

# The Translation of Theological Terms in Some of the Major dialects of the Philippines

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The purpose of this paper is to discuss the ways in which certain key theological terms have been or are being translated in some of the Philippine revisions of the New Testament. It should be recognized that in the following article the literal English translations of Filipino terms often fail to indicate many significant shades of meaning. Moreover, not all these expressions are regarded as fully adequate. Rather they may only reflect various stages of development. The terms were chosen from *A Theological Word Book of the Bible* edited by Alan Richardson (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951). Information regarding the translation of these terms was obtained for Cebuano from Rev. Lumen C. Roble, for Tagalog from Rev. Simon D. Reyes, for Pampango from Dr. Fidel P. Galang, and for Ilocano from Rev. Amadeo Q. Zarza. The first three persons named have served as basic translators for the NT revisions in Cebuano, Tagalog, and Pampango, respectively. In addition, the author has drawn from his experience in working with the various NT revision committees in the Philippines.

## A. Terms Relating to the Redemptive Work of Christ

### 1. *Grace, love, mercy*

Cebuano has no adequate equivalent for 'grace' and the revision uses the Spanish *grasya* which is used exclusively in a religious sense to refer to the grace of God. The Tagalog and Ilocano words *biyaya* and *parabur* also have a religious connotation conveying the idea of a gift from God, although *biyaya* may also be used of a gift from a superior person to an unworthy inferior. In Pampango the word *kalam* describes the quality of one who is open to give, one who has an out-flowing spirit, the opposite of *maimut*, or one who does not like to give, a miserly person.

There is usually more than one word employed for 'love' in the major Philippine dialects. Only one of these is used for divine love. In Cebuano it is *gugma*, in Tagalog, *pag-ibig*, in Pampango, *lugud*, and in Ilocano, *ayat*, although these words may also be used for a noble, refined love of people for each other. They also may simply mean 'like'. In Tagalog and Pampango the word *sinta* is used for the love of a man for a woman and in Pampango also for the love of a person for his country. The Tagalog word for 'sweetheart' *kasintahan* is made from this base. In each of these four dialects there is a word used to mean 'beloved' or 'dear', although such a term apparently is not used by husbands and wives addressing one another. It might, however, be used in a love letter if the writer felt in a romantic and poetic mood. It is appropriately used to describe "the disciple whom Jesus loved," mentioned in the Gospel of John. In Cebuano it is *pinalangga*, in Tagalog, *minamahal*, in Pampango, *pakamalan*, and in Ilocano, *dinungngo*. The root meaning of this term in Tagalog and Pampango and Cebuano is 'precious' or

'dear'. The same root is used in Tagalog to indicate that an article is expensive (cf. the English word *dear*).

'Mercy' is translated in each of these dialects by a word signifying 'pity'. Cebuano has *kaluoy*, Tagalog, *awa*, although *habag* may also be used, Pampango has *pakalulu*, and Ilocano, *asi*. 'Too bad' in Tagalog when referring to persons would be expressed by *kawawa naman*. 'Too bad' when referring to character is *napakasama*, but referring to state or condition of a person is *kawawa naman*. It is interesting to note that in Pampango the word for 'poor' is *pakakalulu* 'one to be pitied'. In Ilocano also the word *asi* denotes a love for the poor or helpless.

## 2. *Redemption, ransom*

The word 'redemption' and its cognates 'redeem', 'redeemer', and 'ransom' are generally translated by words which may be used to buy back an article left in a pawnshop. This is true of the Tagalog word *tubos*, the Pampango word *atbus*, and the word *lukat* which is used to translate 'ransom' in Cebuano. The Ilocano word *subbot* might be so used, but pawnshops do not seem to be a feature of Ilocano culture. The Ilocano word is used for the payment made for the freedom of a person in bondage, for the paying off of the mortgage on land, and for the winning back for someone else of money he had lost in gambling. The Cebuano word *tubos*, unlike Tagalog *tubos*, is not used for redeeming a pawned article but rather to take the place of another who has been penalized. *Tubos* in Tagalog has this Cebuano idea. For example, it would be used of a mother who takes the place of her child who happened to be penalized in the game of forfeits and was ashamed to pay his own penalty. In Pampango a word sometimes used for 'redemption' is *pangakabus*, which signifies that there is a difficult situation from which one is taken by another at the risk of the latter's life. This word is often used more or less interchangeably with *kaligtasan* 'salvation', although the latter does not connote the idea of mortal danger in which the rescuer places himself.

