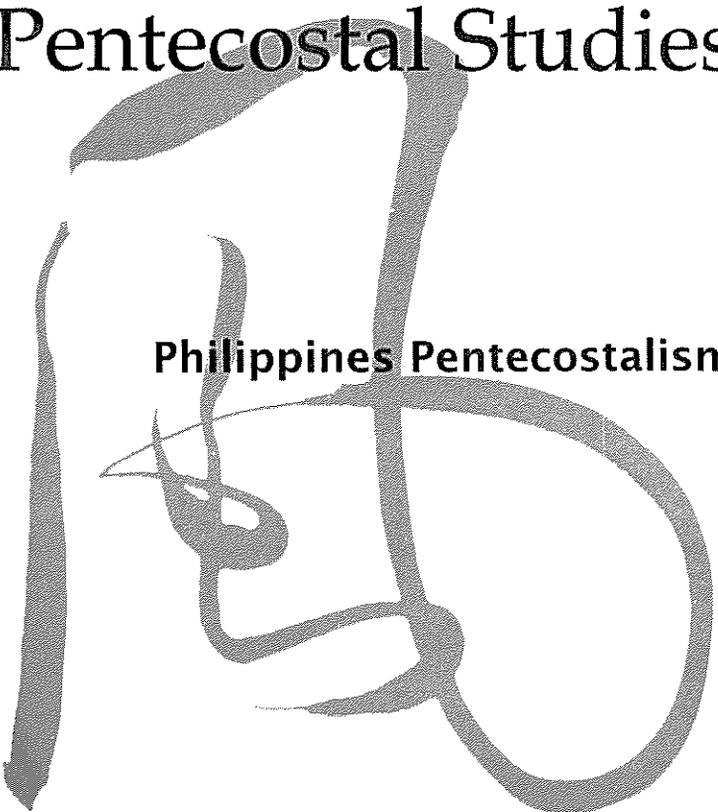


# Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies



**Philippines Pentecostalism**

**Volume 8, Number 2 (July 2005)**

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Joseph R. Suico (chief editor for the current issue)

Wonsuk Ma, William W. Menzies

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## PHILIPPINE PENTECOSTALISM

The Philippines, with its long history of Christianity and economic struggle, has been a recipient of the Pentecostal message for many decades now. The socio-economic and political landscape of a country, in many ways, exerts great influence in the development of a certain faith movement, most particularly when it is brought from the outside. Two broad strokes in the history of the development of Christianity are noteworthy: The invasion of Spain in 1521 brought Roman Catholicism and the intervention of the USA in 1898 paved the way for Protestantism and eventually Pentecostalism.

Although Pentecostalism in the Philippines is represented by many denominations and a variety of theological positions, there is a common doctrine which broadly defines their beliefs. Pentecostal doctrine among various groups most often refers specifically to a “four-fold pattern” (salvation, healing, baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues and the second coming of Jesus Christ).<sup>1</sup>

The history of the Pentecostal movement in the Philippines is still being written.<sup>2</sup> We are in the process of collecting materials which we hope will give us a fuller picture of its growth and expansion. The movement is enjoying varying degrees of success in ministry in terms of the increase of the number of its adherents and influence in Philippine society. There is already a common perception among researchers such as George Harper who said, “...it seems likely in coming years the

---

<sup>1</sup> Holiness Pentecostals add “sanctification” to the four.

<sup>2</sup> The publication of Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang, eds., *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Regnum Books; Baguio: APTS Press, 2005) contains several important chapters on Philippine Pentecostalism while Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, eds., *The International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, revised and expanded edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) includes a substantial entry on the subject.

Assemblies of God will play an ever-increasing role in Philippine society.”<sup>3</sup>

The importance of self-description cannot be minimized as it provides an insider’s perspective of the story oftentimes depicted by those looking from the outside. In most cases where a nation came under a foreign power, historical accounts are often constructed by outsiders, thus, being incomplete. The views of Pentecostals themselves, though not necessarily Filipinos, are essential if we are to have a bigger picture of the story of a Pentecostal outpouring which took place in the early years of the twentieth century.

The collected essays in this issue are by no means a comprehensive representation of Pentecostalism in the Philippines. However, these are by far the more accessible and perhaps the founding accounts in this process of data collection. This issue then is a compendium of various perspectives of how Pentecostalism was developed and has taken shape through the years in varying stages of the country’s socio-political landscape.

The contributors in this issue are missionaries and local practitioners who are “insiders” and have experienced Pentecostalism themselves in their own lives and church ministry. As in any endeavor to chronicle the “journey” of a faith movement, the study of Pentecostalism in the Philippines begins with recounting its history—how it started and the significant events which contributed to the growth of the movement.

But this “history-making” has become an important foundation for both religious and theological reflections as the movement is reaching its early stages of maturity. One of the indicators is their keen interest in higher education and theological self-reflection. What also helps in this intellectual engagement is the growing interest in Pentecostalism from varied disciplines, including theological and sociological perspectives.

The story is yet to be told, as a full historical account of the Pentecostal movement in the Philippines is still undeveloped. There are many narratives out there that need to be unearthed as they form the necessary ingredients for future reflection and analysis. There are smaller Pentecostal groups that are in existence and yet their stories are unheard among “mainline” Pentecostal denominations. It is truly exciting to note in the featured articles how the movement has grown in the Philippines. Pentecostalism has inarguably moved from the margins towards the center particularly when it gained a certain level of acceptability among

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<sup>3</sup> George W. Harper, “Philippine Tongues of Fire,” *Journal of Asian Mission* 2:2 (September 2000), pp. 225-59 (237).

the Evangelicals and the wider Protestant world. It was not too long ago that Pentecostals were not considered Evangelicals and were somewhat placed in the league of obscure “churches” of which many were classified as religious cults.

That the Pentecostals have no theology and lacks biblical scholarship in their engagement with the text is no longer true today. It is also noteworthy that most of the materials used in this issue are based on the authors’ academic thesis (both doctoral and master’s). This suggests that there is an increasing number of Pentecostals taking higher education courses. We have also made use of our collection at the Asia Pacific Research Center of Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, the interview collection of pioneers and stalwarts of the Pentecostal movement in the Philippines.

It is inevitable that repetition in some presentations occurs. Various Pentecostal groups especially in their early stages contributed to the formation of each other’s formation of history and theology. The editors have attempted to reduce such repetitions, but readers will still notice them.

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We hope that this issue will inspire those who have walked the “Pentecostal road” and challenge those many of us who are currently traversing it and will soon be joined by a new breed of Pentecostals whose context may be radically different from ours.

J. L. Suico

## PENTECOSTALISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Joseph L. Suico

Religion is an important part of any culture, and in Philippine culture, religion encompasses the whole society. Thus, the Pentecostal phenomenon in the Philippines cannot properly be understood without considering its socio-religious context. It must be noted that the introduction of Christianity in the Philippines made a strong impact on not only the religious, but also the social, economic and political aspects of native Filipino culture. Ma. Elena Chiong-Javier (1991:19) wrote, "The Spanish missionaries who first came to Christianize the Filipinos also assumed other roles outside of their church roles. They played active parts as linguists, ethnologists, educators, estate administrators and public officials." Thus, the interrelationships between culture and religion in the Philippine society have had great impact in almost every facet of community life.

For this study a survey was undertaken in two stages: reconnaissance and main survey. The purpose of the initial fieldwork was to test the questions raised in the study. During this phase, the target churches were located and the towns where they are situated were verified as to their socio-economic profile (urban or rural status). The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part deals with socio-economic characteristics of the respondents: age, gender, civil status, occupation, education, annual income, monthly expenditure, assets and savings and investments, expenditure on habits, name of church, church status (elder, deacon, member, organization leader), and frequency of church attendance. The second part addressed the respondents' perceptions on social and political issues. The objective of exploring these characteristics is to examine how the demographic and socio-economic factors influence the members' response to social issues and their view of the role of the church in society relative to spiritual, religious and moral factors.

Interviews addressed the views of the respondents on the role of the church regarding socio-economic and political issues. The interview was divided into four sections: political, socio-economic, self-advancement, and church, theology and ministry. The total number of informants during the second stage was 322. The survey instrument (questionnaire) was administered to 72 Pentecostals (39 from International Charismatic Service, 33 from Christ is the Answer Assembly of God) and 207 Roman Catholics (102 from Our Lady of Consolation Parish Church, and 105 from St. Joseph the Worker Parish). Interviews were completed for 22 Pentecostals (15 International Charismatic Service and 7 from Christ is the Answer Assembly of God) and 21 Roman Catholics (11 from Our Lady of Consolation Parish Church and 10 from St. Joseph the Worker Parish).

### 1. The Pentecostal Churches in the Philippines

The coming of the Americans in 1898 paved the way for Protestant mission. It is said that Protestantism arrived in the Philippines wearing an American soldier's uniform because the first Protestant minister came as an army chaplain (Gowing 1967:125). The succeeding years saw the coming of missionaries from various denominations: the Methodists, Episcopalians and Baptists in 1900, United Brethren and Disciples of Christ in 1901, Congregationalists in 1902, Christian and Missionary Alliance and Seventh-Day Adventists in 1905. The first Pentecostal missionaries arrived in 1918 from the Church of God, then the Assemblies of God in 1926 and 1937, and the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel in 1937.

Pentecostalism, like Protestantism in general, has always been associated with the U.S.A. All major and some minor Pentecostal denominations in the United States have sent missionaries to the Philippines starting from the 1920s. Initially, they went to places not yet reached by Roman Catholic priests or in remote areas where the Roman Catholic Church did not have a strong presence. As a minority group, many Pentecostal churches are located outside of the city or town centers.

The Pentecostals' strong emphasis on the miraculous and divine healing is a major factor why people are attracted to its faith and practice. Another reason is their tendency to be "member-oriented" which results in effective mobilization of lay leaders in recruitment activities (e.g., evangelism). In contrast, classical and more established churches tend to

monopolize power in the hands of an elite clergy. Pentecostal churches are known to provide opportunities in empowering their members through the gifts of the Spirit. This means that any member in the congregation has equal opportunity to “move in the Spirit,” such as prophesying, interpretation of tongues, healing, or discerning of spirits.

The Pentecostal movement in the Philippines can be categorized in various ways but for this survey, the writer has limited it into two, namely: “classical” and “independent.” Classical Pentecostal churches are those that have strong links with their U.S. counterparts and are usually the oldest. The Independent Pentecostals are those that either have informal links with churches abroad or indigenous characteristics.

The word “independent” is chosen because of the difficulty with the term “indigenous.” Various disciplines attribute different meanings to the term. For instance, it is widely accepted within missiological circles that self-government, self-support and self-propagation define what an indigenous church is. In the social sciences, however, indigenization refers to a process whereby religions initiated by outsiders are transformed through contact with native religion and culture. Doctrinally, the basic tenets of faith of the independent churches are either similar to that of the classical groups or simply a derivative. In fact, many of them came into existence as a splinter group from the bigger and older Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God and the Foursquare Church. While it can be argued by some that these congregations are “self-propagating” and “self-generating,” and therefore indigenous, their basic theological perspective is one that is merely inherited from North America. Pentecostalism is more globalized than localized as far as the Philippine situation is concerned. A case in point is the Assemblies of God that merely adopts what its counterpart does in the United States. To date the Philippine Assemblies of God continues to maintain the sixteen Fundamental Truths introduced by the first missionaries in 1926.

## 2. Pentecostal Doctrine and Practice

Pentecostal doctrine in this paper refers specifically to a four-fold pattern (salvation, healing, baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues and the second coming of Jesus Christ), which expresses the logic of Pentecostal convictions (Dayton 1987:21). Although Pentecostals represent many denominations and a variety of theological positions, the four-fold pattern follows a broader way of

defining their beliefs. A more specific unifying belief among these divergent groups is the experience known as the baptism in the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion (Johns 1993:63). Most Charismatic or neo-Pentecostal groups are those who have experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit but do not necessarily espouse the evidence of speaking in tongues. For the classical Pentecostals, regardless of denominational affiliation, the four-fold pattern represents the core doctrines of their churches.

From its incipient stage, the Pentecostal movement has flourished mainly among the poor, the uneducated, those from the margins of society and the oppressed. As in other poor countries where Pentecostalism thrives, its doctrine is found by some to have economic relevance. Today the movement is increasingly reaching the middle and upper class and may no longer be restricted to the "disinherited." Although Pentecostalism in the Philippines has now become socially multifarious, it is still a minority when compared with the Roman Catholics.

Although Pentecostals reject certain teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, they agree with them on the major beliefs of Christianity. Many of their converts were usually nominal Christians to whom they have pointed out a personal relationship with God. Much emphasis is given on experience which empowers its followers for the here and now, as well as in the beyond. They strongly believe that the gospel is relevant in their daily life and that God is wholly other yet intimately present in their lives.

### 3. Pentecostalism and Society

Although Pentecostals believe their message is relevant to people and to the larger society, they have also been perceived as indifferent toward social, economic and political issues. This impression has been attributed to various reasons such as eschatology, dualistic vision of the world and aversion to the Roman Catholic Church. Perhaps the most common critique is related to the Pentecostals' other-worldliness which is rooted in various aspects of nineteenth century fundamentalism in North America. An important aspect of this is premillennialism and the need to live in expectation of the imminent return of Christ as taught by J. N. Darby and C. I. Scofield (1843-1921) among others (Ferguson and Wright, 1988:502).

This perception is not without opposition however. For many years, the manner in which the Pentecostal movement was assessed has been quite inadequate, more particularly concerning social responsibility. A Pentecostal theologian, Doug Petersen, has argued that social scientists in the past utilized methodologies which were usually inferential and functionalist. He is convinced these scholarly works “had been undertaken without adequate definitions, data and perspective regarding the groups’ size, distribution, infrastructure, resources, and most importantly with insufficient understanding of the ethos of Pentecostal experience” (Petersen 1998:17).

Pentecostalism in the Philippines has been interpreted mainly by outsiders who tend to ignore the context, particularly the socio-economic dimensions of its members. There is an obvious lack of knowledge and understanding of the significance of the Pentecostal experience especially its institutional relationship to society. Consequently, the attitude of other churches and communities is often marked by theological and cultural prejudices. It is therefore pertinent that formal studies are undertaken to assess the validity of the prevailing perception of Pentecostals’ lack of involvement in socio-economic and political activities.

A study I completed in 2003 explored whether other contributory factors, both external and internal, are also influencing the external perceptions of socio-economic indifference of Pentecostals on the Philippines. The nature of Pentecostal social and economic activities was investigated by looking at how they understand the role and purpose of the church and how it relates to society. As an institution, what are the theological or philosophical frameworks used, what are the goals and purposes of their involvement? As individuals, what are the contributing factors that generate their conviction to participate progressively in the social and economic issues and activities? Factors influencing involvement/non-involvement—eschatology, socio-religious and political attitudes or marginalization are considered. Because the Pentecostal church in the Philippines is part of a broad process of religious and social change, its understanding requires a comparison of its members’ life and experience from those of people from the dominant religious group, which is the Roman Catholic Church.

The results of the survey showed that the ambiguity of the Pentecostals’ understanding of their role in society should not be construed strictly on the basis of their lack of participation in social protest actions. Other factors like socio-economic attitudes and behavior must also be carefully considered. Pentecostalism in the Philippines as a whole is in no sense a uniform or monolithic movement. On the question

of involvement in politics, for instance, there is a range of attitudes. It was also revealed in the study that, although the leadership of the Pentecostal churches under consideration did not have a formal position or theological reflection on the two significant political revolutions (EDSA Revolution 1 and 2), some individual members who were interviewed did actually participate in those events. Some lay leaders when interviewed felt the church ought to be actively participating when a particular situation arises. With regards to socio-economic matters, the results of the survey confirmed one of the hypotheses of the study that there is no significant difference in the socio-economic activities of the members of the Roman Catholic church (control group) and the Pentecostal church (subject group). The majority of the respondents in both groups cited prayer as the key in alleviating poverty in the Philippines.

While the results of the research have shown similar factors between the Pentecostals and Roman Catholics as discussed above, the crucial differences between them reveal the distinctive impact of Pentecostals. These distinctives are with relation to the individual experience and their self-sustaining empowering. The key distinctive is that, from the moment one becomes a Pentecostal, they are empowered to be a missionary. Unlike the Roman Catholic model, there is no long apprenticeship or probationary period. Pentecostals are empowered almost immediately as a soldier and as a contributor. The Pentecostal is personal; the Catholic is formal. The Pentecostal focuses on the development of the self; the Catholic subordinates the self to the institution thereby disempowering its people as it drafts a plan of life for everyone. The Pentecostal starts with the personal; the Catholic starts with the faith of the church. The Pentecostal is related to the experience of everyday life; the Catholic has fine theology, but it is unconnected with the experience of everyday life.

This concept of empowerment, in which any member has instant access to the power of God, has enormous implications for their strategy of development. The Roman Catholic churches, with all their capital of international links, theological expertise and position in society, do not represent any significant advance on the position of the examined Pentecostal churches, newly emergent from both poverty, the animated world of Philippine culture and working in isolation apart from some dependency on U.S. tutelage. The Roman Catholic churches in the study are clearly in a situation of sponsored development. The Pentecostal churches are in a situation of self-help and developing their own positions over time. This shows an important framework in order to understand their achievement fully and thus undermine the inaccurate

assumption that their people are lagging behind, whereas in fact they are taking crucial steps under their own power which will render their development the more sustainable.

The Roman Catholic Church benefits from the perceptions created by their hierarchy and theology and international links that they are well positioned in understanding and negotiating political reality. The Catholic churches are highly dependent on the wider international Catholic support, intelligentsia and theological interpretation. For instance, the urban Catholic church, which is located within the compound of the Recoletos Formation Center (training school for priests), benefits from the resources provided by the seminary. The seminarians themselves are actively involved in parish activities and outreaches of the church. Conversely, the Pentecostal churches benefit from no such perception; in fact they are viewed in entirely different perspectives as being totally dominated by North American dualistic Christianity.

However, there is a level of international Pentecostal understanding available that has been framed in different contexts. In order to interpret the results of the research appropriately, it is necessary to examine wider Pentecostal developments and relate the findings of the research in relation to those. The Pentecostal churches will need to negotiate between the reality of their spiritual experience and the wider reflection that is represented by Pentecostal intellectuals. This will also enable a proper comparison with the Roman Catholic community to take place. The task of the following section is to set the findings of the survey in this larger context by outlining some elements for this negotiation.

#### 4. The International Pentecostal Framework

Frank Macchia's brief description of the Pentecostal movement's theological journey provides a good historical background for understanding the lack of critical theological reflection in the Pentecostal churches. Macchia points out: "The Pentecostal movement in its early decades was driven by a fervent eschatological expectation of the soon-coming kingdom of God. The basic tasks of biblical interpretation and proclamation gained the forefront of a vigorous effort to evangelize the world before the arrival of Christ in judgment and salvation" (Macchia 1999:8-9).

With this zealous expectation, the focus of training in Bible schools and colleges in the 1920s was placed on the mastering of doctrinal

positions and the memorization of the scripture rather than critical thought or scholarly research (Wilson 1988:61). For classical Pentecostals, according to Russell Spittler, “‘systematic theology’ is an elegant name for doctrine. And doctrine consists of a concise statement of biblical truth presented in a logical order and marked by gathered scriptural support.” Spittler further explained a very important point when he said that “[w]hat theology on this level does not do is to address social issues or cultural situations” (1991:297).

As Pentecostal membership worldwide is no longer strictly confined to the poorest of the poor, it now has within its ranks people from a wide range of socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Already there is a growing number of Pentecostals taking higher education and actively involved in various forms of academic disciplines. Hollenweger (1992:17) informs us of an increasingly significant core of “critical Pentecostals” who have dared to move beyond the arrested views of the Pentecostal establishment.

In the early 1970s, the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS) was founded by leading Pentecostal scholars in North America. One of its objectives was to provide a forum so that Pentecostal scholarship would have a context within which to flourish independently of denominational supervision and censure (Macchia 1999:11). Similarly in Europe, the European Pentecostal/Charismatic Research Association (EPCRA) was also founded in the 1970s.

Wonsuk Ma, a South Korean Pentecostal scholar, examines the past contributions and contemporary scholarly works by Pentecostals within the discipline of biblical studies. The number of publications in the form of journals, books and theses and dissertations by Pentecostal scholars as accounted demonstrates the immense interest of the Pentecostals in printed material (Ma 1999:57-61).

With this promising development in Pentecostal scholarship, Macchia (1999:11-12) believes the shift from “irregular theology” towards critical theology in Pentecostal scholarship has already started and is developing in North America and Europe. The coverage of issues addressed by the “critical Pentecostals” continues to expand as more Pentecostals are convinced of the need for serious theological reflection. For instance, Macchia argues for a “revisioning of Pentecostal eschatology.” He is convinced that Pentecostals need to “rediscover the original eschatological fervor that allowed them in the early years of the movement to swim against the stream of the spirit of the age and to advocate female participation in the ministry and interracial fellowship (1999:23). Powers (1999:313-14) has also stressed the prominence of

women in Pentecostal ministry. Women in the Pentecostal movement were allowed to preach and teach the Bible, administer educational institutions and conduct evangelistic campaigns.

Along with the practice of allowing women to be involved in church ministry was the Pentecostals openness towards interracial fellowship even at a “time in American history in which such social relationships were considered demonic, insane, and criminal” (Macchia 1999:23).

Recent developments in Pentecostal scholarship have continued to address wide-ranging issues faced by Pentecostal churches. For example C. B. Johns (1993) proposed to integrate Paulo Freire’s method of liberation pedagogy in Pentecostal spirituality. Johns develops a Pentecostal catechesis based on Freire’s approach that bridges Pentecostal experience with situations of social oppression. The goal of Pentecostal catechesis, as defined by Johns “is the means whereby the faith community becomes aware of God’s revelation and responds to this revelation in faithful obedience” (139). Eldin Villafañe (1993) from a Hispano-American perspective has also offered a social ethic which is based on a principle that churches must be equally understood as places for personal and social liberation. This also poses a challenge for Pentecostals to revision a much broader prophetic and vocational role of baptism in the Spirit.

Through the years, this earlier predisposition towards engagement in social issues has had tremendous effects in various parts of the world where Pentecostalism was present. Wilson (1991:89) writing on the influence of Pentecostals in Latin America has shown that the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in Latin America is attributed to the ability of its adherents to address the frustrations and insecurities of the masses in transition. Increasingly, Wilson believes, the Pentecostals are credited by observers with having acquired the potential for exercising significant social influence. The study of David Martin (1990:234) has demonstrated the inclination of the Pentecostal experience to create “free space” in terms of new priorities and statuses acquired by the movement’s converts. Shaull (2000:197), looking at Pentecostalism in Brazil, has found in his research that the Pentecostal experience “not only frees them from subservience to rigid rules, but also provides them with an unusual capacity for discernment of what is going on in their own lives.” Authors like Roberts (1968) and Willems (1967) view the growth of Pentecostalism not only as an indicator of social change, but also as a factor in modernization and improvement for the poor. Cecilia Mariz (1994:110) in her study of Pentecostals in Brazil notes that despite the claim of the Pentecostal leaders that they do not get involved in political

activities, her findings show the opposite. For example, she observed that “pastors frequently obtain paved streets or electrification of their churches through favors from politicians they have supported” (110).

Paul Gifford (1995:5-6), who writes from an African perspective, acknowledges the influence of Pentecostals in society. In his study he highlights the capacity of Pentecostalism to provide a “new notion of self” which empowers an individual to make personal decisions and within the “small area they have marked out for themselves” they can interact as equals. This view is joined by G. Francois Wessels (1997:366) who is convinced that, unlike the mainline churches in South Africa, charismatic congregations (including traditional Pentecostal groups) have a liturgy which empowers lay members for service. This empowerment lies in the initial experience of glossolalia, which Wessels (366) describes as,

...the most dramatic instrument of empowerment in charismatic liturgy. No one has gone through the bridge-burning, often embarrassing, exhilarating initial experience of glossolalia ever doubts that she has been called, sanctioned and empowered to speak to outsiders about her faith and to minister to whoever is in need.

It is then argued by Wessels that by enabling the Pentecostals with strategies to structure and order in their world amidst social lawlessness and lack of vision, the charismatic congregations in South Africa are far from being other-worldly but in many respects are active participants in dealing with the world in which we all live.

