, “...that a language”, and twice as complement of the verb to confound. The verb *to say* is used thrice. A transformation of the language occurs during the story.

- In the initial situation, the language is unique and enables an efficient communication among the people. The communication is done in close circuits: people speak among themselves. It is done in a uniform way: each one speaks the same language as the other. The speech of the men is not only understood by them, it is followed by effects; the first project is done and even beyond; the second project is also achieved, at least partially since God sees it and His intervention stops its course and prevents its achievement.
- In the final situation, the universal language is confounded. It is not suppressed, but rendered inefficient. One can deduct that henceforth people are isolated one from another and are going to develop a diversity of languages where the efficiency in each language is limited to small groups of people. Nevertheless, this aftermath is not written in the text.
- The reason for this transformation is clearly identified: it is God. He notices the language unity and considers it something that could enable the realization of

new human projects. He expresses His project with a will: man's communication once confounded will prevent the realization of their new projects.

The word **name** is repeated twice.

- The first time, the people wanted to make a name for themselves, the same for all, and not be scattered over the face of the earth. They would obtain this name by realizing an ambitious construction. This desired name expresses uniformity, ambition, and the concentration of all the men in one place.
- The only proper name relating to the men is that of their common ancestor, Adam. This name appears in the text right after they express their desire to be one, as if to say, "You desire a name? However, you already have one: son of Adam, meaning son of clay (Adam means clay in Hebrew).
- Finally, it is the place where the events happened that receives the name of Babel, an indefinite subject. Thus, men are always called sons of clay, while the city, they stopped building, made out of molded and baked clay gets a new name and not just any name. Indeed, in the Hebrew text the verb to confound, "bâlal," follows immediately a name with which it rhymes: this give Babel the significance of confusion or scrambling. Therefore, the ambitious research of men led to confusion.

b. The most invading theme is that of the place.

In the horizontal dimension, one notes that there is a transformation in the situation of the men:

- In the beginning, they are all assembled, migrating eastward.
- Then they settle in a place, a plain, in the country of Shinar. This proper name designates the region we call Mesopotamia. The goal of the project undertaken is to keep them together in this place. It is there that God comes to see and it is there that men achieve their first work.
- At the end, there is a centrifugal scattering movement: it is here that God confounds the language, it is from here that He scattered men. This scattering diffuses humanity over all the face of the whole earth (an expression repeated thrice).

There is a total contradiction between the will of men and that of God concerning this horizontal dimension of place. God does not want the men concentrated. He diffuses them.

In the **vertical dimension** of place, one notes that people are engaged in opposite direction movements:

- Men do not rise, but build a tower whose peak touches the heavens.
- On the contrary, God descends. First to see: the project of men must not attain the desired height! Then, He descends again to intervene on the language of men; it is even lower than their project.

d. Let us not forget the **construction** theme highlighted in green.

The manufacture of the material and its technological usage occupy four positions. The verb “to build” is used three times, the word “city” also, the word “tower” two times, and the verb “to live” once. There is no construction in the beginning. It is once stationary in a place that the men want to build: they want to do it for themselves (let us build) and with ambition. They meet there (?) since God notices the size of this success (their first work) indicating other successes to come. Finally God’s intervention ends the construction. This transformation is parallel to those that we discovered in the other themes. The sole justification expressed is the future that the human construction project was announcing..

7. Why am I interested in this text today?

By intervening in this story, the Lord partially reveals His goals to me. He does not act out of weakness, as if the project of men were a threat to Him: the incident in the text where His descent is mentioned shows that men are far from reaching His level. The risk does not correspond to reality.

He does not react because of His desire to maintain tyrannical power. His method is not to divide to the people to strengthen His reign. His intervention is indeed directed against the tyranny, which represents the complete absorption of an individual into a uniform group, only acting and communicating for and with it.

He is not over-sensitive, angry because he was not consulted. However, He knows where collective ambitions in a closed society will lead: it molds individuals, bakes them and finally petrifies their personality, absorbs them in the anonymity of the uniform concentration. He does not want an added or totalitarian enterprise for the men whom He created. He keeps watch over the entire world population, over the communication among responsible individuals who consider Him a valid partner.