## 3. *Reconciliation, expiation, propitiation*

The words for 'reconciliation', 'expiation', and 'propitiation' are generally related to each other. In Cebuano 'reconciliation' is rendered *pasig-uli* 'a mutual causing to return'. It is formed from *uli* 'to return', 'to come home', 'to restore'. 'Expiation' is translated *halad pasig-uli* 'an offering for reconciliation'. In Pampango the word formerly used for 'reconciliation', *pamipagpayapa*, was based on the root idea of peace or absence of quarrelling, although it did not necessarily signify that the two had been reconciled to each other, but simply that they had agreed to quit fighting. The word suggested for the revision is *pamikasundu* 'a mutual coming together', implying that there had been some misunderstanding or a separation in distance, thought, or feeling, but that there has been a getting together of the persons involved and an agreement of mind and thought has been reached. The expression proposed for 'expiation' is *ain-pamikasundu* 'an offering of reconciliation'. In Ilocano the word used for 'reconciliation', *pannacaicappia*, signifies that there is peace after a state of enmity. The expression used to translate 'expiation' or 'propitiation' is *daton ti cappia* 'peace offering'. In Tagalog the word

for 'reconciliation' is like that proposed for Pampango. *Ipinagkasundo* signifies a conciliation such as between father and son who had had a misunderstanding or quarrel. The word used for 'expiation', however, is *pampalubag-loob*, which signifies an offering made to lessen the feeling of grudge inside the other person. As explained by Rev. Reyes, it is a sort of "spiritual bribe" or an appeasement.

#### 4. *Covenant, testament*

The word for 'covenant' is generally the same word used for 'testament' in the title of the New Testament. The word formerly used in Cebuano could be used of a will or testament, but its more common meaning was 'instruction' (a man's will is considered his final instruction with regard to the disposal of his property, etc.). The word now being used is *pakigsaad* 'a mutual promising'. The words *tipan* in Tagalog and *tipanan* in Pampango also denote a mutual promising on the part of two persons agreeing to do something, e.g. to marry within six months, or an agreement between a landowner and his tenants. In Tagalog the word *tipan* has a romantic touch and often connotes something secretive. The form *tipanan* in Tagalog is used to refer to a 'rendezvous' where lovers agree to meet. In Ilocano *tulag* may also refer to any agreement between two people. The form *nagtulagan* is used to refer to a written contract, e.g. a marriage contract.

#### 5. *Sacrifice, offering*

Terms for 'offering' are not difficult to find, but a suitable translation for 'sacrifice' is more difficult. Cebuano qualifies the word *halad* 'offering' by the addition of *inihaw* 'slain' to express the idea of sacrifice. Similarly, Pampango uses *ain a pete* 'an offering which has been butchered'. Ilocano makes no distinction between 'sacrifice' and 'offering', using the word *daton* for both. It seems to be used exclusively of an offering made to deity. In Pampango the word *daun* may be used for an offering brought before a high official or even something presented to one's lady love. Similarly, in Tagalog the word *hain* is something which is taken and brought before a person, while *handog* is something laid upon an altar as an offering to deity.

#### 6. *Resurrection*

The expressions used to translate 'resurrection' generally contain the idea of living again. The Tagalog uses a cumbersome phrase *pagkabuhay na mag-uli* 'the state of becoming alive or of living again'. Similarly in Pampango *pamanyubling-mie* means 'returning to life'. The Cebuano word *pagkabanhaw*, however, is a religious term used exclusively to refer to resurrection from the dead. The word *panagungar* in Ilocano is formed from the word *agungar*, an agricultural term used to describe the coming back to life of a plant which was wilting but which has been watered by the farmer, or of a bulb which was apparently dead but grows again.

#### 7. *Judgment, condemnation*

The word translated 'judgment' in all four of these dialects simply means a decision made by a judge, court, or referee which may be either favourable or unfavourable. It is therefore necessary to qualify the word

if the meaning 'condemnation' is desired. Thus in Tagalog *kinatulang parusahan*, in Pampango *atul-kaparusan*, and in Ilocano *maocom a madusa*, 'decision to punishment' are used. The word *ocom* in Ilocano is also used of a misfortune or calamity of nature such as a typhoon or pestilence. In Tagalog and Pampango the related forms *hukom* and *ukum* are also used of divine judgment, especially of the final judgment. In Tagalog, however, the form *huhukuman* may be used to describe the execution of a man about to die in the electric chair (which may be regarded as his final judgment!).