This kind of globalizing influence of Pentecostalism however has not confined itself to North America, Latin America or Africa, but even in Marxist contexts such as Eastern Europe, Pentecostals have also made their mark. Peter Kuzmič (1991:140), for instance, has argued that “Pentecostals as a ‘church of the working class’ and a movement of the full gospel are in a unique position to overcome Marxist prejudice and stereotype through the affirmation of the gospel in word, deed, and sign.”

While a connection with an international framework benefits the local Pentecostals in the Philippines, there is also a downside which must not be forgotten, for it has an influence on the witness of the Filipino churches. In his article “‘Pentecostalism and Global Market Culture’: A response to issues facing Pentecostalism in a postmodern world,” Harvey Cox (1999:387) urged the Pentecostals to develop a critical theology of culture. He highlighted the importance of recognizing the relationship between religion and culture, which is quite explicit in the New Testament writings (e.g., Acts 19:23-37). Missionaries did not emphasize

this in training the locals in the early days of the Pentecostal movement. Today, the lack of contextual analysis prevails in the missionary-initiated institutions including various aspects of church life and ministry. What works in the U.S. is usually assumed capable of yielding good results locally. One classic example is how the annual theme of the general council is chosen. Most of the time the local leadership merely adopts what its U.S. counterpart does. This mindset of the leaders has various ramifications in the life and ministry of the local churches.

First, the type of liturgy and music used in the churches has tended to be individualistic and often creates its own enclave culture. Nowadays, the songs and hymns used in the church services are mostly determined by a younger group of worship leaders and musicians. This means that the church music packaged from the United States, United Kingdom or Australia is likely to be chosen over that which has local cultural content. Often, church music is rarely scrutinized for theological rapport or socio-political relevance. There are occasions when the elderly are forced to sing hymns that are not familiar to them, particularly those that contain words with various North American connotations.

The second ramification is that the preaching and teaching ministries of the Pentecostal churches focus mainly on Christian devotional life and growth as shown in the results of the survey of this thesis. However, in the Bible, poverty and justice issues are basic to God's revelation to the world. Deryke Belshaw (2003:5) has correctly observed, "Rich country theologians have problems seeing the relevance of biblical materials relating to extreme poverty in agrarian society, although these are the contexts in which the great majority of the world's poor are located." While most Pentecostals came from poor backgrounds, there is a tendency for them to overlook the poor who are outside their churches.

Third, the projects (evangelistic or relief services) initiated by the missionaries are seldom conceived locally. The plan is always hatched somewhere else, and once a particular programme reaches the country, it is ready for implementation. The locals are expected to participate in a project initiated by the missionaries often budgeted at thousands or sometimes millions of dollars. The objective, however, of transformational development is to encourage the locals to assume ownership and responsibility at a given time. In practice, this does not work all the time and sometimes leads to disastrous results. To the present, most of the foreign-initiated programs are still managed, if not highly subsidized, by the missionaries or their sending agencies. One of the major reasons for this is the lack of contextual analysis. Many of their

projects are not locally sustainable; thus, when a missionary leaves, the locals find it difficult to maintain the original goals of the project.

The above discussion on the positive perspectives of international Pentecostal framework has shown us the possibilities for Filipino Pentecostals to negotiate their spiritual experience with the wider reflection of several issues by Pentecostals around the world. More than ever before, Pentecostals worldwide and those in the Philippines, can now benefit from the serious theological reflections on various issues by a growing number of Pentecostal scholars mainly from the United States, Latin America and Africa. Studies on Pentecostalism in Latin America in particular have become a benchmark for many Pentecostals particularly in their engagement with society.

The negative perspectives of international framework have also shown the limitations of the Filipino Pentecostals in their worship and ministry expressions. The findings of the study reflect heavy influence by the U.S. missionaries in church worship (musical numbers), preaching and relief distribution activities. However, these negative elements also act as a foil to show the achievement of the engagement of the Filipino Pentecostal churches despite these negative international factors working on them.

Having seen the international perspectives, both positive and negative, we are in a better position to identify the implications of this research identified in the study, both for the Pentecostal churches and for other churches surveyed. This survey of international viewpoints shows that there is a development in Pentecostal movements around the world to reflect critically on their theological heritage, and to be confident about the contribution that Pentecostal spirituality gives to the formation of people's identity and to their action based on hope in their situations.

For Filipino Pentecostals, who are in the minority, the Christian community is the primary context as well as the centre for worship and spiritual life. Church ministries are geared towards the members who face conflict in the family, tension in the community, unemployment, poverty and illness. Members of the Pentecostal churches are given both spiritual and practical advice about how to cope with these kinds of situations. These members also hold community responsibilities as laborers, farmers, government employees, teachers, nurses, doctors and factory workers. While they work as individual Christians, they also live in a larger community as members of the Pentecostal churches. Their practical involvement gives a *prima facie* case that this will be impacted by their spirituality and therefore we are justified in looking at the

research findings to see how they will express meaningful social engagement in these spheres.

Because of the findings of this research, the Pentecostals in the Philippines should no longer be viewed through the lens of North American-directed movement, but rather by considering the implications of their socio-economic activities and the wider scope of international linkage for understanding the potential of the findings for expressing and contributing to the needs of society.

##### 5. Implications of the Study for Pentecostal Social Involvement

At the micro-structural level, Pentecostals have made a strong impact. The various programs they have been involved with, such as orphanages and mercy work, can readily prove this. The growth of Pentecostalism all over the world has caught the attention of sociologists and religious scholars. Although the movement is gaining more acceptance among the middle and upper class people, its social impact is still much felt among the marginalized masses in the Philippines and in Asia as well. The following are the major factors that put Pentecostals in the right position to engage in and benefit from active involvement in society.

First, perhaps the strongest impact Pentecostalism has on Philippine society is its commitment to rebuild families amidst communities shattered by social and economic dislocations. The focus on the family has been one of the significant emphases of Pentecostal ministries. Although not a unique emphasis for the Pentecostals, the fact that they are a minority in the Philippines, participation in the public life of the predominantly Roman Catholic society can be restricted. The Pentecostals, amongst others, believe their message is directed first to individuals and families rather than to social and political institutions. James Grenfell's (1995) study of Pentecostal churches in Guatemala showed how women are attracted to Pentecostalism's strong emphasis on thrift, punctuality and honesty and their hostility to domestic violence, gambling and booze. This is particularly true in the Philippines. For instance, when a member of a certain family becomes a part of the Pentecostal church, it usually results in better family relationships. The pastor of a Pentecostal church in Manila in the interview said, "...by providing its members with a venue where they can ventilate their ideas related to different issues and also a place for relationships to develop (marriage couple fellowship), the church has helped them to self-

advance” (Visca interview). One of the programs of the Philippine Assemblies of God that deals with marriage and family enrichment is the Marriage Encounter Weekends that aim to build better marriages in the denomination as well as those from other faiths. Other enhancement seminars designed to aid healthy family lives are conducted on a regular basis, albeit many of the resource speakers come from the United States.

The second is the empowerment of the laity. The research results show that lay empowerment lies at the heart of Pentecostal missions and evangelism. In a general sense, social empowerment depends on the community in which the individual participates. A comparison with the control group, the Roman Catholic Church, shows several distinct advantages of a Pentecostal empowerment experience. The Catholic Church, on the one hand, provides such a community, in which the individual participates and is resourced through the mass; through the mass the individual receives the Holy Spirit and the affirmation of the resurrection. On the other hand, the Pentecostal Protestant view is that the individual is empowered personally and directly by the experience of the Spirit in their own lives. The framework within which this empowerment can be expressed and make a difference is still the community.

The similarity between the activities and expressions of the Pentecostal and Catholic churches surveyed is attributable to the fact that they both are shaped by and located in the community culture of Philippine spirituality and life. The survey also revealed that Pentecostalism per se did not cause its adherents to be concerned for others as it is already inherent in the people’s consciousness. Under circumstances where the community is stable, the above process facilitates social empowerment of individuals through the community. However, the impact of the global forces of modernity provides a vastly increased range of choices for individuals. The traditional geographical communities cannot cope with these. The community fractures because individuals are expressing ever increasing choices which drive them apart from each other—the break up of families, participation in global or cyber communities. The elites look after themselves and the poor implode. The result is that individuals are not empowered because there is no community through which to express their empowerment. In this situation mere community empowerment is not enough. Individual empowerment is needed to cope with the pressures of poverty and social alienation. It is here that the Pentecostal experience of prayer and the Spirit is a crucial resource for individuals.

The third is the empowerment of the poor. The movement has established structures that empower the poor and the marginalized to have a greater voice and participation in the system. An ordinary Filipino whose opinion is not normally heard, upon conversion acquires a sense of worth, new meaning for life, new disciplines for work and new models for family life. The results of the research show that although Pentecostalism started among the poor, it has now attracted even those that come from the middle and upper strata of society. The economic consequences of Pentecostalism have yet to be explored fully. Members of Pentecostal churches are trained to give sacrificially. Thus, throughout the country sacrificial giving has already produced millions of pesos worth of properties including land, church buildings, retreat and conference centers, a television station and others. Pentecostal churches are known for their high percentage of giving to missions and evangelism. Hence, they can also be encouraged to express that same generosity towards development-related projects. Shaull (2000:229) is instructive: "By calling upon the poor to give rather than receive, Pentecostals contribute significantly to breaking the attitude of dependency so deeply rooted among marginal peoples."

Fourth, the Filipinos' rich heritage of shared aspirations and values from their religious faith contribute to the Pentecostal practice and provide a strong foundation for a contextualized approach to transformational development. Pentecostals should consider the potentials of these values in achieving a greater impact of the gospel beyond evangelism and church planting. Filipino writers have already made in-depth research pertaining to the potential contribution of Filipino values in the task of rebuilding a nation that has been crippled by the long-lasting effects of colonialism and dictatorship. The overarching value pointed out by many thinkers is called the *sakop* (group alliance). The *sakop* is a multipurpose group, it focuses on the welfare of the group rather than the individual. According to Leonardo Mercado (1975:55), a Catholic priest, "*sakop* can be a social security system, an employment agency, an emotional support." *Sakop* in the Philippines encompasses practically all levels of a person's relationship: relatives, peers, classmates, neighbors, officemates, extended family by consanguinity or affinity (58). The *sakop* value is best expressed in the family since to this day, it remains the strongest unit of Philippine society. Filipino anthropologist F. Landa Jocano (1992:1) amplified this concept by looking at the relationship of *sakop* with other Filipino values: "In a *sakop*, the positive aspect of Filipino values come into play: *pakikisama* (being along-with), *pakikipagkapwa* (continuing act of reciprocal action),

*pakikiisa* (being-one-with), *pakikibagay* (in-conscience-with), and *bayanihan* (unity).” The future success of a Pentecostal transformational development in the Philippines not only lies in the leadership of the Holy Spirit but also in using these rich resources that are already available in the form of positive cultural values embedded in society.

The above features discovered through the research identify the understanding and practice of these Pentecostal churches as expressing transformational development, and show that they are taking on a sense of the social without undermining their personal experience. In fact, their experience of the personal enables them to deal with a challenging and fast-changing world because of the inner resources they have. The research also shows that the extent to which the Catholics can cope is the extent to which they share the concerns of the Pentecostals for prayer and the spiritual life—not their social analysis or base communities or work of the institutions which are themselves fragmenting under the pressure of modernity.

Therefore to read Pentecostals as those who do not work institutionally with social programs as their primary expression and thus conclude that they have no social focus or concern is to read them through the spectacles of the institutional church. This reading has its validity, inasmuch as for social empowerment to take place, the empowered individual needs to work through a community expression.

#### 6. Concluding Reflections: The Impact of Pentecostalism in Asia

While this paper has primarily focused on the Philippines, it must be noted that the “movement of the Spirit” is widespread in Asian churches today. Various sources demonstrate this fact through survey and other ways of scientific research. (See for example Barrett and Johnson, 2001 and Burgess and Van Der Mass, 2002). Additionally, It has been argued recently by Luke Wesley (2004:105) in his book, *The Church in China* that the house church movement in China is “persecuted, Pentecostal, and powerful.” He also cited one possible reason for the strength of the Chinese house church movement in the face of persecution and opposition: its Pentecostal nature. David Martin (2002:154) in his book *Pentecostalism: The World their Parish* cited R. Frykenberg who suggested that the “single most sweeping movement of conversion in India is Pentecostal.” Barrett and Johnson (2001:13) are helpful in providing us with a snapshot of the growth of the Pentecostal movement in Asia:

Pentecostal/Charismatic (in millions)	
Han Chinese	49.7
Indian	16.6
Indonesian	6.8
Filipino	6.8
Korean	3.3

Furthermore, Burgess and Van der Mass, editors of *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (2002:301) illustrate the growth of membership among Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Asia:

Asia	
AD 1900	4,300
AD 1970	10,144,120
AD 2000	134,889,530
Current growth 1.9% p.a.	

Jungja Ma (1999:201), a Korean Pentecostal missionary serving in the Philippines, outlined at least three distinctive levels of maturity in the region:

- 1) Pentecostal churches in an infant stage in countries such as Mongolia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Tibet, Nepal, China, and hopefully North Korea.
- 2) Pentecostal churches in struggling areas which need a fresh breakthrough, such as Japan, Thailand and Taiwan; and
- 3) Pentecostal churches in countries that have enjoyed significant success in the past and face new challenges. This group may include nations like Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia.

In this paper several implications emerged that the Pentecostal movement in Asia is a globalized one. My research has clearly shown that a connection with an international framework benefits the local Pentecostals. And this is true of many Pentecostals around the region. However, there is a level of international Pentecostal understanding available that has been framed in different contexts. In order to interpret the results of the research appropriately, it is necessary to examine wider Pentecostal developments and relate the findings of the research in relation to those. The Pentecostal churches will need to negotiate between the reality of their spiritual experience and the wider reflection that is represented by Pentecostal intellectuals.

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DOING THEOLOGY IN THE PHILIPPINES:  
A CASE OF PENTECOSTAL CHRISTIANITY<sup>1</sup>

Wonsuk Ma

1. Introduction

Doing theology inevitably involves at least three elements to make it meaningful to listeners in a specific context, be it special or temporal: revelation, context and the theologizer-communicator. Revelation in theologization refers to primary sources: the Scripture and a specific theological tradition aroused in a particular socio-historical situation. The contextual component in theologization is again found in two major categories: cultural and contemporary. The third, theologizer-communicator, includes the individual's experiential involvement in both revelation and context and the method of presentation/communication of the fruit of the theological inquiry in a way that is understandable to and acceptable by the audience.<sup>2</sup>

In this reflection on Pentecostal Christianity in the Philippines, due to the limitation of space, only two components will be discussed: the revelation and the context. For revelation, the focus will be more on the theological and spiritual tradition of this specific family of Christianity, particularly as witnessed in the last century. For the context, obviously it will be the socio-cultural context of the Philippines which the charismatic theological and spiritual tradition has interacted with, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Its earlier version was presented in the Annual Theological Forum under the theme of "Doing Theology in the Philippines," Asian Theological Seminary in February 2005, Manila, Philippines.

<sup>2</sup> For more discussion, see Wonsuk Ma, "Toward an Asian Pentecostal Theology," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1:1 (1998), pp. 15-41.

### 1.1 Pentecostal Christianity: A Definition

The definition of Pentecostalism has been a sharp point of debate among theologians, historians and sociologists. In the first half of the twentieth century, the term simply referred to what is called “classical Pentecostals.” These denominational groups, primarily found in North America and Europe, trace their roots to the early twentieth-century Holiness-Pentecostal revival, such as that found in the Azusa Street revival (1906-09) in Los Angeles. Their doctrinal uniqueness is found in the “baptism in the Spirit,” with tongues as an initial evidence of it. At the advent of the charismatic movement in the 1960s among the mainline churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, the characteristic of the movement shifted to supernatural gifts such as healing, speaking in tongues, prophecy, and others, with reduced emphasis on the baptism in the Spirit. However, with the “discovery” of indigenous Pentecostal groups all over the world, a universally acceptable definition of this fast growing segment of Christianity has become simply unattainable, unless one presents a definition too watered down to be useful anymore.

For the present discussion, however, the term “Pentecostal Christianity” is used as an umbrella term encompassing classical Pentecostals, charismatic fellowships, Catholic charismatics and Christians who accept Pentecostal beliefs and practices while attending non-Pentecostal/charismatic churches/communities. A working definition of the term is: “A segment of Christianity which believes in and practices the availability of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit today, with their characteristic lively and spontaneous worship with the manifestation of the spiritual gifts and enthusiastic Christian lifestyle.”

### 1.2 Pentecostalism in the Philippines

The main thrust of Pentecostal Christianity to the Philippines was initiated by “balikbayans,” Filipino-Americans in the 1920s and 30s, who had experienced the baptism in the Spirit in California and Hawaii. Three of the four “classical” Pentecostal groups included in Suico’s report owe their existence to such balikbayan missionaries.<sup>3</sup> Even before Pentecostal denominations were officially registered, these balikbayan missionaries

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<sup>3</sup> Wonsuk Ma, “Philippines,” in *New International Dictionary of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), pp. 201-207. Also for a good survey, Joseph Suico, “Pentecostalism in the Philippines,” in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, eds. Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2005), pp. 345-62 (350-56).

conducted evangelism and teaching activities often in their home towns and provinces. With the arrival of missionaries, primarily from the United States, “classical” Pentecostal denominations were organized: Filipino Assemblies of God of the First Born in 1943 in La Union, the Foursquare Church of Gospel in 1937 in Iloilo City, Church of God (Cleveland, TN) in 1952 in Ilocos Norte, and the Assemblies of God in 1953 in Pangasinan.

The 1980s brought another wave of spiritual awakening—this time, among Catholic believers. Partly with encouragement coming from the Vatican II, Bible study groups and prayer groups proliferated. Often led by gifted lay leaders, the groups met in homes, offices, restaurants and hotels. Also influenced by the Catholic renewal movement started in North America in 1967 and later spread throughout the world, the prayer and Bible study groups included prayer for healing and renewal. Many local communities mushroomed and some grew as national networks.<sup>4</sup> Many such groups eventually left the fold of the Catholic Church and formed their own “fellowships,” such as the Jesus Is Lord Christian Fellowship by Eddie Villanueva in 1978 and the Bread of Life Ministry by Cesar “Butch” Conde in 1982. This wild growth of the groups and the exodus of Catholic members from their parish churches prompted the Archdiocesan Office of Manila to publish an important booklet in 1983 titled, *Guidelines for Prayer Groups*. The intention was to prevent Catholic “faithfuls” from becoming “born again,” a popular term referring to Protestantism, while providing room and supervision for their “charismatic” activities. One guideline allowed charismatic Catholics to have their own gathering on weekdays and participate in their parish church on Sundays for mass. However, the rise of the powerful El Shaddai broke this guideline, as the group celebrates its own Sunday worship among themselves all over the country and in overseas locations.

Currently, the believers in various Pentecostal denominations are estimated to be about 1.2 million, in the (non-Catholic) charismatic groups 2.5 million, and the Catholic charismatic groups around 11 million, bringing the total Pentecostal Christians in the Philippines to about 15 million. This represents a startling proportion of 18% of the population of 80 million. In this counting, what is missing is “Pentecostal” believers found in non-Pentecostal churches, the traditional category for “charismatics” in other parts of the world. This segment is believed to be growing steadily as Pentecostal beliefs and practices are

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<sup>4</sup> For a recent study on Philippine Catholic renewal movement, see Lode Wostyn, “Catholic Charismatics in the Philippines,” in *Asian and Pentecostal*, pp. 363-83.

increasingly accepted by traditionally non- or anti-Pentecostal groups. David Barrett's estimate for mid-2000 is 20 million, higher than 13 million, the number of Johnstone & Mandryk.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that Barrett included the estimated charismatic believers in traditional churches. He expects this form of Christianity to grow to over 30 million by 2025.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.3 Goal and Purpose

This essay is offered to delineate unique theological and spiritual traditions of Pentecostalism developed primarily in the twentieth century. Although occasionally biblical basis may appear, attention will be given primarily to the historical tradition of the movement. Under each theological uniqueness, the Philippine context is briefly discussed to justify the theological application useful to Philippine Pentecostal churches, believers and leaders. Whenever possible, such theological potential will be explored in three categories: 1) basic issues as they apply to Pentecostals, 2) issues which have to do with the larger church communities in the country, and 3) issues that are related to the society.

As the primary audience is Filipinos or non-Filipinos who are working in or for the Philippines, no extensive discussion of the Filipino society is made, nor is any detailed discussion on Pentecostal history, theology and spirituality provided, as the author assumes the sufficient exposure of the audience to such information.

This reflection is written to help fellow Pentecostal-charismatic believers in the Philippines to become more aware of their theological potential inherited from the worldwide movement, and encourage and challenge them to be engaged in an intentional theological process. This will involve conscious awareness of the context where this theological tradition has been placed by God's providence and the perspective to see this unique theological tradition in the context of the large Christian mandates. The latter will require for the movement to shed its sectarian and fundamentalist mindset and actively dialogue with other theological traditions. Thus, the exposition of its unique theological potential is not to minimize in any way other Christian traditions and their unique theological contributions. In contrast, the call is to view each tradition as a unique gift from the Lord to the Body of Christ and to the dying world,

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Carlisle, UK: OM International, 2001), p. 521.

<sup>6</sup> David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian and Todd M. Johnson, eds. *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), vol. 1, p. 594.

so that each can perform its unique tasks so that the entire Body will be edified. With this in view, several potential weaknesses in this theological system are also included in this discussion.

## 2. Theological Potential of Pentecostalism in the Philippine Context

### 2.1 Religion of Empowerment

The bedrock doctrine of classical Pentecostalism is the “baptism in the Spirit,” often witnessed by speaking in other tongues, and this principal belief is anchored in Acts 2.<sup>7</sup> Among the Charismatics, the same experience has been identified differently, e.g., “fullness in the Spirit” with no doctrinal emphasis on speaking in tongues as “the initial physical evidence” of baptism in the Spirit. However, tongue-speaking still played an important role, as is well described in the experiences and ministry of Dennis Bennett, commonly recognized as the beginning of the “Charismatic movement” in the early 1960s.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of the locus of tongues in the wider Pentecostal movement, what is universally common is the empowerment impetus of this theology. Based on Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (NIV), the coming of the Spirit has been understood as the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for witnessing.<sup>9</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the “Fundamental Truth of the (US) Assemblies of God (<http://ag.org/top/beliefs/truths.cfm#1>, checked: 05/29/2005) reads, “All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian Church. With it comes the endowment of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry” and “The baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance.”

<sup>8</sup> See his popular accounts in *Nine O'clock in the Morning* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1970), pp. 79-80, for example, highlights speaking in tongues as the focus of the new spiritual experience: “Joy, freedom, and spiritual understanding came as the new language poured from their lips” (80).

<sup>9</sup> The unique feature of Lukan pneumatology, particularly in contrast with Paul’s, has been the subject of several important Pentecostal treatises such as Roger Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984)

empowerment theology presumes the calling of believers for ministry regardless of gender, age, and training. This is aptly coined by a Pentecostal scholar as the “prophethood of all believers,” that is, every believer is called to proclaim to be an active witness, in comparison with the traditional notion of the “priesthood of all believers.”<sup>10</sup> This theological breakthrough has provided an incredible release of people in the pew for ministry, while the mainline and evangelical churches are still “ministered” predominantly by properly trained clergies. The explosive expansion of the movement in the first century of its existence, the birth of mega-churches, and the emergence of Pentecostalism as a main missionary force, all have found its theological rationale in the empowerment theology of Pentecostalism.