By ending the construction of the city, He does not oppose to civilizing projects of men; He shows them that true civilization is acquired in the heart of a person, by contact with Him, and does not impose itself by the intoxicated collectivity of selfish ambitions.

E. To Elaborate

The method we just used together allowed us to taste of the richness of messages contained in the Bible. That is the essential point!

However, it is clear that one can go beyond that. This is what the specialists like the exegetes do. It would seem helpful to summarize the questions that they ask themselves and the research they undertake to attempt to respond to these questions. This could be a stimulant for future exegetes that you could become. Moreover, it will be an occasion to discover that the reading of the Bible contains unsuspected wealth.

1. What is the purpose of this narration in Genesis?

The conclusion gives three reasons:

- a.** To explain the “origin” of the name Babel;
- b.** To explain the diversity of the human language;
- c.** To explain the spreading of humanity all over the earth

This type of story, which states the origin of certain things, is called an etiological story.

2. Are these explanations valid?

To answer this question, it is necessary to resort to some documents apart from the text chosen. We will not do that here but we will give some guidelines to follow.

- a.** Study the literary context: Genesis, Old Testament, does the entire Bible confirm these explanations?
- b.** Study the historical context: Does the Bible confirm the explanations of what we have from other sources?

3. Is the translation in conformity with the Hebrew text?

- a. Study your native language and the Hebrew language.
- b. Study all the details and nuances of the text: etymology, philology, semantics, and utilization of dictionaries, grammars, and specialized encyclopedias.

4. Is the present Hebrew text in compliance with the original text?

A textual critique study: compare ancient manuscripts, ancient versions, and ancient quotations; use a recent critique edition of the Hebrew text.

5. Can we reconstitute the history of this text?

A literary and historical study: research of sources, study of shapes, history of the tradition, history of the writing, use of scientific commentaries and specialized studies.

6. Can the date, place, circumstances and author of this text be determined?

In addition to previous studies is the study of traditions concerning these questions and the use of the introductions to texts of the Bible.

7. What is the conclusion of these studies?

Studies proposed to answer these questions are important, passionate and delicate. They cannot lead to absolute results. They enable the elaboration of serious and fertile hypotheses to specify, qualify, to either confirm or put into perspective the results obtained from the study we did together.

Parallel Text Comparison

The Bible contains many parallel texts. The most known are those of the gospels. However, there are others elsewhere. For example, many narrations concerning the history of the Kingdom of Israel are found both in the books of Samuel and Kings, and in the books of Chronicles, and even, for some, in the book of the prophet Isaiah. There are some poetic texts found in the books of Samuel, the Chronicles and in some books of the Psalms. The book of Acts of the Apostles relates three different narrations of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Chapter 2 of II Peter is very similar to Jude.

It is interesting to study all these parallel texts separately but also jointly. Indeed their resemblances are considerable, but their differences are revealing and bear wealth from which it would indeed be a pity to be deprived. Their observation is indispensable to a good study of each of them.

I now therefore propose a complementary means of observation of what we explained in the previous chapters. We will do it using the example taken from the gospel: the arrest of Jesus (Matthew 26:47-56, Mark 14:45-52, Luke 22:47-53 and John 18:2-11).

A. The Tools

For this new study of biblical texts, you will need:

- A photocopy of texts to the study set up in parallel columns. For the gospels, the synopses present all their texts. For the other parallel passages of the Bible, one has to personally prepare this presentation. The best synopsis in French is that which P. Benoît and MR. -E. Boismard did (Cerf editions, Paris 1973) under the title *Synopse des quatre evangiles, Volume 1: Text*. (You would not need other volumes.)
- Colorful crayons, or highlighters: 1 red, 1 blue, 1 yellow, 1 purple, 1 green, 1 orange and 1 brown.
- A ruler
- A good table

The Arrest of Jesus

Matthew 26

⁴⁷ And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

⁴⁸ Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, whomsoever I shall kiss, that it is he: hold him fast.