## B. Terms Relating to the Salvation of Man

### 1. *Salvation, deliverance*

'Salvation' in Cebuano is *kaluwasan*, which may be related to *gawas* 'outside' and *kagawasan* 'freedom'. Salvation is thus the freeing of a person from bondage. *Ligtas* in Tagalog and Pampango involves the saving or deliverance of a person by one who is very powerful and thus able to effect salvation. In Ilocano the word *salacan* is used to describe the recovery of a person from sickness, the preservation of a home and plants from destruction in a typhoon, and the rescue of a person from danger.

### 2. *Justification, righteousness*

The terms used for 'righteousness' and 'justification' in each of these dialects are based on the word for 'straight', which is related at least in Ilocano to the word for 'law'. In Cebuano 'righteous' is *matarung* 'straight'; and 'justify' is *pagmatarung* 'to make straight or righteous'. In Tagalog 'righteous' is *matuwid* 'straight'; and 'justify' is *pinapaging matuwid* 'to cause to become straight or righteous' or *inaaring matuwid* 'to consider straight'. In Pampango 'righteous' is *matulid* 'straight' and 'justify' is *pangagawang-matulid* 'to cause to become straight or righteous', although a separate form *katuliran* is used to denote the righteousness of God. In Ilocano 'righteous' is *nalinteg* 'straight'; and 'justify' is *maibilang a nalinteg* 'to make straight or righteous'.

### 3. *Sanctification, holiness*

'Sanctification' and its cognates 'sanctify', 'saint', 'holy', and 'holiness' are translated in Ilocano by the Spanish *santo*. However, *balaan* in Cebuano and *banal* in Tagalog and Pampango seem to be dialect equivalents of *santo*. These words are used to translate 'sanctify' except where reference is made to God sanctifying Christ (John 10:36) or of Christ's sanctifying himself (John 17:19). In these passages Cebuano uses the Spanish *dedicar*, Ilocano the Spanish *consagrar*, but Tagalog and Pampango use *talaga* (and *telaga*) signifying 'to dedicate' or 'separate for a definite purpose' (cf. RSV "consecrate" in these two passages).

### 4. *Repentance*

The terms used to translate 'repent' in these dialects seem to be fairly equivalent to the English word in meaning, indicating sorrow for one's misdeeds and a resolve not to do them again. In Ilocano the word *babawi* may also be used of a person who realizes he has made a mistake in business, i.e. he may have lost money and now he realizes that he

did not do the right thing. For example, a farmer may be said to 'repent' if he should say to himself, "I should really have planted corn instead of rice. Now I know better. I have learned my lesson. I will do better next time."

### 5. Confession

'Confession' is generally translated in these dialects by a word meaning 'to tell', 'inform', 'declare', or 'make known'. The Tagalog word *ipahayag* simply means 'to disclose', 'reveal', or 'make known'. The Pampango word *papasiag* means 'to make public', while the Ilocano word *ipudno* means 'to acknowledge the truth of something' (from the word *pudno* 'true'). The Spanish loan word *kumpisal* or *confisal* is common to all of these dialects but seems to refer only to the Roman Catholic practice of secret confessing to a priest, although at least in Tagalog it is sometimes used by Protestants with reference to one's confessing his sins to God.

### 6. Forgiveness

This is one of the most uniquely translated theological terms. In Tagalog and Pampango the word for 'forgiveness' is also the word for 'bargain' *tawad*. This may be because forgiveness is regarded as a bargain—something given at a lower price than the person deserves to pay. In Cebuano, the word 'forgive' is formed from *saylo* meaning 'to go beyond'. *Pagpasaylo* 'forgiveness' is literally 'a causing to go beyond'. In Ilocano *pannacapacawan* 'forgiveness' is formed from the root *awan* meaning 'none' or 'no more', signifying that the sin is regarded as being no longer in existence or forgotten. Thus, in Ilocano, to forgive is to forget.

