

Inculturation and the Biblical Apostolate

By

LEONARDO N. MERCADO, SVD

We know that the John Paul I Biblical Center (JPIBC) has not only been the pioneer of the Catholic biblical apostolate in the Philippines. Its method of bible sharing has also been adapted by other countries. As the arm of the Northern Luzon Bishops, the JPIBC, is to be congratulated for its efforts.

The JPIBC again wants to be a leader in the task of inculturation through the bible apostolate. Allow me to share on how inculturation may be accomplished.

On this topic of the inculturation of the biblical apostolate, what we have written earlier on the inculturation of catechesis and published elsewhere may also apply.¹ That means, we need not repeat the documentation. We will just mention in passing what was mentioned in that study.

The Bible, as we know, is the Word of God. We believe that God spoke through the sacred writers, and that Jesus is the concrete manifestation of the Father. But is the Bible the only way of God's revelation?

¹Leonardo N. Mercado, "Toward an Inculturated Filipino Catechesis," *Docete* 12 (January-March 1990): 17-27. More on inculturation may be gleaned from Robert J. Schreiter, "Faith and Cultures: Challenges to a World Church," *Theological Studies*, 50 (1989): 744-760.

Extra-biblical Revelation

Vatican II says that salvation is possible in other religions.² If non-Christians can be saved, does that mean that God also speaks to them? Is there extra-biblical revelation?³ If so, what is our attitude towards it in the light of inculturation?

Paul says that God is seen in creation: "Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities, both his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly seen" (Rom. 1:20). Creation then has been God's way of revealing himself since the beginning of time.⁴

Since this is the case, then we also have to respect this other form of revelation. In other words, as Christians we must be more humble in the face of other religions. For example, we must respect the revelation God made to the members of the Filipino ethnic minorities such as the Tinguians, Igorots, Ibanags, etc. But this is not the place to speak about interfaith dialogue. What I want to say is that inculturation of the biblical apostolate must also look on extra-biblical revelation as a complementary aid in the task of inculturation.

When non-Christians read or listen to the Word of God in the bible, they usually project their culture and world view. For instance, when some tribes of Papua New Guinea listened to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, they were thinking of their cargo cults. They interpreted the abyss between the rich man and Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham as the impossibility of talking to God. Or while we usually associate sex in the Fall (following the interpretation of St. Augustine), other tribes do not see that in the Fall as described in Genesis.

Biblical scholars have their competence on the Bible and not on non-Christians. If we follow the model of the incarnation as the model of inculturation, then the dialogue between the World of God and other non-Christians need mediation. The non-Christians also have their insights which need to be appreciated.

Inculturation

Inculturation obviously has to do something with culture. We take culture here in its broad, anthropological meaning. The term culture has taken a new twist

²*Nostra Aetate*. See also J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, "Vatican II and World Religions," in *Interreligious Dialogue*, Catholic Perspectives, ed. by James H. Kroeger (Davao City: Mission Studies Institute, 1990), pp. 33-39.

³See Jacques Dupuis, *Gesu Cristo incontro alle religioni*, trans. by Germano Garatto (Assisi: Cittadelle editrice, 1989), pp. 228-245; John Patrick Breannan, *Christian Mission in a Pluralistic World* (Middlegreen, England: St. Paul Publications, 1990), pp. 50-59.

⁴Ennio Mantovani, "The Revealing Word, Towards a Dialogue of Religions," in *Mission and Dialogue, Theory and Practice*, ed. by Leonardo N. Mercado and James J. Knight (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1989), pp. 133-150.

for three reasons.⁵ First, because it has been enriched in its use in the social sciences, especially in cultural anthropology, sociology, and ethnology; as such, culture covers almost any aspect of society (e.g., politics, economics, language, religion, etc.). Second, because of the "dialogical character" or the "living exchange . . . between the Church and the diverse cultures of people."⁶ Thirdly, the local church as the living people of God plays an important role in inculturation.

Crollius defines inculturation as the following:

the inculturation of the Church is the integration of the Christian experience of a local Church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in elements of its culture, but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal.⁷

In this definition, inculturation, like culture, is not taken as static but as living or dynamic. Hence there is growth in the culture because it is alive. When one eats, the food, which is a foreign body, becomes a part of our body. The result is that in the growth, we are different from what we were before. The given local community as People of God through inculturation can assimilate both the Good News and culture so that in the process, transformation takes place.