⁴⁹ And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

⁵⁰ And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus and took him.

Mark 14

⁴³ And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

⁴⁴ And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely.

⁴⁵ And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him.

⁴⁶ And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

Luke 22

⁴⁷ And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.

⁴⁸ But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

⁴⁹ When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?

John 18

² And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.

³ Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees,

cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

⁴ Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

⁵ They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

⁶ As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

⁷ Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

⁸ Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

Matthew 26

⁵¹ And, behold, one of them, which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

⁵² Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

⁵³ Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

⁵⁴ But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

⁵⁵ In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me?

I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

⁵⁶ But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

Mark 14

⁴⁷ And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

⁴⁸ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me?

⁴⁹ I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

⁵⁰ And they all forsook him, and fled.

⁵¹ And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:

⁵² And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

Luke 22

they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?

⁵⁰ And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

⁵¹ And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

⁵² Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?

⁵³ When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

John 18

⁹ That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

¹⁰ Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

¹¹ Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

C. Objective

We will bring out the common points in these four stories; find what is unique in each story and what is common to two or three stories. This will allow us to read very attentively each of the parallel texts and show what each writer emphasized on for our enrichment.

D. The method

To arrive at a satisfactory result, you must carefully follow the instructions given. It is not a work of fantasy or imagination, but an objective, mechanical, or if you prefer, scientific reading of texts.

1. The first three columns

To begin, we will only deal with the three columns on the left. These contain the writings of Matthew, Mark and Luke. The fourth column, that contains the writings of John, will be treated later because it is very different from the other three.

The gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are very similar. That is why they are called “synoptic,” meaning “having the same point of view.” This does not exclude them, as you will quickly notice, from having notorious divergences whose meanings are interesting.

a. Reading Horizontally

We are not going to read the texts, vertically, column after column, but horizontally, line after line. If you are hesitant, use your ruler to follow better each horizontal line.

b. A Colorful Text

Every word of every line is going to be highlighted and will therefore appear in color, having the following particularities:

1. Red: All words specific to Matthew; those words that are only found in the first column and not in others,
2. Blue: All words specific to Mark; those words that are only found in the second column and not in the others.

3. Yellow: All words specific to Mark; those words that are only found in the second column and not in the others.
4. Purple: All words common to Matthew and Mark; meaning those words that are found in the first and second columns but not in the third.
5. Green: All words common to Mark and Luke; meaning those words that are found in the second and third columns but not in the first.
6. Orange: All words common to Matthew and Luke; words found in the first and third columns but not in the second
7. Brown: All words common to Matthew, Mark and Luke, those that can be found in the three columns.

Caution!

Respect the proposed colors well, because specialists who studied the New Testament have set up this system and it has acquired a character almost universal. On the other hand, it is a logical system because we used so-called fundamental colors (red, blue, yellow) for details of each column, and complementary colors (purple, green and orange) for points common to two columns.

There could be a gap of few lines between words that should be colored in the same way. For example, the word sword is found on the line that appears right above verse 50 in Luke's text (the third column). This same word is found in the first and second columns, in the texts of Matthew and Mark, a few lines below. One would hesitate to highlight it yellow in the third column, then, purple in the other two columns. The question asked in the third column is specific to Luke, yet it is well understood that the sword in question is the one that served to smite and cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. Logically the word sword would be colored everywhere in brown since it is common to the three texts.

Sometimes, the same verb is used in two or three columns, but does not have the same form of conjugation. For example, the verb "came" is found in the third line of the first column and "cometh" in the third line of the second column. In this case, the minutia wants us to color the root verb in orange, since it is common to Matthew and Mark, and the terminations in red and in yellow since they belong respectively to Matthew and Mark.

Some comparable cases have words used in the singular form in the one column and is in the plural form in another.

Do not consider the words in parenthesis. These words are not part of the original Greek text and were added by the translator for the necessities of the translated language .