In a unique Pentecostal tradition, making of theology is now primarily in the hands of the masses in the pews. This theologizing process has been shaped through two important practices, among others. The first is spontaneous public utterance in the form of prophecy and messages in tongues and often with interpretation. These unique practices based on 1 Cor 14 have undoubtedly promoted the open invitation to everyone in the congregation to participate in worship and proclamation. As in the Azusa Street revival, a spontaneous congregational worship called the “heavenly choir,” often in tongues, is another common feature of Pentecostal worship today, and this also can be understood to have a similar effect on the participatory nature of Pentecostal worship and ethos.<sup>11</sup> Although presumably the message is not of human source, this has provided a conducive atmosphere for a participatory theologizing process. The second, and more direct than the first contributing element, is testimonies. Most likely Pentecostals inherited the Holiness practice of public testimonies, particularly in the camp meetings. In most Pentecostal worship, except in highly organized and prescriptive ones often found in mega-churches, a testimony time is an important part of the order of worship. With no prior arrangement, anyone is expected to share one’s testimony, often in the form of his or her recent experience with God. Even in tribal churches in the Cordillera mountain region of the Philippines, old and young members stand or come forward to the

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and Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke’s Charismatic Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Larry Martin, *The Life and Ministry of William J. Seymour* (Joplin, MO: Christian Life Books, 1999), p. 187.

pulpit to share their experiences with God. Sometimes this lasts more than an hour. Occasionally, prayers are offered for certain needs expressed through the testimonies. This tradition provides a place not only for participation in theology-making, but also a space for the rest of the congregation to reflect, evaluate, and commonly share, once accepted as genuine and valid, the theological experiences of one member as a community possession. This has made Pentecostal theology inevitably a “people’s theology.” The uniqueness of this feature should be understood in the context where theologizing has been left exclusively in the hands of theological and ecclesial elites in most Christian traditions. In addition to the empowerment of individuals, the strengthening of the church in general has resulted in significant consequences in the areas of church growth, mission, and social upliftment. (For details, see below.).

This feature of empowerment in the Pentecostal tradition has several theological implications to the Philippine setting. Although historically church polity has produced various forms of church governance, no one would deny that a theology should have a broad participation particularly from real life situations, although clergy has to provide guidance and theological framework. In many non-western societies, including the Philippines, various social and historical factors have contributed to the existence of social classes. Although in “modern” times egalitarianism with the democratic idealism has strongly influenced Asian societies, the long cultural tradition of social class system still persists, often in subtle forms. This cultural milieu and the long Roman Catholic influence has fostered clergy-oriented Christianity and Protestantism has been not much different from the Catholics. In such a setting, the “anti-cultural” pattern of lay leadership among Pentecostal churches and independent charismatic fellowships has revolutionized the religious norms in the Philippines. The Pentecostal tradition here is known for the mobilization of laity, including women<sup>12</sup> and youth, or sometimes even children in leadership.<sup>13</sup> The emergence of successful lay founders of charismatic

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<sup>12</sup> One highly publicized program to augment this spiritual tradition can be seen in the cell group system of David Yonggi Cho’s Yoido Full Gospel Church. For details, see Yonggi Cho, *Successful Home Cell Groups* (Miami, FL: Logos International, 1981). This mobilization of lay women in church should be understood in the highly male-dominant social context of Korea.

<sup>13</sup> Suico, “Pentecostalism in the Philippines,” p. 350. In Buguias, Benguet Province, I was delighted to see in 2001 a nine-year old girl lead a song service for a Sunday morning worship. In Yoido Full Gospel Church, for many decades, the cell system includes children’s cells and their leaders are also children,

groups is another unique expression evident in Philippine Charismatic Christianity: Eddie Villanueva of the Jesus Is the Lord Church, “Butch” Conde of the Bread of Life Ministries, and, recently, Mario “Mike” Z. Velarde of the El Shaddai Catholic charismatic group, to name just a few. Due to the cultural makeup, traditionally the role of women in the Philippine society in general has been strongly encouraged, and the Pentecostal tradition of empowerment of all believers for ministry has further enhanced women in leadership positions in churches.

In spite of this emergence of a radical shift in church leadership, a broad participation of laity in the formation of “our” theology will be a challenging ideal. Filipino Pentecostals need to articulate and foster this important theological gift.

In a broader sense, the Pentecostals need to continue to develop the empowerment theology of all believers not only for their own sake, but also to effect other church traditions including the mainline Protestantism and Catholic churches. Adding the “prophetic” (or service and more specifically proclamation) to the traditional “priestly” call for all believers is a unique theological contribution to the churches. With the already advantageous cultural traditions of empowerment of laity, Philippine Christianity can influence other Asian churches particularly in the traditionally class or male dominant societies through the increasing missionary activities.

Socially speaking, in this traditionally elite dominant society, the empowerment of the socially marginalized is a theological potential that Pentecostals can develop to make a positive contribution to the society. How the “People Power II” has been interpreted by some sectors as a hegemony war between the established socio-political elites and powerless majority is an interesting reflection to an outsider, but it also demonstrates the longing of the masses to be socially and politically empowered to be the positive and forceful movers of the society. Here the Pentecostals provide a creative role of empowerment from their theological traditions.

One important area to watch, however, is the mushrooming of independent churches (mostly Pentecostal-charismatic type) in the past decades, often led by people with little or no theological training. The down side of the democratization of ministry is the “entrepreneurial” and casual approach to ministry. With little regulation for ordination, for example, hundreds, if not thousands, “ministers” were born during this

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leading cell gathering, worship and other activities under the supervision of a clergy or teacher.

period. Schisms among churches have become a scandal of Pentecostal Christianity in many parts of the world. Some times moral standard and lifestyle of some leaders are being questioned, resulting in the formation of a religious “free market” where anyone is free to set up a church, or even a denomination. Thus, how Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity in country can establish its credibility will be an on-going challenge.

## 2.2 Theology of Transformation

In a way, closely related to the empowerment emphasis of Pentecostal theology is the potential of transformation in various levels of human life. The “uninherited” and marginalized mass suddenly acquired a radically new worldview: their perception of self and everything around them.<sup>14</sup>

In many testimonies, the chain of changes is attested to, often with a radical inner transformation, through conversion experiences, but far more often through the “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” Here is one typical description of this unique experience by C. H. Mason, a prominent leader of the Church of God in Christ, the largest Pentecostal denomination in North America:

So there came a wave of glory into me, and all of my being was filled with the glory of the Lord. So when I had gotten myself straight on my feet there came a light which enveloped my entire being above the brightness of the sun. When I opened my mouth to say, “Glory,” a flame touched my tongue then ran down to me. My language changed and no word could I speak in my own tongue. Oh, I was filled with the glory of my Lord. My soul was then satisfied.<sup>15</sup>

Although it is not fully articulated, the Pentecostals assume that a genuine and unmistakable change begins with the inner being of a person. This is an opposite approach to the liberation theology of Latin America, which experimented a structured and community-based transformation. The general perception of the net result has not been satisfactory in spite

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<sup>14</sup> An exceptional helpful study of Pentecostal’s potential for social transformation is found in Joseph R. Suico, “Institutional and Individualistic Dimensions of Transformational Development: The Case of Pentecostal Churches in the Philippines” (Ph.D. thesis, University Wales, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> E. W. Mason, *The Man...Chares Harrison Mason: Sermons of His Early Ministry (1915-1929) and a Biographical Sketch of His Life* (n.p., n.d.), pp. 15-19 quoted in Martin, *The Life and Ministry of William J. Seymour*, p. 215.

of much planning, financial support, studies and effort. On the other hand, on the Pentecostal side, Teen Challenge may provide a good example.<sup>16</sup> Its unusually successful drug rehabilitation program, which began in 1960 in New York,<sup>17</sup> attracted much attention from government agencies and private sectors. The same report reveals not only a stunning success rate between 67-86% after seven years of their graduation from the Teen Challenge program, 72% continued their education to the college level, 75% are employed, 67% are regularly attending church (while 57% are involved in ministry), and 92% maintain good to excellent health.<sup>18</sup> At the core of its value is the inner transformation of individuals and, earlier, this radical transformation was sought through the experience of the baptism in the Spirit. This powerful experience radically changes one's values, priorities, life's goal, attitude, habits and the entire life, often instantly, although there is a continuing process of molding.

This transformation potential is well attested to in the growth of churches. Although multiple factors contribute to the growth of a local church, there is no doubt that each member contributes to the health and growth of the church. Hong's study reveals that ten of the twelve mega-churches in Korea are Pentecostal or Pentecostal-like in their ethos, worship and message.<sup>19</sup> Harper makes a similar observation about Philippine churches that Pentecostal churches would lead the growth of Christianity in the Philippines.<sup>20</sup> A study of the several large churches in the country proves that growing churches are Pentecostal in orientation.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See for example David R. Wilkerson with John and Elizabeth Sherrill, *The Cross and the Switchblade* (New York: B. Geis, 1968).

<sup>17</sup> "History" ([www.teenchallenge.com/index.cfm?infoID=7&centerID=1194](http://www.teenchallenge.com/index.cfm?infoID=7&centerID=1194)), checked: Feb 21, 2005. One report reveals that the "Teen Challenge claims of a 70% cure rate for the drug addicts graduating from their program...[while] most secular drug rehabilitation programs only experienced a cure rate of 1-15% of their graduates," "National Institute on Drug Abuse Report" (<http://www.teenchallenge.com/index.cfm?studiesID=3>), checked: Feb 21, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> "National Institute on Drug Abuse Report."

<sup>19</sup> Young-gi Hong, "The Backgrounds and Characteristics of the Charismatic Mega-churches in Korea," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3:1 (2000), pp. 99-118.

<sup>20</sup> George W. Harper, "Philippine Tongues of Fire? Latin American Pentecostalism and the Future of Filipino Christianity," *Journal of Asian Mission* 2:2 (2000), pp. 225-59.

<sup>21</sup> Julie C. Ma, "Growing Churches in Manila," *Asia Journal of Theology* 11 (1997), pp. 324-42.

The issue of growth may not be so critical in the Philippines as in many other Asian nations, but it is important to note that Christianity is a minority in the sea of religions in Asia, and the growth of churches is, in fact, a powerful demonstration that the Christian God is indeed true and powerful, thus, rendering credibility to the Christian message. On the other hand, more critical “growth” of the church is in the area of paradigm shift in individual and church life wrought partly through the influence of Pentecostal Christianity, such as aggressive evangelism, church planting, lay mobilization, lively music, and celebratory nature of worship. The Pentecostal contribution to the “renewal” of churches is unquestioned.

When it comes to social transformation through Pentecostal influence, many studies from and on Latin America illustrate the Pentecostal’s potential for social “upward mobility,”<sup>22</sup> another form of empowerment. Unlike the Catholic and mainline social programs, the Pentecostal approach to individual, family and social transformation has been remarkably effective. This “religion of the poor” (against the “religion for the poor,” referring to the church’s program for the underprivileged) has empowered the marginalized mass in a holistic manner and, as a result, many Pentecostals in Latin America are now middle class, influencing citizens of their countries. In Asia this trend is also noticed, that many Pentecostals have advanced in their socio-economic status in the society. In Korea, for example, David Yonggi Cho’s theology of blessing has challenged many urban poor to believe in the “good God” who is concerned not only with their eternal life, but also their daily needs.<sup>23</sup> Many popular televangelists in this country, including Mike Villarde and even controversial Apollo Quiboloy of Kingdom Broadcasting Network, have preached the immanent aspect of God’s presence with instantaneous provision of physical and material needs and have attracted large followings. While undeniably the emphasis on God’s immediate provision has contributed significantly, the relevance of the Christian message in the minds of the masses has also contributed to the

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<sup>22</sup> E.g., David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Pentecostalism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> E.g., Wonsuk Ma, “Asian (Classical) Pentecostal Theology in Context,” in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, eds. Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2005), pp. 59-91 (64-75).

“pop” version of Christianity, sometimes accused of being shamanistic, in the sense that God is exploited for the worshipper’s personal gain.<sup>24</sup>

In the social context of the Philippines, as well as Asia in general, a more serious social issue is before Pentecostal Christianity: moral transformation. The Philippines, the only Christian nation in Asia, has failed to demonstrate the high moral standards that are generally expected among Christian nations. The corruption index of the nation is one of the lowest in Asia.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, recently a question was raised: Why have many political, government, and business leaders of the country trained in Christian (in this case mostly Catholic) universities become part of social corruption and graft? If, in the last fifty years, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity has reached close to ten million, about one-seventh of the total population, what difference have they made to the moral standards of the society is a pointing question.<sup>26</sup> The highly publicized moral failures of some Pentecostal preachers in the West have already posed some hard questions to Pentecostals.

In the last general election, the Philippines experienced for the first time the political potential of Charismatic Christianity, attained for the first time its political potential for two fronts: a presidential candidate, coming from a large charismatic congregation, and also the voting power of El Shaddai, perhaps an 8-million strong Catholic charismatic movement. Some even suggested that to the traditional three “determinants for the presidential election in the Philippines,” Charismatic Christianity demonstrated its potential either to replace one of the existing three, perhaps Iglesia ni Cristo, or to become a new determinant in this highly visible demonstration of political powers. Whether it is consciously recognized or not, Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity has grown in its influence on the society, and it is a proper

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<sup>24</sup> For a little different reason, Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), pp. 218-19, 224-28, 240-41; Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*:

<sup>25</sup> “Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2002” (Berlin: Transparency International Secretariat, 2002) available at [http://www.transparency.org/pressreleases\\_archive/2002/dnld/cpi2002.pressrelease.en.pdf](http://www.transparency.org/pressreleases_archive/2002/dnld/cpi2002.pressrelease.en.pdf), checked Feb 21, 2005.

<sup>26</sup> For a good biblical basis for Pentecostal contribution to moral restoration, see Matthias Wenk, *Community-Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

theological reflection which will provide guidelines to promote a just society, while sharing Christian witness.

### 2.3 Potential of Unity

The theological potential for Pentecostal religion to cross the barriers of differences is primarily found in the incredible racial and ecclesial diversity among the participants of the Azusa Street revival (1906-09). Although severely scorned by white-dominant mass media and the existing ecclesial establishment of the time, the revival led by a humble African-American Holiness preacher was a powerful demonstration of the Holy Spirit's potential to bring radically different people together in the genuine celebration of God's presence.

Although the revival started among a few who were African-American by race, Holiness by doctrine, and lower to middle in economic class, eventually men and women from all races, creeds and socioeconomic positions worshiped together in the unassuming little mission.<sup>27</sup>

To Christian unity, this "spontaneous ecumenicity"<sup>28</sup> among Spirit-filled believers, regardless of their ecclesial affiliation, has been demonstrated time and again. Robeck reminds the Pentecostals of their powerful and yet hidden potential for ecumenism found in the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>29</sup> Kitano, employing a sociological analysis demonstrated that the socio-religious distance between, for example, Pentecostals and non-Charismatic Catholics is significantly far, leaving little expectation that they would engage with each other. However, the socio-religious distance between Pentecostals and Charismatic Catholics is very close, even if their fundamental theological differences still remain.<sup>30</sup> This study done in Metro Manila in the 1980s proves that genuine ecumenism

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<sup>27</sup> Martin, *The Life and Ministry of William J. Seymour*, p. 194.

<sup>28</sup> Koichi Kitano, "Spontaneous Ecumenicity between Catholics and Protestants in the Charismatic Movement: A Case Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, Centro Escolar University, Philippines, 1981).

<sup>29</sup> E.g., Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "Pentecostals and the Apostolic Faith: Implications for Ecumenism," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 9:1 (Spring, 1987), pp. 61-84.

<sup>30</sup> Koichi Kitano, "Socio-religious Distance between Charismatics and Other Religious Group Members: A Case Study of the Philippines in the 1980s," *Journal of Asian Mission* 5:2 (2003), pp. 231-42.

is possible not through efforts to reduce theological differences, but through a powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit. Also, the emergence of the Charismatic movement in the 1960s among mainline churches and the Roman Catholic Church powerfully demonstrated the inter-confessional potential that Pentecostal spiritual experiences can easily be incorporated into the existing theological systems.

However, Pentecostals have two challenges to face in order to fully recognize its ecumenical potential and make positive contributions to the larger church world. The first is the historical reality that Pentecostals have caused more church divisions, understandably due to its unique doctrinal positions, but also, more often than not, due to personality conflicts. The proliferation of Pentecostal denominations in the early twentieth century in North America, especially in some areas, was in direct opposition to its theological potential. This is also true in the Philippines and other countries. Not only in big cities, but also in rural areas, the mushrooming of independent Pentecostal congregations is shamefully alarming. Secondly, thus, Pentecostals need to commit themselves to live up to their theological mandate and distinctives. This requires an intentional action toward church unity. The recent new ecumenical initiative around the creation of the Global Christian Forum (GCF) and its warm invitation extended to the Pentecostals is an encouraging move.<sup>31</sup> The Asian Consultation of the GCF took place in May, 2004 in Hong Kong with 150 Asian Christian leaders encompassing Catholics and Pentecostals and every possible group in between. As a result of this gathering, an ecumenical academic conference took place in Baguio in January, 2005 with representatives from the Catholic, mainline (including Episcopalian, Methodist, Lutheran, United Church of Christ in the Philippines), evangelicals and Pentecostals.

The second area of unity concerns multi-racial matters. Bartleman, an eyewitness and participant in the Azusa Street revival, reported the unheard of interracial nature of the mission: "Divine love was wonderfully manifest in the meetings... The message was the love of God. It was a sort of 'first love' of the early church returned... The 'color line' is washed away by the blood."<sup>32</sup> This went beyond the racial differences. The Azusa Street mission transcended the socio-economic

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<sup>31</sup> "Taking Shape: Global Christian Forum" (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/00/25pre.html>, 2000): checked: July 1, 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street*, foreword by Vinson Synan (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1980), p. 54.

differences as well, while the majority of established churches represented often clearly demarked socio-economic lines: “educated and illiterate, rich and poor, brown, black and white all worshiped together”<sup>33</sup> under the leadership of a “one-eyed, illiterate, Negro” preacher.<sup>34</sup> *The Apostolic Faith*, the official monthly publication of the Azusa mission even reported, “One token of the Lord’s coming is that He is melting all races and nations together, and they are filled with the power and glory of God. He is baptizing by one spirit into one body and making up a people that will be ready to meet Him when He comes.”<sup>35</sup> This interracial fellowship, however, was quickly met with a harsh reaction from local communities and media. The media was particularly strong in condemning the interracial nature of the mission, and captions such as “Disgraceful Intermingling of the Races” appeared regularly.<sup>36</sup> This harsh criticism came not only from the secular media, but more disappointingly from other Christian traditions. Unfortunately, this signaled the devastating development of the mission: schisms initiated by white Christian leaders from within as well as without. The long awaited visit of Charles Parham, the mentor of Seymour, in September, 1906 ended with Parham’s harsh condemnation of the interracial fellowship of the Azusa Street mission. He established his own racially exclusive, in this case white, congregation not far from the mission.<sup>37</sup> Two white female leaders of the mission left with the mailing list of *The Apostolic Faith* and established their own ministry in Oregon, triggering the unrecoverable decline of the mission. Underwood attributed this racial division partly to the immense pressure consistently exerted by the secular press.<sup>38</sup> Until the last decade of the twentieth century, most of the Pentecostal denominations in North America were exclusively either black or white, until the so-called “Memphis Miracle” took place to resolve the exclusively white body of Pentecostal churches in North America and the “white” denominations joined the more inclusive, thus, black-controlled Pentecostal-Charismatic Church of North America in

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<sup>33</sup> Martin, *The Life and Ministry of William J. Seymour*, p. 196.

<sup>34</sup> “Weird Babel of Tongues,” *Los Angeles Daily Times*, April 18, 1906, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> “One token...,” *The Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles), Feb-Mar, 1907), p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> Martin, *The Life and Ministry of William J. Seymour*, p. 248.

<sup>37</sup> It was the Women’s Temperance Christian Union building at Broadway and Temple Street, literally a few blocks away from the Azusa Street Mission.

<sup>38</sup> B. E. Underwood, “Memphis Miracle,” *Legacy* 1997:4 (Summer), pp. 3-6 (3).

1994. What the Holy Spirit miraculously put together was miserably divided by humans.<sup>39</sup>

As Samuel Huntington and many others argue, the post-Cold War era has seen increasing and intensifying conflicts along racial (thus religious) lines. Somalia, former Yugoslavia, and East Timor are only a few examples. The rise of radical religious fundamentalism and its clash among religious groups, as predicted by Harvey Cox,<sup>40</sup> was displayed horribly and powerfully in the 9/11 incident. In the Philippines, subtle racial conflict and sometimes rivalry still exists. However, what is more critical is the conflict in Mindanao by Islamic groups. Although this conflict is religious in nature, one cannot ignore the racial/ethnic component imbedded in the issues.

#### 2.4 Contextualization

It has been observed that Pentecostalism has a very different worldview orientation from many traditional Christian groups. In the West in particular, the spiritual world has been practically ignored for a long time, primarily due to the Enlightenment influences in education. As a result of this rationalistic Christian orientation, anything that cannot be proven scientifically has been removed in Christian thinking, including healing, miracles, prophecy, exorcism, et al. This rationalistic Christianity flourished in the West also because of their increasing affluence and social welfare systems, thus, God is less needed in everyday life. The existence and role of angels and demons, for instance, has steadily diminished in this social and mental environment. When Christianity is brought into a radically different world where existing religions assume a lively and active spiritual world and its close interference with human daily life, this type of Christianity has been found simply handicapped in responding to such daily needs. Inevitably, this has resulted in "split-level Christianity"<sup>41</sup> where a Christian's loyalty and commitment is divided between their new Christian religion for the matters of sin, salvation and afterlife, and to their old religion for daily and existential matters such as disease, omens, daily material needs, et al.

Pentecostal worldview with its restored spiritual world has brought the lost elements of Christianity into the forefront. They include the

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<sup>39</sup> Underwood, "Memphis Miracle," pp. 3-6.

<sup>40</sup> Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, pp. 302-304.

<sup>41</sup> E.g., David S. Lim, "A Critique of Modernity in Protestant Missions in the Philippines," *Journal of Asian Mission* 2:2 (2000), pp. 149-77 (156 n. 29).

emotive or expressive element of worship (now in songs in particular) and the demonstration of spiritual power resulting in healing, miracles, exorcism and prophetic words. In fact, a Pentecostal scholar argued convincingly that the worldviews of Pentecostalism and animism share many similarities with each other.<sup>42</sup> With the demonstration of the tangible reality of God as a Pentecostal ethos, it demonstrates better potential for contextualization among animistically-oriented minds (and after all Asians, Filipinos included, are mostly animistically oriented). This is a stark contrast with the substantial disparity between western Christianity and animistic worldviews, and presents a strong possibility for ideal contextualization.

There is also a practical side to Pentecostal's contextual potential. Poverty is the number one challenge to Asia, and Pentecostal response to felt and daily needs has resulted in an explosive growth of this type of Christianity. For instance, the prevailing message of Mike Villarde of the El Shadai Charismatic group has been God's ability to meet people's daily needs and desires. There is no doubt that this positive notion of God and Christianity has resulted in many cases of social and economic "upward mobility" as previously seen in Latin America. It is also unusual to hear many testimonies of God's miraculous material and physical blessings.

At the same time, there is a great potential that this emphasis on pragmatic and self-oriented religious expectation can easily create another form of "animistic" Christianity. David Yonggi Cho, the pastor of the world's largest single congregation in Korea was accused of propagating shamanistic Christianity. In fact, there are good cases of Pentecostal syncretism in Asia and the Philippines. As seen in Africa, it is possible to see religious groups that are "more Pentecostal but less Christian." Related to this is the danger that Pentecostalism may become a "pop religion" with the increasing and elaborate music and worship which appears to be quite close to the consumer-oriented entertainment industries.

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<sup>42</sup> Julie C. Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits: Pentecostal Ministry among the Kankana-ey Tribe in the Philippines* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 213-31.

As “post-colonial” thinking is advocated in some parts of Asia,<sup>43</sup> self-awareness of Asian Christians to obtain “theological independence” from the missionary, thus, often western-dominant theological agenda and process, has been a constant call from within as well as without.<sup>44</sup> In this context, Pentecostalism has demonstrated its possibility to present culturally acceptable and viable Christianity to Filipinos and Asians with its holistic worldview. The Pentecostals have to constantly warn themselves of the gravity toward an animistic, pragmatic and pop variety of Christian religion.

### 3. Conclusion

Pentecostals in the past have been more activity-oriented with less emphasis on reflection and theological construction. This “intuitive Pentecostal theology” often deduced from their religious practices need to be articulated, especially in its socio-religious context. Their raw material for theologization are narratives such as testimonies, songs, sermons and the like. In spite of its danger of subjectivism, its theology from ordinary people (or “theology from down to up”) can make an important contribution in its theological process and the fruit of theologization.