We have explained that the incarnation is the model of inculturation.⁸ The model implies two components: humanity and God in exchange. Pope John Paul II says that inculturation "expresses . . . the great mystery of the Incarnation."⁹

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI encourages us ("individual churches") to inculturate:

The individual churches – which are involved not only with men but also their aspirations, their wealth and their poverty, with their manner of praying and living and their outlook on the world – *must make their own* the substance of the evangelical message. Without sacrifice of the essential truths *they must transpose this message into an idiom which will be understood by the people they serve and thus proclaim it.*¹⁰

By "substance of evangelical message," I understand with St. Thomas Aquinas that our faith can be summarized in the persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

⁵Ary A. Roest Crollius, "Inculturation: Newness and Ongoing Process," in *Inculturation, Its Meaning and Urgency*, ed. by J.M. Waliggo et al. (Kampala-Uganda: St. Paul Publications-Africa, 1986), pp. 43-45.

⁶*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 44.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 43. Italics in original.

⁸Mercado, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23.

⁹*Catechesi tradendae*, no. 53.

¹⁰*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 63. Italics added.

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is a concrete person. This concrete person or the Good News as a real person, lived and thought like a Jew. His being Jew has challenged others nationalities through the centuries to make him alive, so to speak, in their cultural way of following Christ. So when the first missionaries (who were Jewish converts) preached to the Greeks, the Greeks inculturated Christ in their own culture. Hence the preaching of Christ has always been inculturated.

Nkeramihigo rightly says that "Christianity can not divest itself fully of its European historical destiny, without running the risk of denying its very essence."¹¹ That means we cannot entirely fault the Western Missionaries for preaching a Western Christ because preaching is always inculturated. But we can fault them for making that message as absolute in the sense that it is culture-free. The missionary must be always aware that even his attitudes unwittingly color his preaching of the Good News. Filipino missionaries abroad also preach unwittingly their own image of Christ. If translated in the Philippine context, it means, Filipinos must "bear fruit" with the risen Christ by separating walls of hatred. In being ourselves in following Christ, we automatically are inculturated.

LEVELS OF INCULTURATION

The inculturation of the biblical apostolate can take various levels: the personal, language, translations, and in the theology of interpretation. Let us go to each level.

Personal Inculturation

Since the biblical apostolate means people dealing with other people, obviously this is one area to start with. As people we are subject to how culture affects our ways of interaction. In management jargon, the term is human behavior in organization (HBO). Every organization has to deal with problems related to HBO. The social sciences have been aware of the limitations of Western models.¹² We edited a book on the use of Filipino psychology for village development.¹³ This is not the place for going to the details.

Faith must flow into action. We gave the analogy of the various reactions to watching a thrilling game of basketball. The reactions of the spectators depend on the disposition of each individual.¹⁴ If a young man is in love with a girl, one need

¹¹Theoneste Nkeramihigo, "Inculturation and the Specificity of Christian Faith," in *Inculturation*, p. 71.

¹²Virgilio G. Enriquez (ed.), *Indigenous Psychology, A Book of Readings* (Quezon City: Akademya ng Sikolohiyang Pilipino, 1990).

¹³Leonardo N. Mercado (ed.), *Filipino Psychology for Village Development* (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1980).

¹⁴Mercado, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

not tell him how to express his love. He will express his love according to his talents, his disposition, and the means available to him. If he is in love with God, then something analogous happens. If we draw this example further, we can apply it to a people. If a particular people believes and loves Christ, then that people will naturally and spontaneously manifest that commitment.

Do we impose our preconception of the biblical apostolate without looking at the culture? Let us take a few examples.

Men and women in rural areas do not mix freely. Men tend to associate with men, and women with women. There is hierarchy in our society, even in the family. Question: Does the biblical apostolate take this into consideration in the grouping of its bible sessions?

Our society is hierarchic. Even in the family the children have their rank corresponding titles. What happens if big people and little people are in a bible seminar? (This question also hinges on the proportion of group).

How inculturated is the management style? How inculturated are our biblical administrators? Do they just imitate foreign models? Other problems related with people and human behavior in organization also touch the inculturation of the biblical apostolate.