2. The fourth column

a. Particularities of John

The text of the fourth Gospel, found in the fourth column, is very different from the others. To facilitate things, do not color the words that are only found in the fourth column and see how they appear on the page on which you are working.

b. Points of contacts

To find points of contact between the fourth gospel and the first three, write down the color of the words common to John and any or all of the other columns.

Matthew 26

⁴⁷ And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

⁴⁸ Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

⁴⁹ And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

⁵⁰ And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus and took him.

Mark 14

⁴³ And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

⁴⁴ And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely.

⁴⁵ And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him.

⁴⁶ And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

Luke 22

⁴⁷ And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.

⁴⁸ But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

⁴⁹ When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?

John 18

² And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.

³ Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees,

cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

⁴ Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

⁵ They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

⁶ As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

⁷ Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

⁸ Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.

Matthew 26

⁵¹ And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

⁵² Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

⁵³ Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

⁵⁴ But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

⁵⁵ In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me?

I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

⁵⁶ But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

Mark 14

⁴⁷ And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

⁴⁸ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me?

⁴⁹ I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

⁵⁰ And they all forsook him, and fled.

⁵¹ And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:

⁵² And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

Luke 22

they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?

⁵⁰ And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

⁵¹ And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

⁵² Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?

⁵³ When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

John 18

⁹ That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

¹⁰ Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

¹¹ Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

E. Results

It is now time to draw conclusions from what the colors brought out in these four texts. We are entering the second stage of our method: comprehension.

These findings will be in two parts: history and theology.

1. History

The examination of the colors should enable us to elaborate on the most probable hypothesis regarding the origin of these different texts and their mutual reports. This hypothesis should not be mistaken for the truth but mere probability. To be a historic truth, it must be compared with the entire four gospels and not just taken from this excerpt. It must also be compared with other documents written at that period, something we do not necessarily have.

2. Theology

We are seeking a better understanding of the message that these texts bring to us regarding God, Jesus, and ourselves. This aspect of our discovery will be less hypothetical than the preceding one, and the main interest will be the changes brought into our lives by its application. This is the third and indispensable stage of the method presented in this manual.

a. The text in Mark

In the second column, the dominant colors are brown, purple and blue. There are only some little traces of green. The specificity of Mark is therefore essentially defined with regard to Matthew's text.

1) Traces of Green

Verse 47: one of them..... smote..... *and cut off*

Verse 49: *I sat daily with you.* But

When comparing these green traces with those of the third column, one could say that Mark did not consult what Luke wrote. He could have very well written his text without any knowledge of that of Luke because the similarities are more accidental than deliberate. Most likely he wrote before Luke (besides this is what we are led to believe in the introduction of the gospel of Luke: see Luke 1:1-4)

2) Traces of Brown

What we have just discovered, thanks to the traces of green, allows us to say that Luke consulted either the works of Matthew and/or Mark or their common source of information.

3) Traces of Purple

These make up the largest part of this second column. There are therefore great similarities in the texts of Matthew and Mark. Mark's text is a bit shorter than that of Matthew (7 lines less).

3) Traces of Blue

These are more important in volume, spread out all over the text in such a way that it does not give the impression that Mark wanted to shorten Matthew's text. Those found in verses 43 to 50, are so precise that they render the text more brutal and more anecdotal, more realistic than that of Matthew. The way in which the person responsible for the violent reaction of verse 47 (an assistant) is designated, gives the impression that Mark seeks to exonerate the disciple or to make us understand that such a gesture disqualifies his author. Could such a behavior exist among the disciples? In verse 48, judging from the expression used and looking at the highlighted words, one would conclude, comparing Mark's text to Matthew's, that in Mark, Jesus does not speak to Judas who betrayed him or to the one who used his sword. His words, only addressed to the assistants, appear especially highlighted in brown. This is common to Matthew, Mark and Luke. Finally, verses 51 and 52 talk about what one would call an unusual news item that underlines an anecdotal and brutal character of the story.

Therefore, for Mark, the arrest of Jesus is, above all, a shocking and brutal fact carried out by people who treated Jesus the same way they would treat a thief. However, it is limited to the Scriptures. Without explaining further, Mark remains in shock.

b. The text of Matthew

We have already talked about purple and brown traces in the text of Matthew. Let us now study the two other colors.