With a few areas where Pentecostal spiritual tradition can make a significant contribution in the theological process in the Philippines, the Philippine churches hold an important promise to the entirety of Asia and beyond. The growth of Pentecostal Christianity results in an increasing impact to the large church world and society, including the political arena. Also noted is the rapid growth of international mission movements. Filipinos are perhaps best equipped for cross-cultural

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<sup>43</sup> See R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). Also the Association of Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) began a project to re-evaluate and revise the so-called “Critical Asian Principles” in doing theology in Asia, at the center of which is the colonial history in Asia. In the theological arena, coming out of missionary-, thus, western-led theologization in Asia to relevant Asian theology by Asians has been a continuing call.

<sup>44</sup> For example, Warren Newberry, “Contextualizing Indigenous Church Principles: An African Model,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 8:1 (2005), pp. 95-115 (110-14) proposed additional component to the traditional “Three-Self” indigenous church principle, and one of the new component is “Self-Theologizing.”

ministries with their adaptability in language and culture, high educational standards, constant supply of young ministerial candidates, minimal budgetary requirements and others. Born of their worldviews and religious experiences, signs and wonders will play an important part in future mission, particularly in the non-western continents. How to fully augment the holistic approach to their own society through moral transformation will be a critical challenge for Philippine Christianity at large and Pentecostals in particular.

With the growing scholarly reflections among Filipinos, it is possible or even plausible for Filipino Pentecostals to see increasing contributions to the future of Asian Pentecostal movement through their theological reflection. If this is coupled with the steady growth and missionary movement, Philippine Pentecostalism is poised to impact Philippine Christianity (including Roman Catholicism) and Asia.

## FILIPINO PENTECOSTALISM IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Elijah Jong Fil Kim

### 1. Introduction

The Pentecostal/Charismatic (P/C) movements have drawn worldwide attention in the twentieth century as global phenomena. Few other religious movements can be compared to the way the P/C movements have impacted the global village, with their vast differences and similarities, from continent to continent and nation to nation. Because the Philippines is located in Southeast Asia on the Pacific Rim, there are both Asiatic similarities and differences in Pentecostal and Charismatic phenomena. There are 313 million adherents of the Christian religion, of which there are 199 million professing Christians and 135 million Pentecostal/Charismatics, out of a total population of 3,697 million,<sup>1</sup> indicating that classic Pentecostals in Asia are the smallest group out of the three P/C groupings. It is inevitable that there are Asiatic geographical, historical and cultural connections and commonalities between Filipino P/C movements and those of neighboring countries. As far as similarities are concerned in terms of the socio-religious and historical context, the Philippines shares many more similarities with Latin America than with other Asian countries, although the writer admits that there are great differences between the two regions when subjected to microscopic investigation.

According to Johnstone's statistics, the growth of Evangelicals in Latin America in the twentieth century has been spectacular. In 1900 they numbered about 700,000, or 1% of the population, and by 2000 had multiplied to 55 million. Remarkably, among Evangelicals, Pentecostals have demonstrated the greatest vigor and have become the largest

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<sup>1</sup> David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, eds., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), vol. 1, p. 13.

component of Evangelicalism in Latin America with over 32 million affiliates, which constitute 28% of the world's Pentecostals.<sup>2</sup> Whether Latin American Pentecostalism was derived from local revivals within historic Protestant churches or from the work of foreign Pentecostal missionary individuals or agencies, both vital components of local origins and global connectedness should be taken note of, and such is also the case in the Philippines.<sup>3</sup>

Historically, the Protestant Reformation in Europe and the colonial expansion of Spain and Portugal in Latin America are contemporary events relevant to the Philippines as well. Spain and Portugal, on the one hand, were symbols of the Counter Reformation in Europe, and ideas viewed as heterodox by Roman Catholicism were systematically eradicated throughout the Latin American colonial era, just as in the Philippines.<sup>4</sup> Within the Iberian colonial territories, Protestantism was conceived of as a heresy threatening the ideological and political integrity of a composite socio-political totality which had been established with Catholic Christianity as a model. The same was the case in the Philippines in the Spanish colonial period.<sup>5</sup> Protestantism met fanatical opposition to its efforts to establish Protestant missionary activities in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial era, and this was also the case in Latin America.<sup>6</sup>

The reason that P/C churches achieved such remarkable growth in both Latin America and the Philippines is because of a reciprocal interaction of the double-structured religious system in the dominant religion of Roman Catholicism. On the other hand, South Korean and Southeast Asian P/C growth remained in a different religious context from the former because there was no dominant Catholicism in the region, and

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<sup>2</sup> Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, eds., *Operation World 21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition* (Cumbria: Paternoster, 2001), pp. 29-38.

<sup>3</sup> Sergio Matviuk, "Pentecostal Leadership Development and Church Growth in Latin America," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5:1 (2002), pp. 137-54 (153).

<sup>4</sup> For Catholic response and reaction to the Reformation, see John McManners, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 301-305.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Pierre Bastian, "Protestantism in Latin America," in *The Church in Latin America 1492-1992*, ed. Enrique Dussel (Kent: Burns & Oates, 1992), pp. 313-50 (314).

<sup>6</sup> William R. Read, *New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 11.

the respective countries were not able to have the same double-structured religious system. In Latin America and the Philippines, the P/C impact by means of personal conversions where nominal Catholic individuals encountered God directly through prayer and Bible reading activities, including numerous house Bible studies, brought many people to experiences of healing, exorcism and baptism in the Holy Spirit. As a result, Catholics could break out of the trappings of the religious system dominated by the upper level of Catholicism. On the other hand, the constituents of the P/C movements could maintain their popular and folk religiosity from the lower, poor and marginalized levels. However, though South Korean and Southeast Asian cases have similarities to the Philippines and Latin America, they are very different due to different folk/popular Catholicism of the Philippines and Latin America, while South Korea and Southeast Asia have traditional folk/popular religions such as animism and shamanism.<sup>7</sup>

Church growth in some countries like Korea, the Philippines and India in Asia, and Chile, Guatemala, Brazil, and Argentina in Latin America resulted from classic Pentecostal revival movements. Indian revivals that broke out among the Church Missionary Society and the Mar Thoma Church in 1860, 1873 and 1895 in Travancore, the Malabar Coast appeared much earlier than the Azusa Street Revival.<sup>8</sup> Some revivals resulted in local church growth such as in South Korea, Chile, Myanmar, Indonesia, Brazil, Vietnam and the Philippines. Other revivals in India and Japan did not expand the movement to a nationwide level.

After the Manila Pentecostal Revival broke out in the 1950s, a tremendous change in the history of the churches in the Philippines took place by the spread of revivals, the rapid growth of Pentecostal churches, multiplied church plantings, the emergence of Independent/Indigenous churches with a new influx of neo-Pentecostal movements and the Third Wave's movements. Divergent P/C churches made Greater Metro Manila

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<sup>7</sup> Karl-Wilhelm Westmeier, *Protestant Pentecostalism in Latin America: A Study in the Dynamics of Missions* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999), p. 105, referring to his book, *Reconciling Heaven and Earth*, states that these changes in Latin America can be applicable elsewhere in the world.

<sup>8</sup> A. C. George, "Pentecostal Beginnings in Travancore, South India," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4:2 (2001), pp. 215-37 (215-21) reports that attendees of three revivals experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with some manifestations, such as speaking in tongues and other gifts, because before the revival took place the people were able to study Baily's Malayalam Bible with a comparatively earlier Bible translation than other Asian countries..

a matrix or religious showcase for the rest of the country to enable the expansion of P/C bodies at nationwide level.

Alvarez introduces Bernardo Campos' idea of Pentecostal revival as a moving force of church growth in Latin America as well and quotes him: "pentecostality as the universal experience that expresses the Pentecostal event (*el acontecimiento Pentecostal*)—the key event that characterizes the life of those who identify themselves with the historical Pentecostal revival" plays a key role in history.<sup>9</sup> The P/C movements in Latin America and the Philippines also show diverse Pentecostal and Charismatic elements, according to Kärkkäinen.

In Latin America the Pentecostal movement has grown not only rapidly but also differently. Springing from a variety of situations and methods, the fertile soil of contemporary crisis and change has led to a broad range of movements, including those that reflect the different aspirations of ethnic groups, those built largely on diverse regions or social classes and those that accommodate diverse doctrinal, polity, and denominational emphases.<sup>10</sup>

This examination of the fertile ground for rapid Pentecostal/Charismatic growth derived from the Filipino double-structured religious system can, to some extent, be a possible case study in relation to the Latin American religious system. However, there is no doubt that any rapidly growing religious movement in Asia and Latin America is deeply connected to the traditional or local religiosity and spirituality from the lower level of the respective religious systems, just as it is in the Philippines. Pentecostal spirituality has been deeply related to folk/popular religions in Asia, i.e., to animistic beliefs and practices in "supernatural" arenas. Wonsuk Ma points out the same importance of the animistic orientation of Asians as "No matter how modern a society may look, basically Asian minds are animistic in orientation."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Miguel Alvarez, "The South and the Latin American Paradigm of the Pentecostal Movement," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5:1 (2002), pp. 135-53 (137-38).

<sup>10</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "'Culture, Contextualization, and Conversion': Missiological Reflections from the Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1990-1997)," *Asian Journal of Mission* 2:2 (2000), pp. 261-75 (272).

<sup>11</sup> Wonsuk Ma, "Asian (Classical) Pentecostalism: Theology in Context" (paper presented at the International Conference on Asian Pentecostalism, Fircroft College, Birmingham, September 2001), p. 7, subsequently published as part of Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang, eds., *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Regnum Books; Baguio: APTS Press, 2005).

Harvey Cox also points out the significance of this kind of primal religion, with the spirituality of traditional beliefs and practices contributing to the rapid growth of P/C movements.<sup>12</sup> Because most Asians and Latin Americans are familiar with miracles, prayer for healing, trance, vision and exorcism, the primal religiosity provides opportunity to incorporate P/C manifestations much more easily than Westerners, who have been accustomed to highly organized religions, secularized societies and rationalized worldviews. Hwa Yung agrees with this opinion regarding the reason for the acceptability and receptivity of P/C phenomena by Asians as follows:

The picture in the non-western world was rather different. Most non-westerners possess a supernaturalistic worldview, which even a modern western scientific education could not fully eradicate easily. It is so much part and parcel of their cultural backgrounds. Consequently, a truly indigenous Christianity in Asia has to be supernaturalistic, and therefore Pentecostal!<sup>13</sup>

In addition, the numerical growth of P/C movements in Latin America has resulted from spiritual factors, anthropological reasons, sociological elements, pastoral methodology, psychological factors and cultural factors, which resemble the situation in the Philippines and elsewhere in Asia as well.<sup>14</sup>

The writer tries to situate several socio-religious elements of Filipino Pentecostal characteristics such as immigration, the importance of the ethnic periphery, the relationship between older Protestant and Pentecostal churches, the degree of some inspired culture, the American influence,

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<sup>12</sup> Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Cassell, 1996), pp. 100-105.

<sup>13</sup> Hwa Yung, "Pentecostalism and the Asian Church" (paper presented at the International Conference on Asian Pentecostalism, Fircroft College, Birmingham, September 2001), p. 11, subsequently published as part of Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang, eds., *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Regnum Books; Baguio: APTS Press, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Samuel Escobar, "Latin America: An Evangelical Perspective," *Missiology: An International Review* 20:2 (1992), pp. 241-53 (247) lists factors of the growth of the P/C movements: 1) spiritual factors (the free action of the Spirit); 2) anthropological reasons (hunger for God); 3) sociological elements (providing a sure sense of shelter, security and community in a hostile world); 4) pastoral methodology (lay participation); 5) psychological factors (freedom of worship and emotion); and 6) cultural factors (the use of folk music and instruments).

urbanization and modernization, functional equivalents of religions, and political and apolitical issues into a global context, especially in comparison with South Korea in general, and Southeast Asia in particular when necessary, and generally compares these with Latin America in the following sections.

Domestic immigrants from various places in the Philippines came to Greater Metro Manila and made the metropolitan area a melting pot of ethnic and religious complexity with folk/popular beliefs and practices. The commonality and continuity of ancient religious beliefs and practices are retained within folk/popular Catholicism. For instance, the Visayan migrant generally comes to Manila by the inter-island boats which dock at the North Harbor, Tondo. The resultant homogeneity in language blunts the edges of any differences perceived as arising from ethnic-regional backgrounds.<sup>15</sup> Many of these migrants from different parts of the country who had experienced the "Pentecostal Revival" were able to go back to their home provinces with the Pentecostal message and an intensive itinerant program, producing its further expansion from urban Metro Manila to rural areas.<sup>16</sup> Their enthusiastic counter-immigration to their hometowns in rural areas had a great impact on evangelism and church planting. And, the emergence of strong Filipino leadership by means of inter-immigration contributed to rapid nationwide growth.<sup>17</sup>

As in the Philippines, the expansion of P/C movements in South Korea, Southeast Asia and Latin America has shown a similarly significant urban and mega-city centered character rather than that of sporadically scattered rural missions, concentrated by a number of Protestant/Evangelical denominations and mission agencies for the isolated ethnic and cultural minority groups. One example in Brazil, the growth of *Congregação Cristã do Brasil* (CCB), which has usually been a self-propagating, self-governing, self-supporting and lay-leading denomination since its inception by Luigi Francescon has been affected by

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<sup>15</sup> Residents in Inner Tondo quickly become bilingual, but their children, born in Tondo, grow up identifying themselves with their parents' mother tongue. Mary Racelis Hollnsteiner, "Inner Tondo as a Way of Life," in *Acculturation in the Philippines: Essays on Changing Societies, a Selection of Papers Presented at the Baguio Religious Acculturation Conferences from 1958 to 1968*, eds. Peter G. Gowing and William Henry Scott (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1971), pp. 235-45 (239).

<sup>16</sup> Arthur Leonard Tuggy and Ralph. E. Toliver, *Seeing the Church in the Philippines* (Manila: OMF Literature, 1972), p. 81.

<sup>17</sup> Tuggy & Toliver, *Seeing the Church in the Philippines*, pp. 83-84.

rural-urban immigration.<sup>18</sup> Sergio Matviuk acknowledges these important commonalities and similarities in relation to the immigration factor of the Filipino P/C movements in comparison to the Latin American context as follows:

Many of the scholarly works on Latin American Pentecostal growth in Latin American Pentecostalism affirm that Pentecostal growth in Latin America is related and is a consequence of social phenomena such as people's migration from rural areas to urban areas, poverty and popular religiosity's growth. But there has been almost no theoretical work directed to establish a model of analysis that provides a framework to understand what dimensions of the local culture have been integrated with Pentecostal beliefs to foster the tremendous growth of Latin American Pentecostalism.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. The Issues of Ethnography

There is no doubt that P/C movements are deeply interrelated with migrants from rural areas in the Philippines, Southeast Asia, South Korea and even in Latin America. Some early missionaries and returning believers from mega-cities who had experienced Pentecostal revivals as urban migrants brought back P/C messages to establish satellite house churches and ministries in their hometowns when they returned there or were commissioned to do so by their churches. Although there are a number of missionaries who are trying to spread Pentecostal movements in the remote areas directly, the expansion and rapid growth of Pentecostalism has been developed much more remarkably in the Philippines. Urban Pentecostal churches have dispatched a number of local missionaries strategically in cooperation with denominations, para-church organizations and even overseas-based mission agencies. Rural ethnicity and tradition lead them to be involved in much deeper and broader Pentecostal spiritual ministries than those in urban areas in the Philippines, due to a common shared understanding of the animistic and spirit world worldview.

One should not neglect the racial and ethnic stereotypes of Latin American ethnography that are different from the context in the Philippines. Alvarez comments on ethnographic complexity there as follows:

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<sup>18</sup> Westmeier, *Protestant Pentecostalism in Latin America*, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> Matviuk, "Pentecostal Leadership Development," pp. 155-56.

It is well known that Pentecostals in the region comprise a vast community with different expressions across the continent. Hence, the movement has been affected historically by a rich and multicolored tapestry of race, language and geography including history and politics.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Pentecostalism's Relationship to Older Protestantism

In Greater Metro Manila in 1972, the fastest growing churches were Pentecostal; whereas older Protestant churches were steadily declining. However, they were united in standing against repression and dictatorship.<sup>21</sup> Bautista pointed out that the decline of old Protestant churches resulted from the lack of enthusiastic evangelism.<sup>22</sup> In 1974, the UCCP General Assembly approved a moratorium on new missionaries. Newer P/C missionaries and church leaders aggressively expanded their religious territories by means of dynamic evangelism without any connection to the UCCP. The CAMACOP, CFGP, PGCAG and JIL and many other Pentecostal independent/indigenous churches exhibited rapid and dramatic growth, proving entirely consistent with the picture of Evangelical/Pentecostal expansion in the Philippines.<sup>23</sup> Most newer and younger independent/indigenous P/C churches do not have any direct links with foreign denominational bodies, or the traditional and ecumenical older Philippine Protestant denominations. Rather, they have continued to be self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Typical characteristics of Latin Americans have been closely related to the growth of P/C movements. Alvarez, "The South and the Latin American Paradigm of the Pentecostal Movement," pp. 138-39.

<sup>21</sup> For that reason, the Protestant pastors and workers from the NCCP were arrested, tortured and even executed; the others were placed behind bars. Oscar S. Suarez, *Protestantism and Authoritarian Politics: The Politics of Repression and the Future of Ecumenical Witness in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day, 1999), pp. 1-3.

<sup>22</sup> Lorenzo C. Bautista, "The Church in Philippines," in *Church in Asia Today*, ed. Saphir Athyal (Singapore: Asia Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1996), pp. 169-95 (185).

<sup>23</sup> Bautista, "The Church in Philippines," pp. 250-51.

<sup>24</sup> Alvarez, "The South and the Latin American Paradigm," p. 140.

In Korea, the Pentecostalization of older denominations such as Presbyterian, Methodist, Holiness and Baptist churches can be traced to the origin of “the Korea Pentecost” in 1907 in the Pyongyang Changdaehyun Church revival movement. The entire Korean Protestant church has been affected until now by a strong Pentecostal tradition. However, the general and gradual decline of spiritual zeal and fervor seems to be inevitable in relation to the economic development and political stability in the country today.

The similarly significant and rapidly growing Pentecostal movements among religious pluralistic countries in Southeast Asia such as Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and Singapore appear to be a process of the Pentecostalization of the older Protestant denominations.<sup>25</sup> In a similar way in Latin America, when it comes to the identification of the Pentecostal groups with other forms of Protestant Evangelicalism, their differences are inconspicuous because there is a close correlation between Pentecostal and Protestant churches. This closeness shows that Pentecostals make up 75% of the total Protestant population in Latin America.<sup>26</sup> Pentecostals in Latin America, and especially in Chile and Korea, are probably also more “Protestant” than in other places like Africa.

It is worthy to note that local aspects of the Latin American Iberian culture became a fertile soil to foster the development and growth of P/C movements; this case is similar to the Philippines. Matviuk agrees about “the importance of the aspects of the Latin American culture that permeate Latin American Pentecostalism.”<sup>27</sup> In Brazil there is a fifth of the world’s Pentecostal adherents and proportionally the largest membership on any continent. Peter Wagner points out that the typical fragmenting nature of

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<sup>25</sup> Allan H. Anderson, “Pentecostalism in East Asia: Indigenous Oriental Christianity?,” *Pneuma* 22:1 (2000), pp. 115-32 (117).

<sup>26</sup> According to Douglas Petersen, “The Formation of Popular, National, Autonomous Pentecostal Churches in Central America,” *Pneuma* 16:1 (1994), pp. 23-48 (32-33) as he quoted the statistics of C. Peter Wagner, “the Assemblies of God, has become the largest or second largest in denominational membership in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Venezuela or 13 (excluding Puerto Rico and Portuguese-speaking Brazil) of the 18 Spanish-speaking republics of Latin America.”

<sup>27</sup> Matviuk, “Pentecostal Leadership Development,” p. 162.

Pentecostal churches in Latin America is the major element of church growth.<sup>28</sup>

J. Merle Davis, author of *How the Church Grows in Brazil*, describes the distinctive Brazilian church growth as closely connected with varied factors coming from migration, a man's church, emotionalism, social phenomena, women's Bible and home economy training, missionary spirit, lay leadership, open-air evangelism, Brazilian Plan,<sup>29</sup> the American Episcopal Mission to the Japanese, a mission to the intellectuals and undenominational missions. Most of the Pentecostal church growth factors are inter-connectedly matched to Filipino P/C church growth as well.

#### 4. North American Influence

David Martin states that Latin America's underdevelopment was largely a product of its Iberian culture. By embracing the "Anglo" values incorporated in Pentecostalism, Latin Americans acquired the cultural foundation needed for ascending to modernity and development.<sup>30</sup> The Holiness-Methodist-Puritanical Anglo-American value, through "Manifest Destiny," contributed to the growth of P/C movements in the Philippines.

Protestant churches in general, and P/C churches in particular in the Philippines, South Korea, Southeast Asia and Latin America are mostly related to churches in the USA, directly or indirectly. Whereas Protestantism in the said regions, on the one hand, is a direct legacy of its North American counterpart; on the other hand, Pentecostalism in each particular context is a localized or contextualized version of the said

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<sup>28</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Look Out! The Pentecostals Are Coming* (Carol Stream, IL: Creation, 1973), p. 26.

<sup>29</sup> From 1917 to 1963, each of the Presbyterian Missions and all branches of the Presbyterian Church in Brazil had been operating for evangelism and church planting all over Brazil. See Read, *New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil*, pp. 84-116.

<sup>30</sup> David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Expression of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Prentice-Hall, 1960), pp. 9-46; R. Andrew Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil: The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 4-5; Phillip Berryman, *Religion in the Mega City: Catholic and Protestant Portraits from Latin America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), p. 3.

countries, having only an indirect relationship with the USA.<sup>31</sup> Although Philippine Pentecostalism was influenced by American missionaries and Filipino *balikbayan* missionaries in earlier times, a variety of variations from American Pentecostalism has promulgated peculiar expressions of Filipino Pentecostalism, as is the case in South Korea, Southeast Asia and Latin America.

One example in Korea, Southeast Asia, Latin America and even in the Philippines, is that the number of American missionaries was relatively few in the pre-War era. Since the “Manila Pentecostal revival in the 1950s, an influx of American missionaries, crusaders, evangelists and televangelists to the Philippines has influenced the Philippine archipelago tremendously. This trend made the Protestant churches in general, and Pentecostal churches in particular, theologically, financially, denominationally and doctrinally dependent upon the USA.<sup>32</sup> The context in Latin America is that Central American and Caribbean churches are influenced more by the USA than further in South America, while Korean Pentecostal churches have faced different relations to the USA, which will be discussed later in detail.

The classical Pentecostal denominations in the earlier period in both the Philippines and Latin America were established in collaboration with American missionaries so that they were inevitably dependent on the finances, personnel and denominational relationship of North American churches, but they were able to be independent to some extent in the later stage.<sup>33</sup> There are Indigenous/Independent Pentecostal churches who obviously have no ties to USA denominations and financial support because of the work of dynamic national evangelists and pastors like Eddie Villanueva, national director of Jesus is Lord church, although they have tried to have spiritual and friendly endorsements from USA churches and leaders. Classic Charismatic Pentecostal denominations and churches dependent on the USA financially and doctrinally are struggling to maintain or survive to some extent, yet a great number of independent/indigenous Pentecostal churches are thriving with their

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<sup>31</sup> D. Peterson, “The Formation of Popular, National, Autonomous Pentecostal Churches,” p. 29 also agrees with this in relation to Latin American context and culture.

<sup>32</sup> D. Peterson, “The Formation of Popular, National, Autonomous Pentecostal Churches,” p. 28, also admits this dependency on the USA.

<sup>33</sup> Westmeier, “Protestant Pentecostalism in Latin America,” p. 17.

nationalistic characteristics in the Philippines and Latin America.<sup>34</sup> Filipino and Latin American Pentecostal independent leaders, whatever their relationship doctrinally and denominationally with the USA churches, are clearly the only ones who could take initiative in the development of the Pentecostal movements in their regions.