How inculturated is the way of teaching the bible? Do we just follow the colonial ways of our schools? Scholars have pointed out the Western bias of our school system. While our homes stress the group or sakop, our school system stress individualism. One example of this type of individualism is the reward system: who is valedictorian, salutatorian, and so forth. Since we Filipinos are group or sakop oriented, why not use the sakop philosophy?¹⁵ One of my graduate students tried the sakop of teaching mathematics to Grade I and Grade II pupils in Surigao.¹⁶ The experiment proved the sakop way of teaching made the pupils "work more efficiently and achieve better" than the control group which was taught the traditional way.¹⁷ There are ways of teaching where Filipino values are maintained. Space and time do not allow us to elaborate more on this point.

Language

Language is the carrier of culture. If we speak in our native language, we think Filipino. Although we do not yet have a national language, our various Philippine languages are like brothers and sisters. Hence, we encourage the use of the local language in the biblical apostolate.

¹⁵See Leonardo N. Mercado, *Applied Filipino Philosophy* Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1977), pp. 69-84.

¹⁶Leby R. Mozar, "Sakop-Oriented Learning Among Grade I and II Pupils of Quezon Elementary School, Mainit, Surigao del Norte: Its Implications and Effects on Achievement." Term paper for Philosophy 242; submitted October 2, 1990.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 23.

The trend is towards Filipino and less English. Surveys tell us that the status of English is degenerating in our schools. Television talk shows in Manila channels have more and more programs in Filipino. English programs tend more to be after 10:00 P.M. Likewise prestigious universities in Manila also teach philosophy and other social sciences in Filipino. Some professors who teach theology in Filipino discovered that what is abstract in English appears concrete and even poetic in Filipino.

They also discovered that there is a big difference if the class is in English or in Filipino. When taught in English, the students tend to memorize jargon and give it back to the professor during the exam. In other words, little learning takes place. If they write term papers, they can spin words without realizing their bluff. But if they write in Filipino, they are aware that they are bluffing.

The moral, therefore, is to conduct the biblical apostolate in the local language. Teach the bible in your native language. This also includes praying in our native languages. Hence the liturgy in Ilocano, Pangasinan, etc. will have a far-reaching effect in inculturation.

Translation

The Spanish missionaries had a translation policy of not using the local terms for around 25 key theological words. Examples are *Dios*, *Santisima Trinidad*, *Gracia*, *Eucaristía*, *Sacramento*, and other key words found in the catechism. This policy was to safeguard the purity of doctrine. We know, however, that such a policy is against the spirit of inculturation. We still have to inculturate those theological terms.

The Italians have a saying, "Traduzione, tradditore" (in English we would render it in the plural: "translations are traitors"). This is because each language has its own world view. For example, Eskimo has four terms for snow in its various stages. We do not have a native word for snow. But we have a rich vocabulary for rice from the seed, to its planting, harvesting, milling, and cooking phase. The original languages of the Bible (Hebrew and Greek) have their share in the difficulty of translation.

Now the translations popular in the Philippines are from the Philippine Bible Society (PBS).¹⁸ Its translation of the Bible is based on two principles: (1) direct intelligibility and (2) fidelity to the text. To achieve both principles is usually rare. The *New English Bible* is faithful to the text. It renders the translation in formal, difficult English. But it sacrifices intelligibility for the ordinary reader. The other

¹⁸In this section, I am indebted to Fr. Willi Villegas, SVD, who is a member of the Philippine Bible Society and to Fr. Hermann Mueller, SVD. Both teach at the Divine Word Seminary, Tagaytay City.

extreme of intelligibility is the use of vulgar language. There are translations popular in the so-called Bible Belt of the Southern United States which uses vulgar language. So a compromise has to be met. An example of this compromise is the *New American Bible*.

In the Philippines, how are the translations of the PBS based? They are based more on the principle of immediate intelligibility, and less of fidelity to the text. Immediate intelligibility is geared to the readership of Filipinos between 18 to 27 years of age. This group comprises the bulk of the Philippine population. That means the language must be understandable to this group without the use of a dictionary. So the PBS does not go for the refined (and often difficult) language. The Tagalog or Ilocano which the old people use may be more precise but the PBS avoids their vocabulary for the sake of intelligibility of the masses. PBS prefers the ordinary Ilocano or Tagalog used by the young. Nor would PBS go the extreme of using vulgar language.