1) Traces of Orange

They show that there are some common points between Matthew and Luke.

- In verse 47, the use of the adverb "here" and the verb "to come" makes the arrival of Judas and his accomplices less brutal than in the writings of Mark. Yet, these words are not sufficient to affirm that Matthew and Luke used the same source or felt indebted one to another.
- The name of Jesus is written in verse 49 whereas Mark contented himself with a personal pronoun.

- In verse 50, the words of Jesus to Judas, although different in Matthew and in Luke, begin with the exact same expression: *but Jesus said unto him*.
- In verse 51, Matthew, contrary to Mark who uses them, joins his sentence with the precedent sentence using the conjunction *and*, just like Luke.
- Finally, in verse 52, Matthew and Luke say for a fact that Jesus said something to the one who took the sword.

Therefore, the two main common points between Matthew and Luke are as follows: for them the story is less brutally told, and Jesus speaks to Judas and to the one who fights for him. This report leads us to believe that the book of Mark is the oldest text to which Matthew and Luke would add the words of Jesus borrowed from other sources of information, maybe the same source. Their narrations are less abrupt and leave us to find their significance in words spoken by Jesus that they report.

2) Traces of Red

While specifying that the people who accompany Judas are many; that they come on behalf of the elders (Verse 47); that one of them who was with Jesus used his sword (Verse 51); and finally that all His disciples abandoned Him (verse 56), Matthew shows that Jesus is alone facing the large crowd. Even those belonging to the small group of his disciples do not participate in the deep meaning of this arrest.

The words of Jesus reveal exactly this meaning. In verse 50, Jesus considers the traitor as a friend. Yet it seems that he knows what Judas came to do and he does not try to modify the course of events. Jesus' attitude is an attitude of love, not resigned not fatalistic, but lucid and decided.

In verses 52 to 54, Jesus explains that His method is not to respond to violence-by-violence, nor to resort to a miraculous intervening that he knows is possible, which does not correspond to the situation. Indeed this situation is not a surprise, but a plan of God foreseen and announced in the Scriptures.

In short, in conclusion, after the words of Jesus addressed to the crowd, Matthew reiterates that all this happened to fulfill the writings of the prophets. It is therefore here that one needs to search for the real significance of this arrest.

Therefore for Matthew, this message should only shock those who do not think, who take up the sword when situations surprise them and flee when it frightens them. It is clear for those that want to read Jesus' life in the light of writings of the Old Testament - an invitation to constantly put our nose and our heart in the Bible!

c. Luke's Message

As we saw while studying the traces of green, yellow and brown, Luke knew about

Matthew and Mark's text. Yet, his text is very short and dominated by the color yellow.

1) The Historic Writer

- In verse 47, Luke first paints the scene of the crowd, then that of their leader, the one called Judas.
- In verse 49, he describes the armed reaction before arrest of Jesus because one could see what was about to happen.
- In verse 50, he specifies that the right ear of the servant of the High Priest was cut off. He is a writer who worries about details.
- In verse 52, he enumerates the people to whom Jesus speaks and who made up the crowd led by Judas, but who were not introduced before.

2) The Theological Teacher

Jesus intervenes in verse 51, not only in words to condemn the violent reaction of one of his men, but also out of goodness, He heals the victim. For Luke, even in this hurtful situation, Jesus remains for Luke an example of generosity.

In short, Luke concludes his writings without making mention of what this arrest was to accomplish, but while designating this drama as the demonstration of the power of darkness (probably diabolic), and at the same time, the hour of the examiners of Jesus---time when they assume responsibility.

d. John's message

1) Common Points

Convergences between the book of John and the other texts are very limited. Judas is the group's ringleader who comes to arrest Jesus and one of Jesus' disciples strikes and cuts off the ear of the servant of the High Priest.

Like Matthew and Mark, John shows that the partners of Judas came on behalf of the High Priests. Like Matthew and Luke, he reports that Jesus spoke to the one who took the sword.

2) Particularities

They are very many.