In Korea, these kinds of independent and indigenous Pentecostal churches are very rare, while most Latin American independent churches have shared the case in the Philippines. D. Peterson summarizes this process as follows:

Miguez Bonino's position correctly asserts that Pentecostalism, though having early foreign influences, quickly became indigenous and emerges as an authentic religious and social expression within the Latin American context. Consequently, Pentecostalism cannot be adequately understood within the rubric of the historical projects of the traditional Latin American Protestant movement. Neither can Pentecostalism be understood strictly within the framework of Evangelicalism.<sup>35</sup>

In a different way from the Philippines and Latin America, Korea, according to David Martin, "is exposed to religious and cultural radiation from the USA."<sup>36</sup> The influence of American conservative evangelicalism was modified and transformed. As Pentecostalism in Korea has been contextualized and indigenized it has taken a different form from that seen in the USA.<sup>37</sup>

## 5. Modernization and Urbanization

The characteristic of Pentecostal church growth in Brazil has been explained in terms of urbanization, industrialization and internal

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<sup>34</sup> Westmeier, "Protestant Pentecostalism in Latin America," p. 104, points out "dependence on their foreign funds or personnel has hindered growth."

<sup>35</sup> Petersen, "The Formation of Popular, National, Autonomous Pentecostal Churches," pp. 29-30.

<sup>36</sup> Martin, *Tongues of Fire*, p. 135.

<sup>37</sup> Allan Anderson, "The Contribution of David Yonggi Cho to a Contextual Theology in Korea," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 12:1 (2003), pp. 87-107 (86) also points out the peculiar way of Korean Pentecostalism that is quite different from the west, mainly from the USA.

migration.<sup>38</sup> Modernization is defined as the process of social change and transformation that affects an entire society. David Martin relates the tremendous evangelical growth in Latin America to sociological factors. He agrees that Pentecostalism empowers and offers security to the victims of modernization.<sup>39</sup> According to Willems, Protestantism, as it was established, began to act in a very limited way as a factor contributing to socio-cultural change. Then industrialization, urbanization, internal migration, and the opening of the rural frontier not only generated conditions increasingly favorable to the growth of Protestant denominations but also gradually reinforced their active role in the process of socio cultural transformation in Brazil and other countries in Latin America.<sup>40</sup> This situation was similar to the Philippines, though not to many Asian countries such as India, Indonesia, China and Thailand.

The twentieth-century Pentecostal movement began (in a wider sense) in cities and has continued to be at home in urban areas, particularly in the non-Western world where Pentecostal growth and urbanization have seemed to develop side by side. In the Southeast Asian setting, the city reflects many rural patterns of life that have been carried over from the provinces.<sup>41</sup> A major characteristic of urbanization in Southeast Asia is the functional dominance, with two minor exceptions, of one great metropolis in each of the countries of the region. These cities have acted as the head-links between the West and the indigenous societies. They are in a

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<sup>38</sup> According to William R. Read and Frank A. Ineson, *Brazil 1980: The Protestant Handbook* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1973), pp. 142-43, Pentecostals in Brazil anticipate that the rapidly expanding road network and increasing tempo of the process of industrialization will continue to move together in the years ahead to penetrate all Brazilian society and to integrate Brazil both physically and economically.

<sup>39</sup> Martin, *Tongues of Fire*, p. 65, "...so large a movement, now including about one in six of all Brazilians, has clear political potential. Yet Pentecostal success and the possibility of adherents creating their own free space is predicated on the avoidance of secular entanglements, among which politics are included. Pentecostals are people imbued with hope and with what they discern as 'power', but they have little hope of power through politics." See also Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>40</sup> Emillio Willems, *Followers of the New Faith: Culture Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Phillip M. Hauser, ed., *Urbanization in Asia and the Far East* (Calcutta: Unesco, 1957); Richard P. Poethig, "The Philippine Urban Family," in *Acculturation in the Philippines*, pp. 222-34.

state of rapid social change, associated with the granting of political autonomy to the former colonial nations, with the accelerated rise of nationalism, and the increasing centralization of political functions in the national capitals.

In the Philippines, the rate of population growth of the cities or urban areas has greatly exceeded that of the rural areas as a whole. Urbanization has proceeded faster than would be justified by the state of economic development. All of the cities are sharing in this growth, but Manila stands out as the focus of this movement. When maintaining traditional religion from rural origins, especially folk Catholicism, settling in urban society in Greater Metro Manila is value orientation of the urban Filipino.<sup>42</sup> That is the reason why a new influx of folk Catholicism from most of the provinces, reshaped again in urban settings, became large and strong enough to be the PCCM in greater Metro Manila through domestic migration, urbanization and industrialization.

Industrialization has meant concentration of more factories and related enterprises in Manila, Cebu, Davao, and other centers of population. There has been very little effort toward decentralization of industry. The over-crowding of cities makes it impossible for them to meet the needs of the residents. There are problems of inadequate public services dramatized by traffic jams, overcrowded schools, uncollected garbage, lack of water, and the widening blight of the growing slum sections that breed disease and crime. Definitely, something must be done to enable cities to more effectively meet the demands made upon them by an increasing population.<sup>43</sup>

Urbanization contributes in its own way to the expansion of the newer and more independent/indigenous P/C movements.<sup>44</sup> When people feel the loss of communal identity of their origin in rural areas, they come to P/C churches, ensuring for themselves the security of God's love and power.

The Korean case is not exceptional either, as rapid industrialization and urbanization resulted in a sense of deprivation and loss of identity among the migrant urban poor. Poverty, isolation, instability and

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<sup>42</sup> Poethig, "The Philippine Urban Family," p. 228.

<sup>43</sup> Robert M. Fukode, "The Impact of Industrialization of the Philippines" (a paper presented at the God's People in Asian Industrial Society, in Kyoto, Japan, May 1966), p. 80.

<sup>44</sup> Douglas J. Elwood, *Churches and Sects in the Philippines: A Descriptive Study of Contemporary Religious Group Movements*, Silliman University Monograph Series (Religious Studies) 1 (Dumaguete City, Philippines: Silliman University, 1968), p. 65.

hopelessness caused urban people to look for religious security and the divine presence of spiritual manifestation.<sup>45</sup> It is not exaggerated that P/C movements have been perceived by urban people as providing places of spiritual security and personal communities for people unsettled by rapid social change, industrialization, modernization and urbanization in the Philippines, South Korea, Latin America and other parts of the third world. As David Martin agrees, this urbanized context in South Korea produced a great number of Pentecostal-type, mega-churches and Pentecostal expansion.

#### 6. Functional equivalents of culture and religion

According to Westmeier on functional equivalents of culture and religion, functionalists have tried to tie religion to the modernization processes operative in Latin America, and folk religion is forced to progress to more “advanced” stages through phases of secularization. The functionalist researcher will always end up dividing reality into the sacred and the profane.”<sup>46</sup> Hence, folk religion has been vigorously contributing to the fastest P/C growth in the Philippines and other Asian countries, mainly deriving from the lower level of the double-structured religious system. Latin American Pentecostalism has almost the same expression of folk religion as in the Philippines.<sup>47</sup>

Kärkkäinen agrees with this point:

In some parts of the area, Christian churches in general and Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in particular are growing in an amazing way while in most Asian/Pacific countries traditional religions are still in control.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Hong, “Charismatic Mega-churches in Korea,” p. 106 points out, “The difficulty of finding a place to belong and loss of identity can make humans more connected to God, placing more demands on the role of religion.... Many people migrating from rural areas to cities usually had animistic religious patterns and affectionate human relations, but experienced the new cold social structures and milieu with culture shock.” Martin also states this growth of urbanization provides a fertile soil for Pentecostal growth and development. Also David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), p. 161.

<sup>46</sup> Westmeier, *Protestant Pentecostalism in Latin America*, p. 132.

<sup>47</sup> Matviuk, “Pentecostal Leadership Development,” p. 170 also argues the vitality of folk religion.

<sup>48</sup> Kärkkäinen, “‘Truth on Fire’,” p. 36.

Harper gives a glimpse of two regional similarities of folk religion as follows:<sup>49</sup>

Moreover, the rites most characteristic of folk Catholicism as practiced both in Latin America and in the Philippines focus on Mary and the saints, with relatively little concern for Christ, God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, Manuel María Marzal, SJ, specifies four types of Latin American popular religion, when he was corresponding to Ribeiro's four groups that are classified as syncretic Catholicism,<sup>50</sup> Mestizo Catholicism,<sup>51</sup> transplanted Catholicism,<sup>52</sup> and emergent popular religion.<sup>53</sup> However, the combination of folk/popular religiosity and P/C spirituality resulted in ongoing controversy about syncretism in Latin America and Asia, especially in the Philippines. Traditionally, Asians and Latin Americans have been accustomed to animism and shamanism, beliefs in supernatural power and the spirit world, healing and blessings for a long time. Whenever Western Christianity was modified, adopted, accommodated or inculturated into Asian and Latin American traditional belief systems, there arose controversy about syncretism.<sup>54</sup>

Similarity between early Protestant missions in the Philippines and Latin America verifies historical and diachronic familiarity that had

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<sup>49</sup> Harper, "Philippine Tongues of Fire?," p. 226 describes the characteristic of Latin American folk Catholicism.

<sup>50</sup> This is found in those regions where evangelization (i.e., Catholic evangelization), though it brought about a true religious change, met most resistance, owing to the tenacity and complexity of native religious traditions, as in the high cultures of the Andes and Mesoamerica, and black slaves in Brazil. Dussel, *The Church in Latin America 1492-1992*, p. 72.

<sup>51</sup> This belongs to those parts of the continent where evangelization met with less resistance and where Roman Catholicism, especially in Chile and Paraguay, assimilated the native or black religious traditions.

<sup>52</sup> This belongs to those parts of the continent occupied almost exclusively by emigrant Europeans, coming either as colonizers during the colonial period, or later as emigrants to already independent countries such as Argentina, Uruguay and Southern Brazil.

<sup>53</sup> They are full of emergent popular religions. Dussel, *The Church in Latin America 1492-1992*, pp. 71-73.

<sup>54</sup> Ma, "Asian (Classical) Pentecostalism: Theology in Context," pp. 4-5.

concentrated on medical missions and educational institutions.<sup>55</sup> Similarities of P/C movements between Latin America and the Philippines are a common understanding of the Christian God, receptivity of baptism in the Holy Spirit and a regenerated believer through conversion experience from Roman Catholicism.<sup>56</sup> The similarities and differences of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements between the Philippines and Latin America lie in historical, religious and cultural coincidence of Iberian colonization by the norms of Hispanic Catholicism.<sup>57</sup> Dissimilarities are as follows, according to Harper:

The two regions have many things in common, but there are many things that set them apart as well. For example, Filipinos showed more resilience in the process of Hispanization than did the Aztecs, Incas and other aboriginal American peoples.

As David Martin points out, however, P/C movements in Korea seemingly have been “marked by schism and the canalization of spiritual power through rival charismatic leaders.”<sup>58</sup> Shamanism as a folk religion in Korea has to be dealt with by positive and negative functions, with theological and socio-religious evaluations by scholars, because the religiosity of Shamanism has been deeply interrelated with Christianity. This issue is quite controversial to judge for its function not only in Korean society, but also for world scholars. However, present argument on this appears in negative and positive ways with regard to indigenization, contextualization and inculturation.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Harper, “Philippine Tongues of Fire?,” p. 226.

<sup>56</sup> For similarities between Philippine and Latin American P/C beliefs, see Alvarez, “The South and the Latin American Paradigm of the Pentecostal Movement,” pp. 141-42.

<sup>57</sup> Harper, “Philippine Tongues of Fire?,” pp. 226-27.

<sup>58</sup> Martin, *Pentecostalism*, p. 161.

<sup>59</sup> Martin, *Pentecostalism*, p. 162 comments on shamanism are noteworthy: “It is with regard to shamanism that the ambiguities of indigenization are most obvious. The issue can be argued in several ways, so that shamanism can be positively valued as a female practice or as an expression of “the oppressed,” and from such perspectives one would expect the Pentecostal adoption of (for example) pilgrimages to the prayer mountain to be applauded. Another aspect of indigenization is the distinctly Confucian interest in examination success, in mutual care and wellbeing, and the evident reverence for pastors. Of course, Pentecostalism is noted for its ability to “inculturate” but in the Korean case the

There is no doubt that Pentecostal scholars also admit to evaluating “the importance of the ancient Korean religious system, but also are aware of its dangers,” as Allan Anderson raises the case.<sup>60</sup> In positive response for this, Jae Bum Lee evaluates Shamanism as a way of spiritual preparedness for P/C movements, as an awareness of supernatural power, sins and evil spirits, and the need for blessings and healing are a great contribution preparing the way for Korean Protestant/Pentecostal church growth.<sup>61</sup>

### 7. Political and Apolitical

Passive conformation has been a typical trend of Pentecostal church leadership to their secular governments in Asia and Latin America. However, this idea seems to be fading away. Instead the corporatist form of Protestantism and Pentecostalism is becoming a possible trend, according to Bastian:

Passive conformism, far from proving a kind of self-reflection of the religious counter-society, is in fact a major characteristic of the corporatist dynamics of contemporary forms of Protestantism in Latin America. For this reason over the last twenty years the Pentecostalist leadership in certain countries has become a political leadership in the traditional sense of corporatist mediation.<sup>62</sup>

Many Charismatic leaders in the Philippines and Latin America are actively involved in politics. For example, Eddie Villanueva, the JIL leader in the Philippines, ran as a 2004 presidential candidate. Basic Community Churches that are prevalent in Latin America are also common in the Philippines. Therefore, whether due to sociopolitical

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applause of other Korean Christians has been rather muted, even though they have themselves extensively adopted many features of the Pentecostal style.”

<sup>60</sup> Anderson, “Pentecostalism in East Asia: Indigenous Oriental Christianity?,” p. 131 states, “It may be appropriate to consider Korean Pentecostalism as a culturally indigenous form of Korean Christianity interacting with shamanism. Hong, “The Backgrounds and Characteristics of the Charismatic Mega-churches,” p. 107 concurs with Anderson.

<sup>61</sup> Young Hoon Lee, “Korean Pentecost: The Great Revival of 1907,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4:1 (2001), pp. 73-83 (79). Anderson “Pentecostalism in East Asia: Indigenous Oriental Christianity?,” p. 131.

<sup>62</sup> Bastian, “Protestantism in Latin America,” p. 345.

reasons or religious-spiritual motives, P/C scholars began to dialogue with conciliar-ecumenical leaders on the idea of social liberation. This is certainly the case in Korea, Brazil and some countries in Asia and Latin America.

Wonsuk Ma briefly states the understanding of Minjung and liberation theology as follows:

Unlike liberation theology, Minjung theology (its Korean cousin), or Dalit theology (the Indian attempt), has a starting point in the idea of a change in structure, the Pentecostal movement brought a spiritual dynamic to deprived lives....It is powerfully illustrious that a Latin American Pentecostal leader answered, when asked what is Pentecostal social program: "We are the program." It is no wonder that many reports indicate change in life style among Latin American Pentecostals, and this pattern is replicated in Asia.<sup>63</sup>

As long as modern high-technology, economic development, and speedy globalization are working together from region to region, nation to nation, and continent to continent, twenty-first century Pentecostal/Charismatic followers will encounter complicated aspects of socio-religious-political-spiritual phenomena and they can share together more frequently through global, continental and regional networking,<sup>64</sup> and the spiritual dimension of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements should deal more with other issues such as socio-economic-religious-ecological matters as well.<sup>65</sup>

The Philippine Roman Catholic Church has been a great powerhouse of politics with pastoral letters and ecclesiastical orders to the entire nation. The Church has a Base Community Church which can easily be mobilized politically. Traditional premillennialists from Pentecostal believers put their stance afar from politics, while newer and younger Charismatics feel free to be involved with their free-will decisions in political voting. The variety of political opinions and participations among P/C followers does not explain the mosaic differences in the Philippines. However, ordinary Evangelical Pentecostals appeared similar to Latin American Evangelicals according to Westmeier:

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<sup>63</sup> Ma, "Asian (Classical) Pentecostalism: Theology in Context," p. 5.

<sup>64</sup> Alvarez, "The South and the Latin American Paradigm of the Pentecostal Movement," p. 140.

<sup>65</sup> Alvarez, "The South and the Latin American Paradigm of the Pentecostal Movement," p. 152.

David Stoll maintains that this model would be bound to engender fiction because, compared with the politically loaded agenda of Liberation Theology, Evangelicals could actually be seen as being apolitical in that, instead of struggling for structural changes via political action, their predominate concern is a message of personal regeneration—even though a social vision is embedded in this message.<sup>66</sup>

Pentecostals and Charismatics are not obviously seen in politics on the issues of social and political reforms and programs, though they are actively involved in voting in politics in the Philippines.

No one knows how P/C reciprocal interaction could influence the masses of Filipinos who have been accustomed to the double-structured religious system; but it is obvious because of ancient religious beliefs and practices among folk/popular Catholics and some Protestants. P/C movements are not single-structured religious movements. These movements are rather interacting religious agents to produce dynamic and divergent religious reactions,<sup>67</sup> and divergent P/C services are being held now in Greater Metro Manila to create new religious history for tomorrow.

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<sup>66</sup> Westmeier, *Protestant Pentecostalism in Latin America*, p. 24.

<sup>67</sup> Rodrigo D. Tano, "Towards an Evangelical Asian Theology," in *The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology*, eds. Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur Ro (Seoul: Word of Life, 1991), pp. 93-118 (94-96).

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD  
IN NORTHERN LUZON (1947-1953):  
A HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Doreen Alcoran Benavidez

PART I: HISTORY

1. The Groundwork of Early Pioneers

In 1918, Jennie Brinson Rushim and her husband, Church of God (COG) Missionaries to China, came to the Philippines for several months. It was their impression that there was no Pentecostal missions at that time, and certainly no ministry of any noticeable size. Although they did some missionary work in Manila and won a few converts to the Pentecostal persuasion, their visit was too short to achieve lasting results. They soon returned to China, the land of their burden.<sup>1</sup> Then, in 1936, another COG Missionary, J. H. Ingram in his trip around the world, spent about a week in the Philippines and was deeply moved by the spiritual needs of the country. Unlike Rushim, who reported in 1918 that there was no apparent Pentecostal ministry present in the islands, Ingram reported in 1936 that several small Pentecostal churches were active in the interior.<sup>2</sup>

The Japanese took the Philippines during World War II in 1941 and 1942. The islands were liberated in 1944, and on July 4, 1946, the

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Conn, *Where the Saints Have Trod: A History of the Church of God Missions*, (Cleveland, TN: Pathway, 1959), pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> On February 18, 1936 he sailed from Los Angeles harbor bound to cross the Pacific and the Orient; he termed it "Golden Jubilee Tour" because the COG was fifty years old that year. His intention was to contact independent missionaries around the world who were interested in affiliating with the COG. The tour carried him to thirty-one countries including the Philippines. Charles Conn, *Where the Saints Have Trod*, p. 29

Philippine Commonwealth was granted complete independence by the United States and became the Republic of the Philippines. It was at about this time that the COG entered the Philippines.

### 1.1 Missionary

The first COG Missionary from the USA, Frank Porada<sup>3</sup> and his family from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, came back to the Philippines in February, 1946 and resided in San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte. He was a former Missionary of the UFGC<sup>4</sup> in Ilocos Norte, and being fluent in the Ilocano dialect, he was well received by the Ilocanos. After his affiliation with the COG, he returned to the very people with whom he formerly worked and led to the Lord, and told them of his new affiliation.

In early 1947, some of his former members of the United Free Gospel and Missionary Society joined him. The local churches composing the new group were: Sinaongan Sur, San Agustin, Isabela; Virgoneza, San Agustin, Isabela; Cabanuangan, Jones, Isabela; Cabatuan, Isabela; Barbarit, Gattaran, Cagayan; Payas, San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte; and Taguipuro, Bangui, Ilocos Norte.<sup>5</sup>

Porada's wife and his two children became ill and they were compelled to return to the United States. He stayed and worked alone in the Philippines. Within several months, the COG in the Philippines was organized, and five independent congregations, six ministers and 280 members united with the church and immediately came together for a convention in May, 1947.

Eighteen months after the organization, Frank Porada left the Philippines and was advised by the COG World Missions Department (Cleveland, TN) to appoint one of the ministers to take his place, and to superintend the new work that he had established.

### 1.2 Initial Expansion

Under the leadership of Cortez and his co-workers, including Vicente E. Agustin, Aniceto Domingo, Manuel Gonzales Sr., Eusebio Juan, Jaime Gumallaoi, Aurelio Molina and Victor Rafael, a fruitful

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<sup>3</sup> Before World War II Frank Porada as a United Free Gospel Church Missionary went back to the States for furlough and stayed there for several years.

<sup>4</sup> United Free Gospel Church

<sup>5</sup> The response of Fulgencio Cortez, Sr. to a questionnaire (March, 1990) sent by Al Tagayuna.

program of evangelism began. Not long afterward, in 1950, the Mission Board appointed Cortez as the national representative of the COG in the Philippines. In that same year, under his leadership, the COG in the Philippines was reorganized.

The reorganized Church of God had seven ministers, six organized churches and about two hundred members. In the following years, 1948-1952, the young group was slowly expanding and the following are some more places where new works were started and established (with pastor's name identified in parentheses): Dibuloan, Jones Isabela (Loreto Mateo); Arubub and Pungpungan, Jones, Isabela (Vicente Agustin and his wife), Palacian, Aglipay, Quirino (Aniceto Domingo); Alannay, Lasam, Cagayan and Atoc, Luna, Apayao (Gideon Lagundino); Cabatacan East, Lasam, Cagayan (Alfredo Valiente, Sr.); Maddela, Quirino (Victor Rafael) and Namatican, Santa Lucia, Ilocos Sur (Manuel Gonzales, Sr. and other co-workers).<sup>6</sup>

The reorganization made the confluent efforts of the ministers more effective and fruitful. One American observer noted:

Practically, the entire task has been accomplished by serious, consecrated Filipinos...they have not allowed the lack of American missionary to hinder their zeal to carry the glad tidings of Jesus into new areas where there are no Pentecostal works, the young ministers willingly sacrifice their comforts and move to the needy community. The COG is being enlarged and strengthened constantly by many young people...walking for miles...they go forward for Christ.<sup>7</sup>

The local ministers pressed into remote villages of the Northern Provinces of Luzon, carrying their musical instruments and Bibles with them, talking to those they met, and winning souls for Christ. The work grew steadily so that by 1952, the denomination had fourteen ministers, twelve church buildings and 551 members.<sup>8</sup> Cortez resigned his pastorate in Barbarit, Gattaran, Cagayan in order to devote his full time to supervising the expanding work.

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<sup>6</sup> The response of Fulgencio Cortez, Sr. to a questionnaire (March, 1990) sent by Al Tagayuna.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Conn, *Where the Saints Have Trod*, p. 229.

<sup>8</sup> The Church of God, National office, provided the statistics used. The data records the number of churches, members and ministers from 1947-2002.

### 1.3 The Pillars of the Philippine COG

The following people are considered to be the pillars of the COG in the Philippines because they pioneered ministries and planted churches. They stood for the COG when it was first established and formally registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and they were Fulgencio Cortez, Aniceto Domingo, Vicente Agustin, Victor Rafael, Eusebio Juan, Manuel Gonzales and Jaime Gumallaoi.

#### *1.3.1 Fulgencio Cortez, Sr.*

Cortez from Namatican, Santa Lucia, Ilocos Sur is an Ilocano preacher who was converted to Christianity in California, USA, when he went there for work. Upon his return to the Philippines, he studied at Free Gospel Bible Institute. Before Porada left, he appointed Cortez to take his place; however, some of the ministers of the new organization were not happy with his appointment and they left the group.

The above-mentioned ministers accepted the appointment of Cortez and readily supported his leadership. Cortez led the group for four years without the aid of any missionary.

#### *1.3.2 Cortez's Co-workers*

In Isabela, Porada stayed in the house of Aniceto Domingo and family. Domingo was a United Free Gospel pastor, but Porada was able to convince him to join the COG. Domingo started a COG work in Jones, Isabela and was assisted by Porada in his early ministry endeavors.

Vicente E. Agustin was also a United Free Gospel pastor and also from Cabanuangan, Jones, Isabela. He had already started works in Arubub and Pungpongan, both barrios of Jones, Isabela when he joined the COG, following Domingo's move. Agustin helped Domingo in spreading the work in the neighboring barrios in Jones, Isabela.