### 7. Faith, belief, trust

There are in each of these four dialects two words used to express the ideas of belief and trust. In Cebuano *patoo* means 'to believe that a person is telling the truth', to believe a fact or a statement; while *pagsalig* means 'to trust or put faith in the person himself'. The former is used to translate 'believe' when reference is made to intellectual assent or acknowledgment of the truth of a man's words, while the latter is used to translate 'believe in' or 'believe on' God or the person of Christ as in John 3:16. In Ilocano there are two words corresponding somewhat to these two Cebuano words, *mamati* 'to believe a person or thing', i.e. to give credence to what one says with the idea also of obedience; and the word *agtalec* meaning 'trust', 'entrust', 'commit'. The latter would be used, for example, of a mother giving the keys of the house to her children when she goes to market, or of a landowner entrusting the care of his land to tenants. This word is used in the translation of some passages of Scripture, e.g. John 2:24, "Jesus did not trust himself to them," but the revision committee has not made a final decision as to its use in translating 'believe in' in such passages as John 3:16. The form *panmami* is used in Ilocano for 'faith' both to refer to the act of believing and to refer to that which one believes or the creed one holds. There is a word *sumampalataya* in Tagalog (and *salpantaya* in Pampango) which is used exclusively in a religious sense to express belief in God or to

indicate 'saving faith', although there is another word which seems to parallel the Cebuano *pagsalig* and the Ilocano *magtalec* with the meaning of 'trusting', 'relying on a person'. There is also the word *maniwala* in both Tagalog and Pampango, but it is used only with regard to human beings, while *sumampalataya* and *salpantaya* are reserved for faith in God. A form of *maniwala* is used also to express the idea of giving credence to the truth of what is said, e.g. the intellectual belief that one and one makes two, or the belief that a person who says, "I'll pay my debts," will keep his word.

### C. Terms Relating to the Christian Life

#### 1. *Peace*

In each of the four dialects there are at least two different words used to translate the English word 'peace'. One is used to express the idea of the absence or cessation of war. Another is used for calmness or peacefulness. Still another may be used for quietness. Thus, in Cebuano *pakigdait* refers to a state of peace between two previously fighting or warring parties, while *kalinaw* refers to the subjective state of peace or the calmness of the soul of a person (cf. *peace with God* and *the peace of God* in English). In Tagalog *kapayapaan* indicates the state of a nation, of a family where there is the absence of war, while *balisa* describes the state of mind of a person who is restless or troubled. *Tahimik* is calm and peaceful. In Pampango the word *kapayaran* is the opposite of war, while *katahimikan* refers to inward peacefulness, also the peacefulness of a lake after a storm subsides, and *karatunan* is used to describe the quietness of noontide. In Ilocano the word *cappia* is used to indicate the peace of two persons who have ceased fighting each other, while *talna* is used for the inward calm which a man may have in his heart as well as for the state of peace in a nation that is not at war.

#### 2. *Eternal life*

Two of the four dialects use a negative expression and two a positive one to translate 'eternal' or 'everlasting life'. Tagalog and Pampango use an expression meaning 'life which has no boundary' (*buhay na walang hanggan* in Tagalog). Cebuano and Ilocano use an expression meaning 'continuing life' (*biag nga agnanayon* in Ilocano).

#### 3. *Patience, endurance*

The quality of 'patience' is translated by *pailub* in Cebuano, perhaps related to *kilub* 'inside', denoting an inner spirit of forbearance. In Tagalog this is *pagtitiyaga*. In Ilocano *kinaanus* is the quality of one who is willing to work hard or of one who is good (i.e. patient) with children. The carabao is referred to as *naanus nga animal* 'a patient animal'. The word for endurance in Cebuano, Tagalog, and Ilocano is related in some way in each case to the idea of suffering. The word *pagkamainantuson* in Cebuano is the fact of being persevering in suffering, based on the word *antus* 'to suffer'. Tagalog has two words for 'endurance', *pagtitiis* from *tiiis* 'suffer' and *pagbabata* signifying bearing great suffering or pain (perhaps from *bata* 'child'). In Ilocano the word *mangagitud* signifies endurance in suffering or perseverance in spite of hardship, based on *tured* 'brave', 'courageous'.

