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CBAP@25: REMEMBERING ITS HISTORY, CELEBRATING ITS STORIES

Ma. Anicia B. Co, R.V.M.

The theme of the 25th Business Meeting Dinner scheduled in July 2024 was "Remembering and Envisioning the Future of the CBAP." This sharing is a personal recollection of the beginnings of the Catholic Biblical Association of the Philippines. The focus is on remembering. The memories shared are but a glimpse, a small part of the whole scenario of the beginning of this association. So that personal sharing may not depart too much from what had been written about its history, I consulted the article written by Fr. John Cabrido, S.D.B., which appeared in the publication of the 10th CBAP convention. The video posted on the CBAP website on June 20, 2011, by Fr. Randolf Flores, S.V.D., presents not only the immediate beginnings of the CBAP but also the early initiatives to establish an association of Scripture professors.[1] This video gives a broader perspective on the place of the CBAP in the Church in the Philippines.

I. Before the CBAP Came to Be – A Story in Five Acts

The CBAP video mentions seven acts. The seven acts may be divided into two parts. The first part, before the CBAP was established, consists of five acts. The early initiatives constitute a story in five acts.

[1] Randolf Flores, *"Catholic Biblical Association of the Philippines,"* YouTube video, June 21, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdMrhyePmak.

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Act I. In the 1970s, Most Rev. Cirilo Reyes Almario, D.D., the head of the Episcopal Commission on Biblical Apostolate (ECBA), formed the Biblical Association of the Philippines. It was discontinued for some reasons. The precise date or year when it ceased functioning is not recorded.

Act II. In 1986, Most Rev. Crisostomo Yalung, D.D., head of ECBA, exerted efforts to form a biblical association of professors. He met with students of biblical studies in Rome. He proposed to have a gathering of exegetes from different schools to serve as consultants of the Biblical Commission.

Act III. In 1998, when he was in Rome, Most Rev. Crisostomo Yalung, D.D. had a meeting with the students of the Pontifical Biblical Institute (Biblicum), Gregorian University, and the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum). They shared their desire for an association of biblical professors to help them in their ministry in the Philippines.

ACT IV. In 1999, a group was organized, and the members gathered together to discuss the formation of an association of biblical scholars in the Philippines.

ACT V. On July 22–23, 1999, the first meeting of 32 Filipino Bible Scholars was held at the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) seminary in Tagaytay City.

II. The Birthing of the CBAP

The Articles of Incorporation of the Catholic Biblical Association of the Philippines were formulated and signed by the following incorporators: Fr. Gil A. Alinsangan, S.S.P., Fr. Cielito R. Almazan, O.F.M., Fr. John A. Cabrido, S.D.B., Sr. Ma. Anicia B. Co, R.V.M., Fr. Loreto F. Z. Miranda, C.I.C.M., Fr. Victor S. Nicdao, Fr. Victor S. Salanga, S.J., Fr. Herbert Schneider, S.J., and Sr. Niceta M. Vargas, O.S.A. I was assigned as the Corporate Secretary of the association. As far as I can remember, Fr. Schneider prepared or had the documents prepared. The Articles of Incorporation were signed in January 2000

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and notarized on February 8, 2000, while the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) registration was dated March 16, 2000.

The first Annual CBAP convention was held on July 28–30, 2000, at the PHINMA Training Center, Tagaytay City. The official launching of the CBAP was held on July 30, 2000. Forty-eight (48) official members approved the CBAP Constitutions and By-Laws, and the members of the Board of Trustees were also elected.

III. The CBAP: Remembering When, What, and How

My involvement in the CBAP within its 25 years of existence is not continuous for some reasons. I was involved in 1999–2000 and then in 2014–2017, and from 2020 to the present. I will focus only on how I got involved at the beginning of the CBAP from 1999 to 2000.

I would like to begin my side of the story by referring to the handwritten account of Fr. John Cabrido, S.D.B. From his account, I came to know that way back in 1997, Fr. John, a member of the executive committee of ECBA, had already brought up the topic to Bishop Yalung. This idea preceded what we know as Act III before the birthing of CBAP. It was also Fr. John who thought of inviting Fr. James Swetnam, S.J. to be the Guest Speaker in 1999 for the first meeting of bible scholars in the Philippines. Fr. John held the first meeting of an organizing committee at St. John Bosco Parish, Makati. While I was not present at this first meeting, it was his second meeting that I was able to attend.

I cannot be sure about the dates anymore, but I remember that it was Fr. John who contacted me and invited me to the meeting. He, of course, mentioned Bishop Yalung when he introduced to the group the idea of forming a biblical association—an idea I certainly welcomed. Shortly after I arrived from my studies at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Leuven, Belgium, and started teaching at the Maryhill School of Theology (MST), Quezon City, an MST professor brought up the topic of forming an association of theologians. I took some steps to make this a reality, but after a first meeting of theology professors, I realized I had to do some research work that led me to

Fr. Catalino Arevalo, S.J. I realized that it might not yet be the time to have such an association of theologians formed. The idea, therefore, of forming an association of biblical scholars was something that I was willing to commit myself to.

I attended the meeting of the Organizing Committee composed of Fr. John Cabrido, S.D.B., Fr. Victor Salanga, S.J., Fr. Gil Alinsangan, S.S.P., Fr. Cielito Almazan, O.F.M., Fr. Vermundo Miranda, C.I.C.M., Sr. Niceta Vargas, O.S.A., and myself.

I was glad to be part of the preparatory committee for the first meeting of Bible Scholars in the Philippines. I was also included in the committee that would prepare the Articles of Incorporation, Constitutions, and By-Laws of the Catholic Biblical Association. The work was not tedious because Fr. Herbert Schneider, S.J. was with us. He came to the meeting with the prepared documents. I learned a lot from him about the process of organizing an association. Fr. Vic Salanga, S.J. was the leader of the group, and we usually met at the Loyola School of Theology. We appointed Fr. Gil Alinsangan, S.S.P., to be the treasurer.

We finally had our SEC registration on March 16, 2000, and the official launching of the CBAP on July 30, 2000. I think most of us who were at the preparatory committee were elected as members of the Board of Trustees. I enjoyed our meetings at LST because Fr. Herb would prepare our snacks. Those were the days….

Once a CBAP member, always a CBAP member. Happy Anniversary, and congratulations to everyone, especially to our present CBAP leadership, Dr. Maricel Ibita, and the members of the Board!