Eusebio Juan pioneered the COG work in Saranay, Cabatuan, Isabela. While he was the pastor, a revival was experienced in the church. Many of the believers received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As a result of the revival, the towns of Cauayan and Dabubu in Isabela were reached with the gospel through the members who experienced the Pentecostal outpouring.

Jaime Gumallaoi was from Baruyen, Bangui, Ilocos Norte. He helped pioneer and establish the churches in the towns of San Nicolas, Taguiporo and Bangui all in the province of Ilocos Norte.

Manuel Gonzales was from Samac, San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte. He was encouraged to become a pastor by his pastor Maura Miguel, who

was then pastoring in Payas, San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte. He entered the ministry at the age of eighteen even before he had formal training in a Bible school. In 1951, after four years of ministry, he decided to have formal training at the Messengers of the Cross Bible College in Santa Catalina, Ilocos Sur. In his second year, he married Gertrudis Manuel, one of the youth of Payas, San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte. During his early years in the ministry, he became sick and pledged to serve God if he was healed. Gertrudis Manuel Gonzales, his wife narrated the incident:

In 1955, a religious gathering (at that time called "rally") was held at Bingao, San Nicolas Ilocos Norte. Benigno Maningan, one of the powerful preachers of his time, preached about the healing of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:1-6. Among those who attended the gathering and heard the preaching were Manuel Gonzales and his brother in-law Blas Gonzales. One month after the rally, Manuel Gonzales suffered from a terrible stomachache, and there was no known cure for it. It was an illness that no one could explain. Every possible cure was tried, and every person who might be of help was consulted, until one of them said one day that there was no hope and as soon as the sun sets that day the patient will also die. We had given up hope. I had even called the pastor in the vicinity, Pastora Cayso, to perform the last rites for the patient; but Blas Gonzales refused to give up. He went to the patient and reminded him of the preaching they heard about the healing of Hezekiah and they both agreed that they should pray. We began praying, and when the pastor and the Christian brethren in the area arrived, they joined in the prayers. For hours we did not waver in our prayers. Suddenly Manuel Gonzales made a stir, which he had not done for some time because he had gone very weak. We who were praying were even more encouraged. Later, Rev. Manuel Gonzales jumped up from his bed and joined in our praises, joyfully thanking the Lord for healing. And healed he was! So the preparation for the supposed wake that would follow his death became a powerful revival in the area that strengthened our faith and began a powerful healing ministry of the church through the believers.<sup>9</sup>

Manuel Gonzales became one of the most respected leaders because of his dedication to the ministry. He was one of the leaders who helped the early missionaries in their ministry in the Philippines.

In 1952 Victor Rafael pioneered a church in the town of Maddela in the province of Quirino. He was responsible for the spread of

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<sup>9</sup> The author's interview with Gertrudis M. Gonzales, Pasay City, Metro Manila, November 2002.

Pentecostalism in the towns of Palacian and Aglipay in the province of Quirino.

## 2. Spread

### 2.1 Province of Isabela

#### 2.1.1 *Cabanuangan, Jones*

The pastor of the church was Aniceto Domingo. The church experienced a great revival in the village. People were healed of different kinds of sickness, several hundred were baptized in water and some were baptized in the Holy Spirit. As a result of this revival, churches were planted in Arubub and Pungpungan and Dabubu.

#### 2.1.2 *Virgoneza, Jones*

Emeterio Mariano brought the gospel to Virgoneza, a town of Jones. Virgoneza then became an outstation of the church in Cabanuangan, Jones. When the revival broke out in Cabanuangan, the group of believers in Virgoneza heard the news and they visited the church; they too experienced the outpouring of the Spirit. Through the leadership of Aniceto Domingo, who was the pastor in Cabanuangan, Virgoneza, the COG planted three daughter churches in Quimmelabasa, Rang-ay; Dappig and Sinaoangan Sur.

#### 2.1.3 *Sinaoangan Sur, San Agustin*

In the 1950s Sinaoangan Sur COG was started as an outstation of the church in Virgoneza. In 1964 the church was turned over to Manuel Gonzales, Sr. It was through his ministry that the church had grown rapidly, and revival in the church was experienced, souls were saved and sick people were healed. Gonzales helped pioneer COG churches in Sinaoangan Norte and Palacian in the town of San Agustin, Isabela.

### 2.2 Province of Cagayan

The church in Barbarit was the key in the spread of the COG work in the province of Cagayan. During the 1950s a group of believers were praying and fasting in the small church in Barbarit, Gattaran, Cagayan. After a few days, at the peak of fasting and praying, at about ten in the evening, a fire from heaven came down and enveloped the church building. The top of the church was so bright that the people in the village and the neighboring villages thought the church was being

consumed by fire. But in the morning, when they went to see the damage, they were amazed that the church was intact. Yes, the church was on fire, but by the fire of the Holy Spirit. Because of this experience, many were saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit. As a result revival spread and churches were planted in Alannay and Cabatacan East, in the town of Lasam, Cagayan.

### 3. Incorporation

With the mission growing in number and expanding, the ministers felt the need for the group to be registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) of the Philippine government, so that it might obtain the rights and privileges of any legitimate organization set forth by the government. On March 20, 1953, Fulgencio Cortez, with the close cooperation and assistance of his fellow ministers, started to work towards this registration, with the approval of the COG headquarters in the United States. The SEC granted the registration of the church on May 8 of the same year and the group became known as the New Testament Church of God, to differentiate it from another group that had already taken "Church of God" as its name. The founding incorporators were seven "pillars": Aniceto Domingo, Vicente Agustin, Victor Rafael, Eusebio Juan, Manuel Gonzales, Jaime Gumallaoui, and Fulgencio Cortez Sr.

In 1984, the name was changed to Church of God World Missions of the Philippines, Incorporated. The registration of the organization resulted in the establishment of a formal organization and the acquirement of the right to solemnize marriage.

After the incorporation of the organization, Wade Horton, Foreign Missions Representative of the COG in the US, visited the Philippines during his 1953 world tour. He visited Mindanao to see whether there was a possibility of planting a church on the island. That trip was made in response to the request of some Christians in Mindanao who wrote to the COG headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee, expressing their desire to join the church. Discovering the reality of spiritual hunger of the people in Mindanao, he decided to include this island as a mission field.

## PART 2: THEOLOGY

In its formative stage of the denomination (1923-1947), two Pentecostal groups exerted their theological influences in the COG in the Philippines, as many ministers in early years came from the UFGC and many ministers and workers were trained at the Bible school of the Filipino Assemblies of the First Born.

### 1. The United Free Gospel Church

The United Free Gospel and Missionary Society was a Pentecostal organization whose international headquarters was located in Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania, USA, and was the first Pentecostal denomination that reached Philippine soil.

#### 1.1 A Brief History

Joseph Warnick, the first American Missionary, started the work in the Philippines in 1921. He came from Hawaii with two other Filipino ministers, Emeterio Mariano and Antonio Corpuz, both Ilocano immigrants to Hawaii.<sup>10</sup> The three went to San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte the hometown of Corpuz and began to preach the Pentecostal message. They were quite aggressive in spreading the gospel and they extended their outreaches to the neighboring towns. They soon won some converts and baptized them in water. They built the first chapel in the *poblacion* of San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte, where the converts of the town assembled and worshipped during Sundays and mid-week services.

In 1923 Mariano visited his hometown in Virgoneza, Jones Isabela, and preached the gospel. One of the converts through his ministry efforts was Theodorico Lastimosa, who a year later in 1924 became a licensed local pastor. Mariano and Lastimosa worked together in Isabela. The work extended to Quimalabasa, Sinaoangan Sur, Sinaoangan Norte, Rang-ay, Dabubu, Dappig, Pongpongan, Arubub, Addalam and Palacian.

After three years, another young Missionary, Frank Porada, came to help the work in San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte. He worked with Joseph Warnick until Warnick died in 1927. Then Porada became the leader of the work.

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<sup>10</sup> The author's interview with Hermie Vivit, National Chairman of the Free Gospel Church, San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte, May, 2002.

In 1927 Lastimosa was assigned to pastor in San Nicolas after Antonio Corpuz had quit. For two years, Lastimosa worked with Frank Porada and started works in the towns of Laoag, Dingras, Banna, Nueva Era and Batac, all in Ilocos Norte.

Porada tried his best to learn the Ilocano dialect. He sent Lastimosa to take care of the work in the town of Dingras and he took care of the church in San Nicolas. This continued until 1931 when Porada decided to swap places with Mariano. Porada went to Isabela to work in Virgoneza, while Mariano went to pastor in San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte.

Before World War II, Porada went back to the States for furlough and stayed there for several years and Mariano assumed the leadership. He handled the work in Ilocos Norte and Lastimosa handled the work in Isabela.

There were two female ministers who helped in the promotion of the gospel work: Florentina Luis, who helped in Cabanuangan, Jones, Isabela, and Josefa Derrada, who helped in the work in Dingras, Ilocos Norte.

In 1937 United Free Gospel Bible Institute was opened in San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte. The institute offered a two-year Bible training. There were sixteen graduates in their first graduation class. The following year, fourteen graduated and one of them was Fulgencio R. Cortez, Sr.<sup>11</sup> After the second graduation, the school closed because only one minister had committed to take care of the school and he was not able to keep it going.

When Frank Porada returned to the Philippines after the war, he was no longer a UFGC Missionary, but a Missionary for the COG. Upon his arrival he contacted Emeterio Mariano and his former Free Gospel colleagues and invited them to join him. Mariano joined the COG.

Mariano, who was formerly the head of the UFGC, rallied the churches and informed them of his affiliation with the COG. Many of the ministers and churches of the UFGC joined Porada and Mariano because they were introduced to faith by the ministry of the two of them. When Porada returned and introduced a new organization to the group, the people did not resist the change and voluntarily joined him. Their loyalty to Porada and Mariano, and the fact that the teachings of both organizations were not much different, made their change not difficult. But other ministers refused to join and remained with the UFGC. The ministers and churches that joined Porada became the first members of

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<sup>11</sup> He later became the first national representative of the Church of God in the Philippines.

the Philippine COG. The charter churches were: churches in Jones and Virgoneza, in the province of Isabela; church in Barbarit, Gattran, in the province of Cagayan, and the Church in Payas, San Nicolas in the province of Ilocos Norte. When Mariano died, Cortez was appointed to lead the COG that was then known as the New Testament Church of God.

The post-war period saw a significant decline of the UFGC because there was no solid leadership to head the church. Finally, in 1979, a Missionary, Lyle Berg, Sr. and his family, arrived to help strengthen the dying church. One year later another Missionary, David Cook, arrived. With the arrival of the Missionaries, the work of the Free Gospel Church began to grow again. These Missionaries worked with the national pastors who remained in the group. In 1981 they re-opened the Bible school and renamed it Faith Bible Institute, and this brought further growth. There are fifty-one ordained and licensed ministers, and forty-two local congregations scattered throughout Isabela, Cagayan, Ilocos Norte and Abra.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.2 Theological Influences

Since the early ministers of the COG came from the UFGC, the UFGC had influenced the teachings and the practices of the COG ministers. The major influence of the UFGC on the COG churches in Northern Luzon was in the holiness teaching. The UFGC established the first Pentecostal Bible school in Ilocos Norte in 1937 and many of the pastors who joined the COG got their theological education there. The UFGC believes in the entire sanctification of believers. The statement of faith of the UFGC states:

The Scriptures teach a life of holiness without which no man [*sic*] shall see the Lord. By the power of the Holy Ghost we are able to obey the command, "Be ye Holy, for I am Holy." Entire sanctification is the will of God for all believers, and should earnestly be pursued by walking in obedience to God's Word (Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15, 16; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 1 John 2:6).<sup>13</sup>

The subjects like entire sanctification and holiness were the major teachings during the 1950s in the Pentecostal churches. Because of the

<sup>12</sup> Hermie Vivit interview (May, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> "Doctrinal Statement of the United Free Gospel Church" supplied by Hermie Vivit (San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte, May 2002).

strong pursuit of holiness, many prohibitions were taught and preached in Bible schools and in the churches. The early COG members were influenced by the rigid rules set by the UFGC, such as prohibitions for women to have short hair, to perm their hair, to wear jewelry of any kind, to wear short skirt or pants or to wear make-up. These rules also include prohibitions to eat blood, to drink wine of any kind and to go to the cinema or to a disco house.

Those who violated these rules were even accused of being backsliders. Fulgencio Cortez, Sr., the first Superintendent of the Philippines COG, was one of the first graduates of the United Free Gospel Institute and he was greatly influenced by the holiness teachings. He strongly imposed that all these rules were to be followed by all COG churches in Northern Luzon during this time. In one of his sermons in 1975 he said:

Holiness is God's standard of living for his people. One of the commandments of God for us is to be holy (1 Peter 1:16). Holiness and humility should grace the life of a minister and if he possesses these spiritual qualities he will always live successfully. No unholy man is fit to handle the word of God neither worthy to represent a holy God.<sup>14</sup>

Even ministers who later joined the COG adopted the holiness teaching and the prohibitions. In the COG churches, the failure to adhere to any of the rules meant disciplinary action and worse, expulsion from the church. Soledad Gungab, one of the earliest members of the COG in San Nicolas and the first woman to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, recalled:

I had my hair permed because that was the hairstyle during the early 1950s. I was excited to show to my fellow young people in the church of my new hairstyle but I was shocked when I was disciplined. My ministry in the church was stopped and I was prohibited to be involved in any ministry of any kind. It was a painful moment but I had to obey the leaders of the church.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Sermon of Fulgencio Cortez, Sr. entitled "Holiness as God's Standard for Living" (1975).

<sup>15</sup> The author's interview with Soledad Gungab of Payas COG, San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte, May, 2002.

The slogan, "Holiness unto the Lord," that can be seen in almost all United Free Gospel churches, was adopted by the COG pastors. Even today this can be seen in some COG churches all over the region.

## 2. Filipino Assemblies of the First Born

### 2.1 A Brief History

During the 1920s, Filipinos were recruited to work in the agricultural plantations in the United States. Many left the Philippines and worked as cane cutters in sugar cane plantations in Hawaii and as grape pickers in the vineyards in California. They only received meager salaries and were discriminated as "secondary citizens."

In 1917, Julian Bernabe, the pioneer of the Filipino Assemblies of the First Born, landed on a plantation in Hawaii. He was converted and was baptized in the Holy Spirit in the early 1920s during a Pentecostal revival meeting in Papaikou, Hawaii. Coincidentally, the associate evangelist of the revival meeting was Emeterio Mariano. After his conversion, Bernabe had a desire to share his new found faith with his fellow Filipinos. He then moved to California and made friends with Filipino laborers there. In California he started his first Filipino congregation.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1930s Pentecostal revival meetings were conducted in San Jose, California, and many Filipinos were saved and baptized. There were many Filipinos looking for a place to worship, as many area churches did not welcome them. White Americans did not want to fellowship with Filipinos. That strong racial discrimination pushed the plan to organize a Filipino church community in California. In 1933 the Filipino Assemblies of the First Born (FAFB) was registered as an organization.<sup>17</sup>

Sometime after the incorporation of the FAFB in California, Silvestre Taverner, who was saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit in a Pentecostal revival meeting, felt a call to share his new found faith with his fellow Filipinos in the Philippines. Thus, in 1935 before World War II, he sailed back to the Philippines.

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<sup>16</sup> Heredel P. Cappel, *Filipino Assemblies of the First Born, Inc.: Its Pentecostal Roots and Fruits* (Caba, La Union: Messengers of the Cross Bible College, 2001), p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Cappel, *Filipino Assemblies of the First Born*, p. 16.

He began his ministry among his friends and relatives in San Juan, Abra. But the people perceived the gospel message as a threat to their syncretistic religious belief. At the break of the war (1941), Taverner's evangelistic effort was temporarily stopped. Immediately after the war, he resumed his ministry, and this time the wind blew in a different direction. People not only believed in the Lord Jesus Christ but experienced the endowment of the Holy Spirit. Concurrently in California, God spoke to four Filipino ministers, Clemente Balangue, Pedro Yaranon, Domingo Mabalot and Felipe Calizar, to join Taverner in the Philippines.<sup>18</sup>

In January 1949, five Bible schools were opened in various parts of the country: Messengers of the Cross Bible Institute in Sta Catalina, Ilocos Sur; FAFB Agricultural Bible Institute, Dappig, San Agustin, Isabela; Temple Bible College, Tandang Sora, Quezon City; Glad Tidings Bible School, Marbel, Mindanao and Bible School, Piddig Ilocos Norte. Young people flocked to these schools to be trained and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

On November 24, 1949, the first convention was held in San Juan, Abra. The presence of the Holy Spirit was heavily felt, and God moved supernaturally.<sup>19</sup> In January 19, 1951 the FAFB was registered with the SEC.

In 1968, because of severe persecutions, the FAFB headquarters and the Messengers of the Cross Bible Institute were transferred to Caba, La Union, where they have remained until now. From its humble beginnings, the FAFB continues to grow and spread from the Philippines to locations around the world, including Canada, England, Spain, Greece, Kuwait, Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia. Currently FAFB has 350 ministers, 250 churches and 18,000 members.<sup>20</sup>

## 2.2 Theological Influences

Julian Bernabe, the pioneer of the FAFB, was saved in a revival meeting in Hawaii through the preaching of Emeterio Mariano. When

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<sup>18</sup> Cappal, *Filipino Assemblies of the First Born*, p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> People heard sounds of rolling ocean waves, some jumped for joy, others were slain flat on the floor, others spoke in tongues, others made the interpretations, others cried because of the wonderful experience of the power of the Holy Spirit. Cappal, *Filipino Assemblies of the First Born*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Heredel Cappal by Conrado Lumahan in Caba, La Union on August 12, 2005.

Bernabe opened the Bible schools in the Philippines, early ministers of the COG received their training in the FAFB Bible schools, until the COG was able to establish their own training schools. That is the reason why there is evidence of the influence of the FAFB in the early theology of the COG, such as:

### *2.2.1 Dispensational teaching*

The COG pioneers were fundamentally dispensationalists as some early leaders (e.g., Manuel Gonzales and Valerio Vicente) studied at the Messengers of the Cross Bible Institute in Santa Catalina, Ilocos Sur in the early 1950s. Larkin's dispensational chart was studied in the school, and all graduates were supposed to master the chart in order for them to graduate. Furthermore, the Scofield Reference Bible was sought after by many ministers which helped in the propagation of the dispensational teachings.<sup>21</sup>

### *2.2.2 Baptism in the Holy Ghost*

One of the major pre-requisites for graduation at the Messenger of the Cross Bible Institute in the 1950s was baptism in the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues as the physical evidence. The glossolalic experience was the proof that a student was ready for the ministry.<sup>22</sup>

### *2.2.3 Divine healing*

The students in the Messengers of the Cross Bible Institute were taught that healing and deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement and is the privilege of all believers (Isa 53:4-5; Matt 8:16-17; James 5:14, 16). Divine healing is an integral part of the gospel. The graduates were encouraged to exercise the gift of healing in their ministries.

### *2.4 Eschatology*

The urgency in teaching and preaching the imminent coming of Christ compelled many Pentecostals for evangelism. The eschatology taught during that time was the two-stage rapture of Christ: the

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<sup>21</sup> "FAFB Statement of Faith," in Heredel P. Cappel, *Filipino Assemblies of the First Born*, pp. 36-39.

<sup>22</sup> The author's interview with Valerio Vicente, former COG Regional Overseer of Northern Luzon, in Baguio City, November, 2002.

immediate return of Christ for the saints and his return after the great tribulation with the saints to reign on earth.

### Conclusion

In the late 1940s the Church of God first reached the Ilocano-speaking people in the northern part of the Philippine islands. Then after the reception of the gospel and the Pentecostal revival in the north, the church grew in number in that part of the country. It was not until the early 1950s when the church finally went to the southern part of the Philippine islands by starting its ministry among the Ilocanos who migrated there who came from the north.

Today, in 2005, we must recognize that the Church of God finally has been completely established and is operating in the whole country. The COG has to be grateful and recognize the historical antecedents that have brought us where we are now. Let us recognize the encounter, which people in our past have made with their present realities and the repository of concerns, and activities that reach us either as mistaken judgments or deliberate undertakings because these things also form us.

The present generation and the future generation of the Church of God in the Philippines are in danger of losing their identity if they are not reminded of their history. Also the key to continued growth of the denomination lies in the study of its history.

The denomination whether we like it or not, is influenced by the past and we distort not only history but also ourselves when we live unaware of our past. In order not to repeat the misdeeds and false expectations of the past, the denomination should not ignore its history or should not have a short historical memory.

## THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PHILIPPINE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD AND THE ROLE OF EARLY MISSIONARIES<sup>1</sup>

Trinidad E. Seleký

### 1. Philippine District Council of the Assemblies of God

Filipinos, who graduated from Assemblies of God Bible Schools in the United States and went back to their country to preach to their own people,<sup>2</sup> wanted an Assemblies of God (USA) appointed missionary to help them become organized. Their reason for this action was that the Philippines, at that time, was still under the protectorate of the United States, with a Counsel General as the final seat of authority. A requirement for permitting any outside church denomination to operate in the Philippines was that it must seek registration with the United States Counsel General and have a duly appointed missionary or church leader from the home body in the United States.

#### 1.1 Leland E. Johnson

Leland E. Johnson, with his wife and two children, landed in Manila on Christmas Eve, 1939, and spent an uneventful Christmas Sunday in a hotel. He brought with him a letter from Springfield to be presented to the Vice-Counsel, Cordell Hull, who in turn would present it to the Counsel General. The letter requested permission to register an

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<sup>1</sup> This article is taken from Trinidad Cabanilla Esperanza, "The Assemblies of God in the Philippines" (Master of Religious Education thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1965). Only in a limited extent, editorial changes were applied: subheadings were added with several explanatory footnotes, and the Journal style has been applied.

<sup>2</sup> See Trinidad Seleký, "Six Filipinos and One American: Pioneers of the Assemblies of God in the Philippines," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4:1 (2001), pp. 119-129.

organization known as “The Philippines District Council of the Assemblies of God, Incorporated.” The following day the Johnson family began to search for a house. The list of houses for rent in the newspaper was beyond a missionary’s pocketbook. Johnson recalled:

We drove out of the city just a short distance, and my wife, children and I, taking off our sun helmets, bowed our heads and prayed. We prayed that the Lord would direct us to a house that would be presentable, yet within our budget.<sup>3</sup>

They were able to rent an unfurnished house and did their housekeeping with very meager equipment. Many of their household belongings were stored in Hong Kong when they left China for their furlough. To their disappointment, their ship was rerouted and did not stop at Hong Kong on the way to the Philippines. It took over six months before a boat to Manila brought their belongings. A few days after their arrival, Castor Abad, a Filipino about thirty-five years of age, who had heard the Pentecostal message in his home province, came to offer his services and to help the Johnsons make their new house a little more comfortable. He also asked if they would have services the following Sunday. They decided to have both Sunday morning and evening services and discussed the advisability of inviting outsiders. Castor Abad had some young friends whom he was sure would be willing to attend the services. A report describes their first Sunday service:

The following Sabbath day was a beautiful day, and although our small group had to be seated on planks and the inadequate chairs we had, we felt that this was a grand occasion, and an opportunity to invite the Lord to be with us. After a short scripture reading from the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, we went to prayer.

Only three of us were Christians, but God poured out His Spirit in a mighty way. Even after my wife and I finished praying, we looked up to see Bro. Abad still interceding fervently. On and on he prayed, pouring out his soul to God, and time and again pleading for the salvation of the seven young men. Truly inspiring was this sight, a picture I shall never forget. This time of prayer was beyond any service that the natural might have arranged. In fact, several of these young men began weeping, and crying out to God for salvation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Leland E. Johnson, *I Was a Prisoner of the Japs* (Saratoga, CA: Author, n.d.), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, *I Was a Prisoner*, p. 9.