#### 4. *Servant, slave, minister*

The various words for 'service', including terms for 'servant', 'slave', and 'minister', are very interesting in that they reflect the cultural viewpoint of the Filipino people toward those assigned tasks considered menial. In each of the four dialects there are well-known terms used to indicate a state of slavery or of a degrading servitude, but these terms are never used in referring to one's own servants or to anyone else unless one intends to be insulting or derisive. This may be a reaction to the state of former servitude which the Filipino people felt toward their former Spanish overlords. The word for 'slave' in Cebuano is *ulipon*, in Tagalog *alipin*, in Pampango *alipan*, and in Ilocano *adipen*. In Tagalog the word *kaalipinan* 'the state of being in slavery' is used, for example, to describe the powerless victim of Communism, who may be said to be in a state of utter servitude. Tagalog has another word, *bataan*, from the word *bata* 'child', to refer to one who is inferior like a child and who must obey orders because he is inferior. A *bataan* in Tagalog is an inferior who will do anything for his superior. But these are not dignified words. Even the word *alila*, which correctly denotes a domestic servant, is not used as frequently as *katulong* 'helper' or the more general term for 'servant' *lingkod*. Similarly, in Pampango a house servant may be called *ipus*, but he is more likely to be referred to as *kasaup* a 'helper'; and a 'server' among equals is referred to as *talasuyu*. In Cebuano the domestic servant is called *binatonan* from the root *baton* meaning 'to acquire'; the more general term for all kinds of servants is *sulogoon*, while the word used of the service of a public official or one who serves the public or mankind is *alagad* (e.g. Mark 10:45, "The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve..."). In Ilocano the word *catulongan* 'helper' is generally used of one's servants, but the word *panagservi* is used of the service of one who serves the general public. In all four dialects the term adopted for a Christian minister is the Spanish term *ministro* (even though the word 'minister' in the original is the same as 'servant').

#### 5. *Testimony, witness*

The ideas of testimony and witness which are synonymous in meaning in English are translated by two separate words in the major Philippine dialects, one to indicate the character of the person who bears the testimony and the other to indicate the testimony which the witness bears. In all four dialects the word for the person who is the witness is *saksi*. In Cebuano the testimony he bears is *pagpamatuod*, in Tagalog it is *patotoo*, and in Ilocano *pammanecnec*. In each case the word refers to something which is caused to be stated as true, or attested as true.

#### 6. *Fellowship*

In each of the four dialects the expression used to translate the concept of 'fellowship' contains the idea of a mutual sharing among two or more persons. In Cebuano the word *pakig-ambit* means specifically 'a mutual sharing'. In Pampango, the word used to describe the fellowship that characterized the early Christian church in the Book of Acts is *pamiagum* 'a coming together in mind and spirit', although two other words may also be used to denote 'fellowship': *pamiabe* 'a coming together

in body', and *pamisanmetung* 'a coming together to become one'. In Ilocano there are likewise three terms to express 'fellowship': *panagcaddua* or *pannakicadcadua* denoting the sharing by two, derived from *dua* 'two'; *pannakimaymaysa* 'to be one together' and *panaglalanglang* or *panaglangenlangen* used of fellowship in eating together, (sitting around a table together), and used also metaphorically of spiritual communion with God. In Tagalog the words for 'fellowship' are *pagsasama-sama* and *paggipisan-pisan*. Both denote the idea of 'coming together' or 'togetherness'.

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## The Lwo Bible

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The name *Lwo* is used by the International African Institute to designate a group of some twelve Nilotic languages spoken in parts of the Southern Sudan, Uganda, and Kenya. In Uganda the three main languages in this group are Alur, Acholi, and Lango, and in practice the name *Lwo* has been frequently used in recent years to cover the two latter only. The Alur people are separated administratively, as well as geographically by the Nile, from the other two, and little has as yet been published in their language, which is also sufficiently different from the other two to warrant their having a separate Bible.

The Acholi and Lango tribes occupy a considerable portion of the present Northern Province of Uganda and share a common border. Though somewhat fewer in numbers, the Acholi occupy an area more than twice that occupied by the Lango and also overlap into the Sudan. Official sources cited by Bryan and Tucker in *Distribution of the Nilotic and Nilo-Hamitic Languages of Africa* (1948) give the number of Acholi speakers as c. 180,000 and of Lango speakers as c. 276,000. It is expected that the census held in 1959 will show an increase in these figures. The Lango are usually held to be a Nilo-Hamitic tribe who have adopted a dialect of Acholi while retaining some features of their original language. The task of the Lwo Bible Committee is to produce a version which will be equally acceptable to both groups.

Ten years ago such a project would have excited little favourable response and possibly some suspicion; now we feel we can go ahead. Faced with a large number of languages and dialects, the Uganda Government recognized five which it would use for official purposes and in which the Education Department would assist towards the printing of school books. Acholi was one of the five; Lango was not. The Anglican Church, through the Church Missionary Society, had begun work among the Acholi some twenty years before they opened up work in Lango District, in 1926, taking with them the Acholi New Testament already in print. Such books as they had produced by the middle forties of this century were also in Acholi, with a few Lango