By intelligibility, the PBS has debunked the literal translation, that is word for word translation. They follow the principle of Eugene Nida for dynamic equivalences. It means they do not translate words but meanings.

The PBS gave a seminar to the bible translators. They gave two examples. For the Dayak tribe in Borneo, to give cold water to somebody is the highest insult. The people of the tribe always boil their water because of the problem of polluted water. But Christ said: "You can be sure that whoever gives even a drink of *cold* water to one of the least of these my followers because he is my follower, will certainly receive a reward" (Mt. 10:42). So the bible society in Borneo translates "cold water" in that passage as "hot water." This translation is for direct intelligibility, and relays the original intention of Christ.

How would you translate sheep and lamb in places where people never saw them? Sheep, as we know, is an important animal for the Semites. It is used for food, for sacrifice, for clothing. The horns are used as musical instrument. In Papua New Guinea where there are no sheep, pigs are important as wealth, for Food, for sacrifice. So "Lamb of God" is "Pig of God." Pig is the dynamic equivalence of lamb.

Another example of the translation of meaning is the parable of the talents (Mt. 18:23-35). How is talent to be translated? In the original language, a talent was the highest denomination of money. Commentators say that the 10,000 talents in the parable is more than the annual budget of a country. One talent would be equivalent to a million pesos. One local translation reads that the servant owed the king five million pesos whereas his fellow-servant owed him only five hundred pesos. So in this dynamic equivalent translation, the reader see and understand the difference between the two sums.

Furthermore, any language changes. For instance, when I was in high school, we used to sing "Old Black Joe." It has a passage, "when my heart was young and gay." Now "gay" has a different connotation, meaning "homosexual." Or take the

word "boy." It now has a pejorative meaning in the United States. Similarly the Tagalog or Ilocano which our grandparents used to speak is different than that spoken by from the present generation. Whereas the old people would say, "Hindi ko masikmura," the present generation would say, "Hindi ko ma-take."

Because of the rapid language change, the PBS has a new edition of every translation for every ten years. So when the PBS finished its 1980 translation of the Ilocano bible, the translators already started their work for the 1990 edition. PBS can afford this frequent translation because they are rich. Are our Catholic leaders as generous for funding translations? Or have they other priorities?

So far, about the positive side of PBS, let us now look at the negative side – at least from the Catholic viewpoint. Perhaps an example will illustrate the point. Mt. 19:1-12 deals with the question of divorce. According to the Good News translation, Jesus says: "Man must not separate, then, what God has joined together" (Mt. 19:6). Let us go to the controversial verse: "I tell you, then, that any man who divorces his wife for any cause other than her *unfaithfulness*, commits adultery if he marries some other woman" (Mt. 19:9; parallels in Mk. 10:11-12 and Lk. 16:18). In the original Greek the word for is *porneia*, an unchaste thing. Even the reputable Protestant exegete, Joachim Jeremias, says that *porneia* in Hebrew is *enuth dabar* and does not speak of divorce. In plain English, it means a marriage which is not a marriage because of the impediment. Should somebody attempt a marriage with such an impediment, the marriage should get annulled because it is no marriage at all. Mt. 19:9 "is probably concerned with the dismissal of an illegitimate spouse, or with a separation which cannot be followed by another marriage."¹⁹ The verse sounds like an exception but it is not an exception.

Now the PBS translation of *porneia* is "nangangalunya" from "alunya." Fornication or adultery is not the correct translation. The PBS therefore puts adultery as the translation. Fr. Villegas objected to the translation, saying, "Look, this is a Protestant scholar telling you that your translation is wrong." PBS answered: "It is our tradition that we follow divorce, and translation must be reflected in our translation." In the final analysis they decide what to translate in spite of the Catholic objections.

With that kind of translation, the Protestant preachers therefore can quote the bible that Christ allows divorce.

We can therefore understand why the Archdiocese of Cebu made its own translation of the New Testament. Four Cebuano translators produced a translation of the four gospels after two months of work. They based their work from the English translations. But scholars laugh at this quick, shallow attempt. Any good translation of the Bible will entail years of hard work.

¹⁹Xavier Leon-Dufour (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, updated second edition (Pasay City: St. Paul Publications, 1988), p. 336.

Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, the archbishop of Nueva Segovia, has also been aware of the limitations of the Protestant ecumenical translation. In his letter to the episcopal chairman of the JPIBC, he requests for a Catholic translation for the following reasons:

In the United States, Catholic scholars and Protestant scholars worked together in translating the Bible. Even so, Catholic scholars have also worked on an exclusively Catholic translation, not because they believed that their common work with Protestant was, in effect, Protestant in nature. While they saw the value of a common translation, they also saw advantages in having a Catholic *translation* that would more clearly and easily lead to a Catholic *interpretation*. This must be the same attitude that we Catholics should have. There is always the need for better and better translations. I also believe that an Ilocano Catholic translation of the Bible would take away an emerging fallacy that since there is a common Bible translation there are no differences in Biblical interpretation between Catholics and Protestants. In the context of our pastoral situation today where so many of our own flock go astray because of the Bible, the necessity of emphasizing the fact that there is a Catholic *interpretation* of the Bible has to be underscored. A Catholic *translation* will help towards this. Such a position is quite different from simply labelling the PBS translation as Protestant.²⁰

There are values on both positions, that is, to stick to one ecumenical translation, or to also have a Catholic translation. Perhaps a compromise is to have a section limited to controversial texts with a Catholic translation.

The best procedure is to translate from the original biblical language to the other without intermediaries. For instance, there are some trained bible scholars who know both Hebrew, Greek, and their native Tagalog. So they can translate from the biblical language straight to Tagalog. But how many can do that kind of work?

The translators of the PBS do not know the original biblical languages. In view of this deficiency, they take as many translations as possible – as far as seven. Then they lay these translations in front of them and read them verse by verse. Then they find the common denominator which they use for the translation to the given Philippine language.

So in the question for inculturation, how do you train your bible facilitators? Do you use the ordinary translation? Or should you not tell to go back – as far as they are able – to the original text?

²⁰Letter (dated Sept. 8, 1990) to Rev. Edmundo Abaya, Episcopal Chairman of the JPIBC.

In short, we agree that the dynamic equivalence of translation is a way of inculturation. But it has also its dangers.

Interpretation and Worldview

The problem of biblical interpretation brings us to a deeper level, namely, that of hermeneutics.

In the first place, we know that the word of God is very rich. It is like a diamond which can be seen from any angle. Each angle has its own beauty. Likewise the person of Jesus can also have many interpretations, each depending on the eyeglasses of the viewer.

On the other hand, we also know that the Bible is told in Semitic categories. How normative are those categories? This problem brings us to world view.

In Table 1, we show a comparative analysis of culture and religion. Since the Jews of the Old Testament were a pastoral people, their livelihood meant following the herd for pasture. Hence they were nomads. Now the life style of defending the herd required a social organization which was male-oriented. Since the male played an important role, kinship was patrilineal and women were second class. It was natural to think of God as a personal being, the giver of all things, the judge. The sacrifices also reflected the pastoral life: the offering of animals like the sheep.

From this Semitic culture, the patrilineal descent also made the Jews think of God as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3:6). The psalms and worship reflect the Semitic culture.

On the other hand, if Jesus would have been born in a different culture, for instance, agricultural, then the categories in which he could have expressed himself would have been different.

Is this Semitic culture absolute? There are also matrilineal cultures as in certain tribes of Indonesia. Is God therefore not better presented as a mother? The current feminist movement is precisely against the male domination in the Church. After all, Paul said that in Christ there is not male or female (Gal. 3:28).

But there are also cultures where God is not male nor female but neuter.²¹ Buddhism, for instance, pictures the Absolute, not in male nor female terms.

Likewise there are cultures where the absolute is neither male, female, nor neuter but personal.²² One example, I think, is Philippine culture. We have been

²¹Leonardo N. Mercado, "The Holy in Filipino Thought," *Diwa* 14 (1989): 70-71.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 71

acculturated in thinking God as father. But I believe the pre-colonial Filipinos and even our ethnic minorities still have this view. Their main concern were the ancestors who will intercede before the absolute. God for the ancient Filipinos was someone remote and inaccessible. Even now when we think of *palad* (fate) or *gaba* (punishment), these terms are not bound by gender.

What about Kabunian? Is he not male? Kabunian and other tribal gods, I think, are limited to the tribe. They amount to intercessors. In anthropological terms Kabunian would be a demaideity.²³ God for the ancient Filipinos, we said earlier, was described as ostiose (or lazy) because he is removed from the affairs of mankind.