Soon they increased their services and also met on Tuesday and Thursday nights. Before the Johnsons left for the city of Baguio in the spring of that year, they had a group of seventeen Christians, each of whom was eager to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

### 1.2 Council Organized

On January 2, 1940, Hermogenes P. Abrenica, Hosendo Alcantara, and R. C. Esperanza went to meet with the Johnsons, and plans were laid for a convention. Missionary Glenn Dunn and his wife came to the Philippines from China in February. They were soon to go on furlough back to the States, but they very kindly consented to help organize the work in the Philippines. The first convention was held in San Nicolas, Villasis, Pangasinan on March 21-27, 1940. L. E. Johnson, the superintendent appointed by Springfield, presided over the meetings. A constitution was adopted, and H. P. Abrenica, R. Alcantara, Pedro Castro, R. C. Esperanza, Servillano Obaldo and Lorenzo Sebastian were ordained to the ministry. L. E. Johnson, Benito Acena, and Pedro Z. Collado officiated in the ordination services. The elected officers were: R. C. Esperanza, secretary; Pedro Castro, treasurer; and H. P. Abrenica and R. Alcantara, presbyters. The newly organized Philippines District Council of the Assemblies of God was incorporated and registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of the Department of Justice of the Philippines on July 11, 1940.

### 1.3 Initial Growth

Feeling now that they belonged to a duly recognized religious body, the ministers launched out into more active service. Emil Bernaldes reached towns in Bohol; Jose V. Maypa in Capiz; Eugenio Suede in Iloilo; and Pedro Castro among the mountain people of Ilocos Sur and Abra. Everybody was committed to work; they were impelled to move forward and conquer more ground for Christ. They anticipated the early return of Christ and were constrained to spread the gospel to every tribe. There was an unusual hunger for God among the people, and in nearly every service souls were saved. The missionaries were active, too.

In October, 1940 the Dunns held evangelistic meetings in La Paz, Iloilo. Souls were saved and there were those who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Their meetings were climaxed by baptizing twenty-eight converts. The Dunns also ministered in Panay. The first Pentecostal

outpouring in Mindanao came when they visited the work of Pedro Z. Collado in Pikit, Cotabato.

Leland Johnson also held evangelistic meetings, and here is an account of one of his meetings, hard for him to forget.

We held five services, alternating between Bro. Esperanza's church and Alibeng. It was not until the fifth night that our efforts seemed to bear fruit. The first four nights were very trying, to say the least. The enemy had personified himself in the form of young Catholic men, who inspired by their priest, had brought large bamboo clubs with them. They disturbed our audience, and wrought havoc and confusion. They even went so far as to set fire to the building in which we were holding our meetings. Had it not been for posted guards who immediately extinguished the flames, we might have had more than confusion. After this incident, we thought it might be wiser to hold our meetings in the open air. We moved out into the compound entrance, and with big hardwood trees as our chapel, and two gas pump lanterns for our light. The disturbers, about sixteen in number, began a new method of annoying. They began by attempting to sing us down in our song service. When we began the second verse of a song, they would sing the first again. By hook or by crook, they completely upset our song service, and it occurred to me to ask our Christian friends to join in prayer, asking God for wisdom in dealing with the situation. Our prayer was answered, and God led us right into the midst of our enemies to begin song service anew. In my heart I was saying, "It doesn't make any difference what they do to me. They can wrap this trombone around my neck, but by the grace of the Lord, I'm going to show them that a Christian is not afraid." My little band joined me, and the renewed song service actually seemed to effervesce. We sang two songs, and then swang over into some lively choruses. These were followed by a short but impressive message, and a good, old-fashioned altar call. It was soul stirring to see how the tide turned, for God was overruling in the minds of these young men, all the prejudice the Catholic priest had initiated into their hearts. The men had come with the object of ministering a sound beating to any or all of us. God's convicting power struck them, and there, kneeling in the dust beneath the trees and the stars, many of these same young men called upon God.<sup>5</sup>

Two women missionaries, Blanche Appleby and Rena Baldwin, arrived in Baguio in the summer of 1941. They were a great

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<sup>5</sup> Johnson, *I Was a Prisoner*, pp. 10-11.

encouragement and help to the Johnsons. They were also former missionaries to China.

War clouds were hanging low; and the Japanese had pushed their forces towards Beijing and disrupted the activities of the language school there. This forced the school to seek refuge in a neutral nation. The city of Baguio was chosen and among the group studying the Mandarin language were five Assemblies of God missionaries: Robert Tangen and his wife, Doris Carlson, Elizabeth Galley and Gladys Knowles, all single women missionaries. About the same time, the Dunns left for their furlough to the United States.

The fellowship between the missionaries and the national workers was very close. There was a united effort to accomplish one great aim, the establishment of indigenous churches. This resulted in a very zealous and aggressive move for God.

The rapid growth of the work called for trained workers to become pastors and evangelists. Bethel Bible Institute was opened in Baguio on August 1, 1941 with twelve students enrolled. A spirit of study and consecration prevailed. Some of the students were very evangelistic; others were excellent workers. With war conditions developing so rapidly, the urgency of spreading the gospel was balanced with a sincere and deep desire for complete surrender to God, and students sought the Lord earnestly. They received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and as a result, many outstations sprang up.

#### 1.4 War

On December 8, 1941, sixteen Japanese planes made their sneak attack on Camp John Hay, a U.S. military base in Baguio, only a mile from the Bible school. Casualties were great. Then followed newscast reports of great destruction done to Clark Field Air Base in Pampanga, Nichols Field near Manila, and Sangley Point in Cavite, the largest U.S. naval installation in the Philippines. Soon the United States declared war against Japan. All schools were closed indefinitely, including Bethel Bible Institute, as the Philippines became a battleground. The American missionaries were interned, and the Filipinos were left to carry on the work.

The war curtailed advancement of the work. Although the Japanese did not prohibit the holding of church services, there was always suspicion of anti-Japanese activity in assembling a crowd. In some cities sermons were censored, and open air evangelistic meetings were impossible. Personal evangelism and house-to-house visitation were the

two most effective means of reaching people for Christ. In spite of many disadvantages concomitant with the war, most of the churches won converts.

None of the ministers had been killed by the Japanese. Bethel Chapel in Baguio was ably pastored by Juan Soriano, who was one of the Bible school students. With the wise assistance of Rosendo Alcantara, the congregation grew. Juan Moldero, a Spanish mestizo who was a vicious but very influential man, was saved. His wife was also converted. Juan Moldero has been a very active church leader in San Francisco, California. Devout Catholic families were converted, such as the Manongons, Ferrers and Ramoses. Four Mangonons were in the gospel work.

A convention was held in Pozorrubio, Pangasinan in December, 1943. It was a time of praise and thanksgiving unto God for his miraculous deliverances from narrow escapes of death. Intercessory prayers were offered to God in behalf of the missionaries who were in prison camps.

The convention was attended by Enrique Sobrepeña, Aifinir, Cipriano Navarro and Fonseca who were leaders of the United Evangelical Church, one of the three church groups that merged on May 25, 1948 and formed the present United Church of Christ in the Philippines. They came for the express purpose of inviting the Assemblies of God to join them, but the Council decided not to join.

In May and June, 1944, a short-term Bible institute was conducted in Pozorrubio, Pangasinan. Sixteen young people from Baguio, La Union, Pangasinan and Nueva Ecija attended. The teachers were R. C. Esperanza, R. Alcantara and G. Cayso.

The liberation ushered in a more fruitful time of missionary endeavor. By the grace of God all the interned missionaries survived, with two children added who were born during the war. They were repatriated to the United States. However, new missionary appointees came.

## 2. Missionary Outreach

### 2.1 Mountain Province<sup>6</sup>

Comfort came to Elva Vanderbilt's grief-stricken heart just a week after her husband's funeral, as God visited her in her apartment in Los Angeles, California and began to reveal to her his will for her life. She answered "yes" to God's call for missionary service. A feeling of urgency led her to choose a country where she could have an immediate ministry in English. She felt she could not settle down to study a foreign language. She visited the Johnsons, missionaries from the Philippines, who were at the time in Los Angeles recuperating from the sufferings of the war. She was shown pictures of the Igorots of the Mountain Province in Northern Luzon and was told that they were pagans and were culturally less advanced than their Christian and Mohammedan Filipinos. As she listened to information given her about these mountain people, she was convinced that these were her people.

Vanderbout arrived in Baguio City, Mountain Province in January, 1947. Baguio, called the "City of Pines," is the summer capitol of the Philippines, 130 miles north of Manila, and is 5,000 feet above sea level. The scars of war could still be seen in the ruined city. She felt at home in her apartment and knew she was in God's will.

Soon she busied herself teaching, and conducting cottage prayer meetings. One day she took with her a young girl as her interpreter and held an open air meeting. Children and adults gathered around, and with her visual aid materials, she told the story of Jesus Christ, who died for sinners. Among several, who went forward for prayer after the message, was an old Igorot man with G-strings. The missionary also invited him to her apartment to have his badly infected finger treated. The following day the man waited for the missionary in the same place for another service. During the meeting, he asked if he could be allowed to speak, and given permission, he testified to finding peace when he received Christ as his personal Savior the day before, and to the healing of his finger through the kindness of the missionary. Vanderbilt had her first convert.

About four months later Vanderbilt passed by Tuding, a village notorious for its wickedness, and considered to be the headquarters of

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<sup>6</sup> Much of the material for the missionary work of Elva Vanderbilt is taken from the book, Inez Sturgeon, *Give Me This Mountain* (Oakland, CA: Hunter Advertising, 1960).

crime. The more she prayed about it, the more she was convinced that God would have her begin a work there, and warnings of danger failed to intimidate her. She requested permission from the school officials and the parents to hold religious instruction classes in the elementary school. With two Filipino workers and Alcantara as her interpreter, Vanderbout began classes in Tuding school on July 26, 1947. Practically all of the 400 pupils attended. The children were fascinated by the picture illustrations, as they absorbed the words of their teacher. Classes three times a week took much of her time and energy, and transportation was a problem. At times she and her co-workers would walk twelve kilometers for the classes and she would be very tired and stiff at night. However, the slow comprehension of the gospel by the thirty-nine children was an inspiration to her.<sup>7</sup> The pupils told their parents about the missionary and the Bible stories they heard, and invitations from the parents were relayed by the children asking Vanderbout to visit the homes so that the parents could hear the Bible stories too.

As the door for a greater ministry was opened, she and her co-workers visited the homes and were welcomed graciously. In every home they visited they received a warm invitation to return. Her heart was touched by suffering people lying on the floor with almost nothing to cover them and she ministered both to their spiritual and physical needs. She went back time and again supplied with sheets, pillow cases, wash cloths, towels, soap, combs and other items sent to her by the Women's Missionary Council groups in the United States. She cleansed and dressed open sores; bathed the children, combed their hair and clothed them; shared some of her own clothes with the women, and such acts of service won the hearts of the people.

The whole population waited for Vanderbout's visits, and she decided it was time to have open air public services. The message that Jesus is the Savior and Healer was gladly received, and with simple faith, she and her co-workers prayed for the sick. One case was outstanding. A boy with ulcers on his leg for years was given a short time to live by the doctors. He was prayed for and within a few days he was completely healed. The news of his healing spread fast and far. A revival broke out and believers multiplied. Night services were begun under the house of Mrs. Ducayag, one of the first converts. The people sat on backless benches of planks split from the trees which the men cut in the forest. Prayer meetings for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit were held upstairs

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<sup>7</sup> From this group are Leonardo Caput, who served for many years as the superintendent of the Northern Luzon District, and his wife Betty Tercero.

with every room packed with people. Many experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The charismatic gifts were in operation. At this time opposition began to arise among the unconverted, but God vindicated His people with signs following.

As believers increased, the meeting place under the house became very crowded. They needed a church building of their own, and Vanderbout moved from Baguio City to Tuding to supervise the work. A gift of two thousand dollars was sent by Pastor and Mrs. Turnbull and friends at Bethel Temple, Los Angeles, for a church lot. The converts were poor but they gave what they could for the building of their church. With a permit from the Bureau of Forestry, the men went into the forest and cut down trees for construction. They had a mind to work and on December 9, 1949 a beautiful church was dedicated, and Juan B. Soriano assumed full pastorship.

During her visits to the homes, Vanderbout's heart ached for the undernourished, deformed, and sick children. One by one she took boys and girls into her care. They were first housed under the church building but the cold, damp rooms soon became crowded. It was a life of faith to pray in necessary food, clothing, medicine, books and other items for the children. Friends in the United States and in Baguio City helped, and in 1953 Bethesda Children's Home was built.

Pressing invitations from relatives of the orphans and believers in Tuding opened opportunities for the expansion of the gospel work in other places in the Mountain Province. In her station wagon, which was given by the Christ's Ambassadors of Southern California District, Vanderbout, accompanied by Pastor Soriano and young people of Tuding Church, journeyed over unfamiliar narrow roads, zigzagging around the base of cliffs and crowns of mountains to bring the gospel to Banguitan, Besao, Bontoc, Talubin, Sagada, Mayayao, Big Basig, Sumadel, Kayan, Buguias, Longboy, Tabuk and other villages among the headhunters of the Mountain Province. Many times they had to walk distances from the end of the road to reach their destination. God gave Vanderbout extraordinary grace and wisdom in communicating and sharing herself and the gospel with the people. About seventy young people from the Mountain Province have attended Bible school and the majority of them entered into full time ministry among their own people.

Vanderbout was married to Pastor Juan B. Soriano in April, 1963.

In March, 1964, Walter Erola and his wife, former missionaries to Burma, were assigned to Baguio. They were to manage a rest home to provide facilities for vacation for both missionaries and nationals. Erola

also ministered to the different tribes of the Mountain Province. They served in the Philippines until March, 1986.

## 2.2 Eastern Visayas

Chaplain Edwin M. Brengle joined MacArthur's liberation forces. As he stepped on Philippine soil in Leyte, March 10, 1945, he felt a desire to help the Filipino people, and with the war over, he received a missionary appointment. He and his family arrived in Manila on January 6, 1947. After three years of service in Bethel Bible Institute in Pozorrubio, Pangasinan and later in Malinta, Polo (now Valenzuela), Bulacan, the Brengles moved to Sogod, Leyte and founded Immanuel Bible Institute in July, 1951.

A chapel was built in Sogod. Outstations were opened and the students had many opportunities to witness in different parts of Leyte. Immanuel Bible Institute had its first eight graduates in April, 1953. These became pioneers in Leyte, Bohol, Cebu and Northern Mindanao. When Immanuel was moved to Cebu City in November, 1953, the students and faculty members opened outstations and preaching points.

In 1955 J. Edward Blount opened an evangelistic center which developed into Cebu City Bethel Temple built by Ernest Reb. Graduates of Immanuel continued to pioneer churches, assisted in many ways by missionaries assigned to the Bible school. Among them are: Calvin Zeissler and his wife, Mayme Williams, Arthur Ahlberg and his wife, Mollie Baird, Leslie Bedell and his wife, Roy Armstrong and his wife, and Lester Kenney and his wife. The work has been strengthened by city-wide campaigns held in Cebu City by Ralph Byrd and Harold Herman, with far-reaching effects all over the Eastern Visayas. Stanley Faulkner and his wife arrived and were engaged in evangelistic and church establishment ministry. Faulkner also had oversight of Bethel Temple in Cebu City.

## 2.3 Western Visayas

Warren B. Denton and his wife<sup>8</sup> heard of the need of missionaries in Panay Island, Philippines from Glenn Dunn and his wife, who visited the island in 1940. Ten years later, when the door to missionary service closed in South China, the Dentons went to Panay Island. Their first eight

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<sup>8</sup> Source material for the Denton's work has been obtained from their letters and notes sent to the writer.

months were spent in Dueñas, Iloilo where they worked in cooperation with Eugenio H. Suede. In June, 1950 the Dentons moved to San Jose, Antique. A nipa house was purchased and the lot on which it stood was leased for ten years.<sup>9</sup> Prayer meetings were conducted in the front room of the house. Then high school students were invited. The first evangelistic campaign was conducted with “Bobby” Clark and Walt Boring from the United States. On June 24, 1951, they had their first baptismal service with eight candidates immersed. In July, 1951, a native style church was built. The wooden frame material was purchased by nickels saved over a period of time by Denton’s mother in the States. Religious instruction was conducted in the public schools, and six students from Antique attended Bethel Bible Institute. Open air meetings at public markets reached thousands of people with the gospel, and about one hundred villages were reached using literature evangelism as a means of spreading the gospel.

When the Dentons returned to the United States for their furlough, the Gunder Olsen and his wife took their place. On their return in 1954, a mission house was built of permanent material. Also built was a house for national workers. Nilo Lapasaran and his wife Elena Marfil were the first national pastors of San Jose Church. Warren Denton became advisor for the Antique churches. Vacation Bible school programs built up the Sunday school attendance, and in 1954 there were 2,500 enrolled in Vacation Bible school classes in their different outstations. Ralph Byrd held a salvation-healing campaign in February, 1955. The meetings met with great opposition until the closing night when the Holy Spirit moved on the people, and souls were saved, and sick bodies were healed. A lame man walked down the streets carrying his crutches. Cesar Palacios, Sr., a tubercular, received healing and had a victorious testimony. His wife and two children lived in the mission compound. His wife taught a cooking class in the Antique Christian Training School and was an active worker in the church.

A new church building was constructed in 1948 and a new dormitory was built for the Antique Christian Training School. During 1958-1962 nine new churches were constructed. Charlotte Rodgers provided supervision when the Dentons returned to the States for their furlough. When they returned in 1963 a classroom and work shop building for the training school was built.

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<sup>9</sup> Before the expiration of the lease, the lot was purchased by the Assemblies of God, U.S.A.

Two new churches in Culasi were built in Northern Antique under the leadership of Demetrio Marfil. The Mundo tribe in the mountains was reached with the gospel. A chief was saved before he died and a number of the mountain people received Christ.

Religious instruction classes are being conducted in the public schools in San Jose, Sibalom and San Remigio.

By using their station wagon and portable transistor public address system, the Dentons went to barrios for open air evangelistic meetings. Since March, 1964 the gospel message was spread over the town of San Jose with the Denton's strong public address system, on Sunday nights from seven to eight-thirty. Every Monday evening a prayer meeting rotates among the Assemblies of God, Salvation Army and Baptist churches of San Jose.

#### 2.4 Iloilo

The Olsens<sup>10</sup> were half-way through their itinerary in preparation to go to Indonesia when they were asked by Missions Secretary, Noel Perkin, if they would be willing to go to San Jose, Antique to supply for the Dentons while they were home on furlough. On March 12, 1953 the Olsens arrived in the Philippines. As they drove through Iloilo City en route to San Jose, God impressed on their hearts that they should pioneer a work in the third largest city of the Philippines. In a year they moved to Iloilo City.

On January 17, 1954 the first service was held in a leased building with seven people attending. Two weeks later the church was dedicated. Most of the congregation was composed of pastors and Christian workers from Antique who had gone to Iloilo City to welcome the Dentons "home." Fausto Virgo, a graduate of Bethel Bible Institute, became national pastor in February, 1954. At the close of the first year, Sunday school attendance averaged 200.

Ralph Byrd held an evangelistic campaign in January, 1955. Many souls were saved and healed and before the meetings were over more than 100 received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Ernest Reb conducted a week of meetings in 1956 and attendance reached 500. An annex was added to the building to accommodate the people. On November 13, 1956, Melvin Steward and his wife relieved the Olsens, who went on

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<sup>10</sup> Much of the source material of Iloilo work done by the Olsens has been obtained from *The Voice of the Visayan District Council*, Aug., 1955; *The Pentecostal Voice*, Dec., 1956; and *The Pentecostal Evangel*, Dec. 8, 1963.

furlough. Sunday school attendance reached almost a thousand. A large college building was secured and the Olsens raised the money for this building while on their furlough. With the extensive outstation program of the church, about 8,000 were being reached every Sunday. In 1957 Hal Herman's meetings literally shook the city. In 1958 the Sturgeon campaign was another success. J. Edward Blount and his wife relieved the Stewards, who moved to Manila for language study. When the Olsens returned in 1959 two outstation churches were constructed. Many young people have gone to Bible school from Bethel Temple in Iloilo city and entered in the ministry. Just before the Olsens went on furlough in 1963, Tommy Barnett held a three-week meeting and Sunday school records were broken with 1,754 present. The Olsens returned in September, 1964 to Iloilo City for their third term and initiated a greater evangelistic outreach in Iloilo Province.

## 2.5 Negros Occidental

"Oh! How they need a missionary here," cried Calvin R. Zeissler,<sup>11</sup> a sailor boy of eighteen in the United States Navy during World War II, after walking the streets of Opon, Mactan Island, near Cebu City. The poverty, sickness and desolation of the people made a deep impression in his heart. The war over, he was discharged from the Navy and enrolled in Glad Tidings Bible Institute in San Francisco, California. Although Bible school was a happy experience he soon began to question why God wanted him there. One afternoon he felt desperate and needed to know the answer to his question, "What is God's will for my life?" He spent time in prayer and when he got up from his knees he knew God wanted him to be a missionary. Suddenly, the words, "Oh! How they need a missionary here," flashed into his mind. He began to wonder where he had heard or read those words before. He then remembered the streets of Opon and how he had spoken these very words. He knew that God wanted him to be that missionary.

On December 14, 1953 Calvin Zeissler and his wife landed in Manila. Their first ten months were spent in Cebu City helping teach in Immanuel Bible Institute.

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<sup>11</sup> Source material for the work of Calvin Zeissler in Negros Occidental has been obtained from his unpublished articles, "Personal Testimony of My Call to the Philippine Islands" (n.d.) and "History of the Bacolod City Assemblies of God Work" by Calvin Zeissler (n.d.).

In September 1954 while visiting with the Gunder Olsens in Iloilo City, the Zeisslers became concerned for the island of Negros. They moved from Cebu City to Bacolod City, capital of Negros Occidental, on November 1, 1954. A commercial building was rented and December 26, 1954 was grand opening day with a large attendance. Bonifacio Ragodo became national pastor. Glenn Horst was the first evangelist and in meetings a number of young people were saved. Of these, two graduated from Bible school and were involved in ministry. Evangelist Ralph Byrd and his wife conducted a city-wide campaign in February, 1955, and hundreds were saved and healed. Church attendance had a steady growth and the building was overcrowded. After a few months, fifty Sunday school outstations were opened with a combined attendance of 1,600. Adults were brought to the church, and some of these outstations developed into churches.

Religious classes in the public school were another outreach of the church which left a testimony with the school officials and parents.

In 1957 Hal Herman conducted a city-wide campaign. Existing facilities were not able to hold the new converts and the Teacher's Center Building, which could seat 800, was rented for Sunday and week night meetings. A Swiss man who attended the church gave the Zeisslers a loan to buy property in a good location and in August, 1957 construction began on the new church building, Calvary Temple. The pastor and members of the Zeisslers' home church in San Jose, California financed the building and the purchase of the lot, giving over \$10,000. Members of Bacolod City Church gave what they could and many young men donated hours of labor on the construction.

Other American evangelists who have made their contribution to the work are Gene and Ruth Martin, Willie Conrad, Charlotte Rodgers, Vermita and Don Shelly.

The new church was dedicated on December 8, 1957. At the same time a farewell service was held for the Zeisslers, who left the next day for their furlough. Lester Kenney and his wife took their place. Calvary Temple in Bacolod City became a mother of several churches in the island. Nilo Lapasaran and his wife pastored the church.

## 2.6 Manila Area

In 1951 Paul Pipkin rented a market place and converted it to Glad Tidings Revival Center in Maypajo, Caloocan, Rizal. Benigno Maningan,

Filipino minister, helped in the pioneer work. Lester Sumrall<sup>12</sup> came in July, 1952, and took over the work. He at once made it clear that he came to establish a Pentecostal church in the city of Manila. The people did not believe him as he pictured to them the beautiful church he would build in the city. Times and surroundings were very discouraging but Sumrall “wrestled with God” in prayer and believed God without doubting. On his first Sunday night service forty were present, the fourth Sunday, ninety. At the end of the year there were 423 in Sunday school. During Thanksgiving week in 1952, Evangelist A. C. Valdez, Jr. was invited for meetings held at the San Lazaro Race Track. Thousands went through the prayer line to receive help from God. Many were saved and healed and 359 candidates were baptized at the close of the meetings. Attendance at Glad Tidings Revival Center increased.