For John, two groups confront with each having its main character: Judas and Jesus. These two people have knowledge: Judas knows where to find Jesus (verse 2); Jesus knows everything that is about to happen (verse 3). The knowledge gives each one a power. Judas can come up to Jesus (verse 2). This power is limited, just as his knowledge was. Besides, men representing force accompany Judas: the cohort, the Roman army and armed guards. This troop needs light: they carry lanterns and lamps (verse 3).

Nevertheless, Jesus' power is greater. It is He, by His knowledge, who takes the initiative to introduce Himself to those who seek Him (verse 4). Judas does not need the agreed sign to designate the person to be arrested; Jesus designates Himself (verse 5). This scene is repeated (verses 7, 8) because the power of Jesus is stronger than the number and weapons of His aggressors, "they went backward and fell to the ground" (verse 6).

Before even talking about a tentative armed resistance (derisory enough in this perspective where Jesus is stronger), Jesus is preoccupied by saving the disciples with Him, and He does this, not to accomplish an Old Testament prophecy as Matthew and Mark underlined, but because of Jesus' own words (see John 17.12), valued as that of the prophets. Moreover, one could say that in this scene (verses 4 to 9), John presents Jesus as God who reveals himself, because it is when He says: "I am He" that those who came to arrest Him fell (verse 6). However this expression is repeated three times (verses 5, 6 and 8) and in Greek it says, "I am," that is a form of revelation of God used by John in other passages of His gospel (John 8:24, 28, 58; John 13:19) and borrowed from the Old Testament (Exodus 3:14, Isaiah 43:10).

The last two verses of John's text give names of the one who smote with the sword, Peter and his victim, Malchus. These details could have come from a particular source of information: maybe by the other disciple "known unto the High Priest" (John 18:15) and could well be the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23-25; John 21:20, 24) and who participated in the writing of this book.

Verse 11 ends by an affirmation of Jesus that shows how well John understands, not only the arrest of Jesus, but also His death. The cup He is going to drink is God's gift that Jesus accepts. Jesus went towards those who came to arrest Him. He goes towards the gift - certainly painful - but a gift, all the same, that comes from His Father.

F. Conclusion

These are four narrations of one same setting, four understandings of who Jesus is. For Mark, Jesus is unjustly manhandled. For Matthew, He fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament. For Luke, He is a generous man who heals even when He is attacked by the powers of darkness. For John, He is the Son of God who appears stronger than men and who goes towards a mission that His Father entrusted to him.

Each of these facets is true. The observed differences are not due to the imagination of the authors. They are convinced about the necessity to transmit a corresponding message at a time of their own sensitivity, first to the needs of recipients of their writings. They used various sources of information to obtain what enabled them to better transmit a message conformed to some aspects of a truth so rich that no one can drain it.

CONCLUSION

It is now time to get to work. I have given you major clues in developing your personal or collective survey of the Bible. I encourage you to invest in this study.

This will take time. You will need to set up some time in your schedule to proceed. The simplest manner is to choose a text every week. It could be the text of your Sabbath School, that of your Bible group, or another text. You choose this text on Sunday. On Monday morning, you make two or three copies of it and you dedicate between 20 and 30 minutes of your time each night to it. Let your main objective be to do nothing but observe the text during the first three sittings, from Monday to Wednesday. You will begin the comprehension on Thursday and the application on Friday. It is indeed very important to spend more time observing the text. It is the basis of all success. This corresponds to what Phillip said to Nathaniel who doubted that something good could come from Nazareth.

The more you practice, the more you will enjoy practicing this type of Bible study. It will even be easier for you to teach a Sabbath School Class, lead a Bible Study, preach or do a public conference. You will therefore strengthen your knowledge of God's Word, your faith, and your spiritual experience. You will testify of it more easily.

Exercise this manner of studying the Bible with others. You will quickly notice that others will make your observations more complete. The text will become richer and richer. You will benefit from the observations of others, and, others from yours. This is how people improve in their fraternity and fidelity to the Lord.

For His Word is “living and eternal” (1 Peter 1.23).

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