The idea of God as impersonal or apersonal has always been in the mystics. St. John of the Cross speaks of God as *nada* (nothing). John therefore has been called the Christian Buddhist. *The Cloud of Unknowing*, that anonymous mystical classic has also a different picture of God. So in the Christian tradition, there is a variety of valid presentations of the absolute.

I know of one nun who is steeped in the feminist movement and feminist theology. She told me that she prefers to meditate on God as having no gender. In this way she feels more fulfilled.

In Table II we have the contrast of three broad types of culture.²⁴ The table makes a continuum from the kinship types (as represented by our tribal Filipinos). The other extreme is the industrial type (like the middle and upper class Filipinos of our big cities). Between the two extremes are the peasants.

Under the column of ideology, religion permeates all aspects of life among the kinship type but is unimportant for the industrial type. This table is quite rich and can help us crystallize the target audience of our biblical apostolate.

I suggest we focus ourselves to the world view of the tribal Filipinos (kinship culture type) and the peasants. The industrial culture type may be concentrated in Metro Manila and some big cities.

There is the danger that a certain interpretation be imposed on others. Let us take an example. We know that the West has the dominance-over-nature philosophy or worldview. Gen. 1:28 reads: "Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control." Although

²³Adolf Jensen, *Myth and Cult Among Primitive Peoples* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 88-92.

²⁴McGavran developed this model which Wagner and Winter expanded. See R. Daniel Shaw, "Culture and Evangelism: A Model for Missiological Strategy," *Missiology* 18 (1990): 294-295.

the original meaning of the text is that man is only a steward, a trustee of God's creation, this text justified the West in exploiting the environment. Because of the problems in the ecology, the West has realized that this dominance over nature is wrong.

On the other hand, the Filipinos have the harmony with nature orientation. The typical Filipino has that natural yearning to be one with creation. But the rich and the powerful, who have been influenced by the West, have also abused the environment.

Having the right terms or philosophy is like having the proper tools for the inculturation of hermeneutics. Here we need the help of Filipino philosophy.

Perhaps an example will illustrate the point.²⁵ It is about the translation and understanding of the soul. Our theology of the soul has been colored by scholastic philosophy, which in turn was based on Greek philosophers. The elements of body and soul are discussed in the various philosophers.

But our Filipino thinking is different from Western thought. Besides the body, we have the soul and spirit. The soul (translated as *kaluha* (Cebuano Visayan), *kaluluwa* (Tagalog) and *kararura* or *kadua* (Ilocano). This soul is believed sometimes to travel outside the body when one dreams. Because it is a companion, is also called guardian angel. When the soul is away for a long time, we have ceremonies to call back the soul, lest the body gets sick. Besides the soul is the principle of life, which is not so explicit in our languages. The term we prefer is *ginhawa* (Cebuano Visayan), or *hininga* (Tagalog), or *anges* (Ilocano). The spirit departs only after death.

This belief of the body, soul, and spirit is close to the Chinese, Indian, Japanese, and Jewish (biblical) thinking. The bible speaks of body as *bashar* (Hebrew) or as *sarx* (Greek). The soul is *nephesh* (Hebrew) or *psyche* (Greek) whereas spirit is *ruach* (Hebrew) or *pneuma* (Greek).

Because of this explicitation of the Filipino mind, we can therefore understand better the bible. So the biblical scholars who want to inculturate must work together with indigenous philosophy.

The inculturation of hermeneutics and of biblical theology also depends not on translating terms but on the meaning.

Let us conclude by way of summary. We spoke about biblical and extra-biblical revelation. That means inculturation of the biblical apostolate must be open-

²⁵See our forthcoming article, "Soul and Spirit in Filipino Thought," in *Philippine Studies* (July 1991)

minded to the other form of how God reveals himself to people. We also spoke about the levels of inculturation: the personal, language, translation, and world view. These are challenges which remain to be answered.

The Word of God (Jesus Christ and the Bible) is the core of our ministry. In order to be understood, the message has to be understood especially through inculturation. Pope John Paul II sums it up: "Therefore an unremitting effort of inculturation must be pursued in order that faith may not remain superficial."²⁸ □

*Missiological Education and Research Office,
Manila*

²⁸*L'Osservatore Romano*, 28 June 1982