

# **PHILIPPINE REPORT TO THE WORLD ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE (MALTA)**

**By**

**Msgr. Mario Baltazar, O.P.**

## **I. On Bible Translations**

Ten Roman Catholic priests and one Catholic laymen have had (some are still having) **full-time active participation** on the translation projects of the Common Bible in the Philippine Bible Society:\*

The following common version New Testaments have been published already: Tagalog, Cebuano, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Pangasinan and Somarenyo. Those that are in process and soon to be published are: Bikol and Pampango. These publications carry the Roman Catholic Church's *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur*.

The common version Old Testaments in the above Philippine languages exist already either in basic draft form or in the final stage being processed for publication. The Deuterocanonical books also have been translated in four of the above languages.

Excepting for one Catholic priest and one layman, whose salaries were partly subsidized by the Philippine Bible Society, all the other priests received their full salaries as translators from the Roman Catholic Church.

The other important thing to take note is the fact that before any common version is disseminated, a programme to launch the common version is held in public under the joint sponsorship of the Roman Catholic Church and the Philippine Bible Society. This joint launching has always been received joyfully by our people.

The cooperative work between Filipino Catholic scholars and their Protestant brethren has reached a high-level point and is

---

\* For the Cebuano translation, Fr. Diosdado Camomot (at the initial stage of the project also Fr. Mardonio Honculada and Fr. Cesar Alco-seba); For the Tagalog translation, Fr. Emilio C. Palma; For the Iloko translation, Fr. Godofredo Albano and Fr. Peter Julian. For the Hiligaynon Fr. George Monteclaro (at the initial stage of the project. Fr. Jose Gaston); for the Bikol translation, Fr. Jesus Esplana. The new Testament of these translations had already been published.

strenuously being kept up there. Today we can be proud both of the quality and quantity of various Philippine-language common bible projects being produced.

An important consequence of this on-going cooperative venture is the relationship of goodwill and mutual respect that was generated among the Christians in our country. The interconfessional translations have set the stage in the Philippine where Catholics and Protestants put their minds, hearts and resources together in an atmosphere of brotherhood and charity. It is hoped that this cooperation, begun in the sphere of bible translation, may extend into other areas of Christian service and apostolate.

## II. On Biblical Apostolate

We are aware of the enormous potential of the biblical apostolate in our country; we are also conscious of the vast ground we still have to cover but we have barely scratched the surface. Our dismay as well as our impatience in this regard is tempered by the recognition of that necessary logistics-principle that before starting any effective apostolate of the bible one must first take steps to make the bible available to those one must evangelize.

Ten years ago, the Church in our country has taken that first step by deciding to work with the Philippine Bible Society in translating, publishing and disseminating Bibles in the Philippine languages. But we are still far from being able to claim that we have made the bible available to every Filipino home.

Then there is the matter of priorities that the Philippine Church must consider when it wants to involve its resources and efforts. Social and economic problems; the question of vocations; the lay ministries; the seminaries; government programmes that have repercussion in Church-life; education and religious instruction; the basic christian communities; all of these are simultaneously claiming the attention and the purses of our bishops, and in the process are showing (so it appears) the question of the biblical apostolate to the background.

We feel the need of a functional service organization at the national level that should effectively help the bishops and other biblically oriented organizations to discharge their responsibility of

making the bible available and intelligible to all the Filipinos. We have not yet reached that stage, although our Bible Committee, set up by the Bishops' Conference, approximates that status.

Notwithstanding the absence of a truly functional service organization at the national level, there exist in our country genuine apostolic works that give guidance or promote Bible Study. Examples of these are the Catholic Bible Center in the Archdiocese of Manila which publishes the "Good News", a quarterly bulletin giving guidelines for the study of the Sunday Gospel Readings; produces "Bibliya at Buhay," a weekly radio program; holds weekly Bible Study and Prayer meeting ("Bibliarasal"); and organizes Bible Seminars from time to time; the religious congregation in the Daughters of Saint Paul; the numerous Prayer-Bible study groups all over the country; the various Catechetical institutes; the Basic Christian Communities' leaders institutes or seminars. They arise here and there, flower and hold on, or die, depending on the interest and resources of their animators.