An unusual event happened in May, 1953 in the City Jail. Clarita Villanueva, a 17-year-old inmate, was being beaten by devils seen only by her. The whole city of Manila was frightened. Doctors, psychiatrists, and others tried everything they could to help the girl but to no avail. Lester Sumrall, after reading newspaper reports and listening to radio broadcasts about the incident, volunteered his services to the mayor of Manila to go and pray for the girl. He fasted for two days and in the name of Jesus, he laid his hands upon Clarita and commanded the devil to get out. Clarita was miraculously delivered. This stirred the whole nation regarding the deliverance ministry. As a result the Manila City Council passed a special city ordinance to give a needed building permit for Sumrall’s church and gave it free. The church saved P1,500.00 (\$750.00), an unprecedented event in Philippine church history.

The miracle opened preaching opportunities for Sumrall in many places and different churches. This prepared Manila and the whole nation for a month of nightly meetings in Roxas Park, just across from the Manila City Hall. Evangelist Clifton Erickson preached and prayed for the sick nightly and God saved and healed. At the time Manila Bethel Temple was under construction and after all expenses of the campaign were paid, the people gave P20,000 (\$10,000) toward the building. The church was dedicated on August 1, 1954.

The Sumralls left and Ernest A. Reb and his wife took over Bethel Temple. Outstations developed into churches. Bethel Temple Manila became a mother of several churches in different districts of Manila,

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<sup>12</sup> Much of the source material for the work of Lester Sumrall in Manila had been obtained from Lester Sumrall, *The Real Manila Story* (South Bend, IN: Lester Sumrall Evangelistic Association, 1964), p. 49

Quezon City and Caloocan City. Other missionaries who pastored Manila Bethel Temple were Alfred Cawston and his wife, Albert Reid, his wife and their son, Tommy, and Lyman B. Richardson and his wife. When the Reids were pastors, churches in the provinces of Rizal, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas and Quezon were begun. Work was also opened among the Chinese in the city of Manila. Later Chinese Bethel Temple came under the supervision of Dale Barber and his wife.

Other evangelists who made their contributions to the Manila area work are Oral Roberts, Rudy Cerullo and T. L. Osborn. Ralph Byrd was also used. During his ministry in 1955 the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit came and hundreds were baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Faculty members and students of Bethel Bible Institute also helped in the churches and outstations and in the city-wide evangelistic campaigns. The Sumralls returned to Manila in 1964. On November 8, 1964 a student center was opened in the midst of three big universities. Ernest A. Reb was in charge and many university students were reached.

## 2.7 Bicol Region

Ernie Sjoberg, an American missionary, Eliseo Sadorra, and Urias Ronquillo were the first to go to the Bicol Region. The first outpouring of the Holy Spirit came to Naga City, home place of Urias Ronquillo. Four churches received the Pentecostal message and they became the nucleus of the Assemblies of God work in the Bicol Region. Jesse Candelaria and Alfonso Tengson followed up the work. After these men went to other places to pioneer, Urias Ronquillo left his building contracting business in Manila and gave his full time to the gospel work in Naga City. Under his faithful leadership a P33,000.00 (\$11,000.00) concrete church was built. American and national missionaries and evangelists helped in various campaigns from time to time. Bethel Temple in Naga City is the Assemblies of God headquarters in the Bicol Region with twenty-two churches in the process of becoming a district council. Bible school graduates are helping pioneer in different places.

## 2.8 Mindanao

Graduates of Bethel Bible Institute and Immanuel Bible Institute pioneered works and by 1965 there were forty-five churches in Southern Mindanao in the province of Cotabato, Zarboanga del Sur, Lanao del Sur and Bukidnon. Leslie Bedell, while serving as the district superintendent of the Visayas and Northern Mindanao District, helped pioneer the

Agusan Valley with twenty churches established. Stanley Faulkner and his wife, later in Cebu City, were also assigned to an evangelistic ministry in the southern Philippines, including Mindanao. Ralph Byrd and Mayme Williams made great contributions to the Mindanao churches in their campaigns. In 1964 Glenn Dunn and his wife, the first Assemblies of God missionaries assigned to Mindanao, arrived. They helped the newly established Bible school at General Santos, Cotabato. They also had a general ministry of assisting churches throughout the Southern Mindanao area. With this personnel help the work in Mindanao rapidly developed.

A great contribution was made by Ernest A. Reb and his wife of the Oriental Missionary Crusade, working in cooperation with the Philippine Assemblies of God. In seven years, ninety churches were built. Hundreds of villages were reached with Reb's barrio evangelism program. With seven gospel boats called "Seavangelists," Reb and the national workers plow the Philippine waters in search of souls in the different islands of the archipelago, some of them so small as to be easily overlooked by gospel workers. The Rebs were assisted by Eliseo M. Sadorra, Philippine Director of Oriental Missionary Crusade, who was also once the Assistant General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in the Philippines.

There were many nationals whose names should be included in this missionary outreach, but because of their number and limited space the writer confines her discussion mainly to the missionaries.

## THE PENTECOSTAL LEGACY: A PERSONAL MEMOIR<sup>1</sup>

Eli Javier

### 1. Introduction

It has become evident that the task is rather formidable to bring a useful reflection on the history of a Pentecostal body in country in its more than half a century history. At the same time, I feel I have an edge in that the observations were made from the perspective of both an “insider and outsider.” There are personal anecdotes that can be corroborated by those who are still alive. These validate what has been written and experienced by others. Not all correspondence, minutes, and reflections that were published and presented in more formal settings are available to this writer at the moment. This is a handicap of sorts. However, this presentation should not be viewed as the end, but, rather the beginning of our continued pursuit of our “roots”. We owe it to the next generations, should Jesus tarry, to transmit to them our cherished legacy. More materials ought to be written and the “stories” and other oral recitals of how God brought us thus far “through many dangers, toils and snares.” This small contribution of this writer begins with a quick look at personal background to help the audience understand some dynamics of this presentation.

#### 1.1 My Journey of Faith

I grew up in a Methodist family and church. My maternal grandparents were among the first converts in our town of Taytay.<sup>2</sup> My

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version was presented at the Annual Lectureship of the Assemblies of God School of Ministry, Manila, Philippines in September, 2001. I wish to register my appreciation to the leadership of the school for the kind invitation, and also Alex Fuentes for his assistance in the revision process.

mother, for one, was preparing herself to become a Methodist deaconess at Harris Memorial School, now Harris Memorial College. This was cut short, however, by an early marriage. Obviously this heritage provided a form of piety not necessarily borne out of personal experience, but was handed down more as of a tradition.

My conversion experience could be traced to an open air crusade held at what was then Roxas Park (now Luneta Park), across the street from the Manila City Hall. In February 1954, under the auspices of the Assemblies of God and particularly Lester Sumrall, Clifton Erickson led the evangelistic services which lasted for about 30 solid nights attended by 50,000 to 60,000 people, according to police estimates of the crowd.<sup>3</sup> Our Taytay church participated actively in the meetings. Before that time, there was no substantial AG congregation in the Tagalog area, much less in Manila. It was in one of those meetings where I made a personal decision for Christ. Although I did not make my way to the altar, it was nevertheless personal and definitive. Not much was changed on the outside but the inner certainty of a relationship with God made right through a personal appropriation of Christ's finished work was real and meaningful.

The Methodist church in Taytay, the only evangelical church in town at that time (although today there are 37 or so evangelical churches and fellowship already), became involved with the Pentecostals through a series of events in the early 1950s. In 1952, there was a girl inmate in the Manila City jail who claimed to be bitten by unseen spirits. The journalists at that time dubbed these "spirits" (two of them, according to Clarita Villanueva, one taller than the other) as "The Thing."<sup>4</sup> Even the mayor of Manila at that time, Arsenio Lacson, got involved in this sensational event which hugged the papers almost on a daily basis. Later, complete with drawings from the descriptions given by Clarita, the newspapers reported that psychiatrists, medical doctors, priests and even charlatans were engaged to provide relief to the girl, but to no avail. Lester Sumrall learned about this and started praying and fasting and when the right moment came, he went to the city jail and prayed for the girl and cast the evil spirits out and eventually, Clarita was delivered

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<sup>2</sup> A thriving town in the province of Rizal, Philippines. It is a stone throw away from the boundary of Metro Manila.

<sup>3</sup> Lester Sumrall, *The Dove and The Eagle* (South Bend, IN: Temple Press), p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Sumrall, *The Dove and The Eagle*, p. 15.

miraculously by the power of God.<sup>5</sup> The picture of Lester Sumrall with his hands holding the head of the girl was published on the front page of *The Manila Times* with the caption, “a Methodist missionary....”<sup>6</sup>

This human error which shows that the Assemblies of God were unknown was used of the Lord to capture the attention of Rev. Ruben Candelaria who was then the Superintendent of the Manila District of the Methodist Church. When he saw this he became curious and furious: Curious because he was hungry for an apostolic ministry himself and furious for having an American Methodist Missionary working in his territory without his knowledge. He looked for Sumrall and was led to his home and office on the campus of Bethel Bible Institute in Polo, Bulacan. That was the beginning of a friendship which was described by Sumrall as similar to that of David and Jonathan.<sup>7</sup>

Rev. Ruben invited Rev. Sumrall to a meeting of the Methodist ministers of the Manila District where Sumrall met among others, the cousin of Ruben, David Candelaria, who was then pastoring in Taytay. Ruben and Lester began showing to the different Methodist churches under his jurisdiction the film of Oral Roberts, *Venture into Faith*.<sup>8</sup> This film was shown in the Taytay church where David and some members of his family experienced divine healing. The Taytay church became involved with the initial work in Manila of the Assemblies of God particularly in Maypajo, bordering Manila and Caloocan.

It was Paul Pipkin who was conducting Youth For Christ meetings while serving with Far East Broadcasting Company that led a number of young people to Christ, the likes of Eli Sadorra, Eli Cruz, Lydia Castro, Virgie Carolina, Flora Herera, Celia Herera, Aurora Ustares and others. A number of these young people belonged to different protestant groups. These were the first fruits among the Tagalogs. These activities served as the forerunner of the Maypajo church, where occasionally the Taytay folks would attend whenever there were special meetings there, especially when Sumrall took over the pastorate while Pipkin went on furlough. It was in this small church which was dubbed “Maybajo” because of the stink of the Maypajo estero where Sumrall made a

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<sup>5</sup> Sumrall, *The Dove and The Eagle*, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Sumrall, *The Dove and The Eagle*, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Sumrall, *The Dove and The Eagle*, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Sumrall, *The Dove and The Eagle*, p. 17. A film produced by Evangelist Oral Roberts about a boy by the name of David Collins who was healed by God in one of the evangelistic tent meetings of Oral Roberts.

prophetic utterance before a handful of people, "I will build the biggest protestant church in Manila and the Philippines."<sup>9</sup> So he did, as a result of the 1954 Roxas Park Crusade, Bethel Temple was built. Having found favor with the city officials because of the Clarita Villanueva deliverance, choice property was made available and construction began. The Taytay church contributed to the building of Bethel Temple in Manila by saving in "coconut banks."

## 1.2 Call

When my call to the ministry was ascertained before graduation from high school, the plan of my parents, which the church concurred with, was for me to go to Bethel Bible Institute for one year and learn the Bible, after which I will proceed to the Union Theological Seminary for my basic ministerial training. At that time, the president of the seminary, Dr. Benjamin Guansing, was a close friend of my mother from earlier years. Our house in Taytay was second home for the deaconesses who were assigned at the Taytay church. Before there was any parsonage, our family (before I was born) took care of the pastors who were assigned in our town. However, the one year plan at Bethel became three years in view of some significant developments.

The salvation-healing emphasis of the early 1950s was followed by the coming of Ralph Byrd, an Assemblies of God pastor from Atlanta, Georgia in 1955, who was instrumental in introducing the Pentecostal baptism with speaking in tongues. Lester Sumrall has returned to the United States and a young preacher by the name of Ernie Reb became the pastor of Bethel Temple in Manila.

In February of 1955, our Taytay Methodist church experienced a Pentecostal outpouring similar to Acts 2. Instrumental to this was Ernie Reb who was preaching a weeklong revival in the Taytay church. He brought along some of the deacons and members of Bethel Temple. I was among those who were baptized in the Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in a language I did not learn. There was no theological treatise on the Spirit's baptism, but somehow the Lord used Ernie Reb and the experience of the Candelarias to create that hunger for what Jack Hayford termed as the "fullness of the Spirit."<sup>10</sup> In 1956, the

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<sup>9</sup> The writer was present at the Maypajo Church when these words were uttered by Lester Sumrall.

<sup>10</sup> Jack W. Hayford, the only Pentecostal plenary speaker at the Lausanne II Congress on World Evangelization held in Manila distributed his pamphlet

Taytay church broke away from the Methodist church and formed what is now known as the Taytay Methodist Community Church, (In 2002 the name was changed to The Messiah Community Church) an evangelical, full gospel church.

On March 31, 1957, fifteen days after graduation from Bethel Bible Institute, I was ordained to the ministry. Laying their hands on me were the then General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God, Rudy C. Esperanza, Alfred Cawston, (AG missionary pastor of Bethel Temple), Ruben Candelaria (Tagalog pastor of Bethel Temple) and David Candelaria. There were twenty-seven young people from Taytay Methodist Community Church who studied at Bethel Bible Institute and nineteen young people from its daughter churches.

It was in 1961, while serving as a pastor at my home church in Taytay that the Missionary Pastor and the National Pastor of Bethel Temple in Manila came to talk to my parents and myself as regards an invitation for me to serve as an assistant pastor at Bethel Temple in Manila. I was then 22 years old and pursuing my undergraduate degree at Philippine Christian University. The then Central District of the AG recognized my ordination and thus my official involvement with the Assemblies of God began. I was an eye witness and right in the middle of the growing pains of the movement. Early on, I served as a bridge with the larger evangelical bodies and became an unofficial spokesman and apologist for the much ostracized Pentecostals. I gained access to the pulpits of the conciliar churches (that is, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines) and also the Evangelical churches. I was once dubbed as the “Mr. Sunday School of the Philippines” not only because of the radio program, but also because of my lead participation in the Sunday school conventions in the different regions of the country. I rubbed elbows with both the missionary personnel and the rising nationals engaged in theological education. When Asian Theological Seminary was organized by the combined efforts of the Far Eastern Gospel Crusade (now SEND International), Overseas Missionary Fellowship and the Conservative Baptist Mission,<sup>11</sup> I was invited to serve as a member of the Board, to my surprise. Later, I was invited to serve as an adjunct faculty member of the said seminary.

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entitled *Fullness*. I was one of those who received a copy. Later in 1990, Hayford expanded this teaching in a book entitled, *A Passion for Fullness* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> “History of ATS” ([www.ats.ph/aboutats](http://www.ats.ph/aboutats)): checked: Aug 26, 2005.

You may be wondering about the need for this lengthy background. The truth is, without you knowing it, my own life and ministerial development is a living demonstration of that Pentecostal heritage. My spiritual and ministerial formation is truly a Pentecostal legacy that I cherish.

## 2. Development of the Pentecostal Movement

The development of the Pentecostal movement and its recognized impact worldwide for about a century since its more significant post-apostolic rise are documented by an abundance of both historical and theological treatments of the distinctives of the Pentecostal witness. Added to these are some of the personal experiences of the writer and others who were either first or second generation Pentecostals. Everyone's own Pentecostal experiences can corroborate all these making this article very meaningful and real.

The market today is no longer lacking in materials that analyze both the beliefs and practices of the Pentecostals of different varieties. Most of the more scholarly treatise on Pentecostals came out during the latter part of the 1960s and the early 70s. Before this time, the writings were mostly "apologetics" or simply put, the defense of the Pentecostal distinctives. Two earlier books trace the beginnings of the modern-day Pentecostal movement in general, and the Assemblies of God in particular. Kendrick's *The Promise Fulfilled: A History of the Modern Pentecostal Movement* is more scholarly in treatment and included Pentecostal bodies other than the Assemblies of God.<sup>12</sup> Additional researches were made by Menzies (*Anointed to Serve*)<sup>13</sup> and by Blumhoffer of Harvard University (*The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism*).<sup>14</sup> With what God has started to do, this writer is looking forward to a more credible AG history in the Philippines that will not be self-serving, but God-honoring.

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<sup>12</sup> Klaude Kendrick, *The Promise Fulfilled: A History of the Modern Pentecostal Movement* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1961).

<sup>13</sup> William W. Menzies, *Anointed to Serve: The Story of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1971).

<sup>14</sup> Edith L. Blumhoffer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989).

The modern Pentecostal movement is usually traced directly to two significant moves of the Holy Spirit, namely the outpouring of the Spirit in 1901 at a Bible school in Topeka, Kansas which was evidenced by speaking in tongues the speakers did not learn and at the famous Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California in 1906. Before these, of course, there were scattered reports of similar experiences, but they have not impacted the world.

What was the state of affairs before the outbreak of the Pentecostal revival? It was paradoxical that near the close of the nineteenth century, revivalists, including Moody and Sankey were awakening thousands into new life in Christ. The evangelistic fervor ushered many people into the kingdom. However, these new converts found little life-sustaining atmosphere in the average church at that time. American Protestantism's spiritual state was described as at its low ebb, although the church was wealthy, cultured and influential. The academic and theological institutions which were originally established to preserve the faith had become cradles of liberalism. There was "apostasy". The spontaneity of worship which marked the revival days became a thing of the past. Religion was no longer experiential. The church embraced "worldliness" and abandoned holiness. Clergy was professionalized and the call to the ministry was minimized while the ministry itself degenerated into a means of livelihood. Ministers were placed on the basis of academic and theological training. Consequently, there was spiritual coldness prevailing in many churches.

Against this backdrop, there was the remnant of God's people who waited, prayed and expected God to "revive His work." Is history repeating itself? Is God about to raise another movement to bring us back to the flowing stream of His Spirit? This reflection purposes not only to help us appreciate and cherish the Pentecostal legacy, but to cause us to reflect seriously on the state of affairs of the movement in general and the Assemblies of God in particular.

At one time, Philip Hogan, for many years the Executive Director of the Division of Foreign Missions of the Assemblies of God, USA, said that probably only God and David Barrett knew how many Pentecostals there were in the world.<sup>15</sup> Numerically, the movement has grown and the

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<sup>15</sup> Philip Hogan made the statement while still serving as the Executive Director of World Missions of the AG in 1988 during the conference of the International Decade of Harvest, which gathered all general superintendents from around the world in Springfield, MO. I represented the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God.

influence has widened. In 1975, there were 96 million and in 1985, it rose to 247 million. The projection for the year ending 2000 was 562 million.<sup>16</sup>

In the passing of years, the perception of the people about the Pentecostals has changed. In the last thirty years or so, the shift in the evaluation has taken place. For one, a number of Pentecostal scholars have emerged and have received recognition for their scholarly works. For one thing, these completed their graduate degrees in non-Pentecostal and well respected institutions of learning. When the renewal broke through the mainline denominations, a number of their prominent ministers and theologians joined the ranks of spirit-filled “apologists”. In addition to theologians, musicians from the ranks began to gain recognition among the wider evangelical body. Even in government service in the United States, Jim Watts, an AG layman caught the attention of Americans when President Ronald Reagan appointed him to serve as a member of his cabinet, and the Attorney General of the United States in recent years was a true-blue Assemblies of God, John Ashcroft.

### 3. Pentecostal Legacy

As we ponder on the imprints the movement has made on millions of people around the globe we cannot help but thank God for what He has done. What has been our legacy from the Pentecostal movement?

#### 3.1 The Doctrine: Dynamics of the Holy Spirit and the Supernatural

The Pentecostals desire to experience the Holy Spirit in exactly the same way as the first disciples. This was not shared by the evangelicals for many years. It is said that to many evangelicals the Spirit of God has remained the holy “Ghost” indeed. The differences among Pentecostals with regard the active role of the Holy Spirit in the trilogy of salvation, sanctification, and service empowerment do not negate the prominence placed on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in post-apostolic times.

The Holy Spirit empowering ordinary men and women to do mighty exploits for God became a rallying point of a movement which began with mostly, the marginalized. To this day, the official voice of the Assemblies of God, *The Pentecostal Evangel*, still carries on its masthead

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<sup>16</sup> Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), p. 360.

the words from Zechariah: “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” The anointing served as the criterion for ministry, not academic credentials.

The premium placed on the ministry of the third person of the Trinity became the distinctive of Pentecostals. When the Pentecostals preached, they expect the preaching to be followed by “signs and wonders.” The issue of spiritual power is pervasive in the world and therefore is more concerned with spirits than with sin. It is said that the majority of house churches in China have been marked by signs and wonders. We do not discount the excesses that came out of this commitment, nevertheless, the recognition of the reality of the supernatural has enabled the gospel to penetrate into areas where people are influenced directly and daily by demonic forces of evil.

It is noteworthy that a number of evangelical groups have embraced this supernaturalistic worldview. Even in the Philippines, we have heard of evangelical but non-Pentecostal ministers who have been engaged in exorcising evil spirits.

To the Pentecostals, the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues as the initial evidence is regarded as normative to the life of Christians. Although, some Pentecostal scholars have argued against this strongly, to most Pentecostals, this “normative” experience sets them apart from the rest of the evangelical body.

For years, most Pentecostals believed that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was the “gateway” to the gifts. More recent scholarly works however, have recognized that gifts are given not necessarily on the basis of first receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

I owe a debt of gratitude to the Pentecostals for helping me come to a more biblical approach to world evangelization through the power of the Holy Spirit.

### 3.2 Evangelism and Church Planting

It is said that the strength of the Pentecostal missionaries was not so much in the area of missiology as in missiopraxis. Evangelism and missions are less of a theory and more of practice. Obedience to the Great Commission was taken seriously not just by the clergy but by the whole church in an aggressive manner.

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<sup>17</sup> E.g., William W. Menzies and Robert P. Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundation of Pentecostal Experience: A Call to Evangelical Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000).

A number of the early Filipino “state-boys” were attracted and converted to Christ through street meetings where the church people would evangelize. There was no place that could not be utilized by the Pentecostals to evangelize. Peter Wagner has described that Pentecostal converts in South America will be on the street testifying a week after their conversion. Later this became the “seminary in the streets.” Training in witnessing was done “on the job.”<sup>18</sup>

The zeal to evangelize does not end in leading people to Christ. Pentecostals will see to it that they are brought to the church to be nurtured and consequently, until their new found faith will extend to their “oikos” which may be in distant places. Soon enough, the gospel will be brought to this distant place and a church will be planted. In the past, this was done through the “mother church” plan which developed quite naturally.

Bethel Temple in Manila was originally conceptualized by Lester Sumrall as an evangelistic center rather than a church in the traditional way. I was made to understand, having worked with Lester Sumrall even for about a year, that he envisioned a center where there will be an almost year-round evangelistic thrust. Satellite or daughter churches would be planted around the metropolis and the center becomes a sort of a “feeder” to the daughter churches. Although Sumrall left Manila, this vision became a reality in that a Bethel Temple was established in various places, namely Tondo, Manila; the cities of Quezon, Caloocan, Pasig; and Naic, Cavite. For many years, Bethel Temple held extension classes every Saturday in different parts of the metropolis. Even before the cell concept was popularized by the Korean church, Bethel Temple had divided the metropolis into districts under a district leader who will gather the people in the area, visit and minister to them. Evangelizing the neighborhood was a natural result. These were like “small churches” within one big church.

The Pentecostals were at the forefront of city-wide evangelistic crusades. In 1952, A. C. Valdez preached a crusade at the San Lazaro Race Tracks in Manila. Itinerant preachers came to Manila like Robert MaCalister, Philip Green and others. This was followed by Clifton Erickson (in 1954), Oral Roberts (1956), the Great Commission Congress with Morris Cerullo (1959) and other preachers like Al and Tommy Reid who later served as pastors of Bethel Temple and opened other Bethel Temples in the southern part of Luzon including the Bicol

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<sup>18</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Look Out! The Pentecostals Are Coming* (Carol Stream, IL: Creation, 1973), p. 95.

region. I was part of the “preachers’ quintet” who sang during the open air crusade in Baguio in 1957 to start a Bethel Temple there. Other Bethel Temples were established in Iloilo, Cebu, and Calvary Temple in Bacolod. These became in turn mother churches themselves. Since the breakthrough in Manila, other cities of the Philippines followed as sites of the evangelistic and church planting thrusts of the Assemblies of God. This was a shift from the many years (24 years or so) of AG witness in more rural areas.

It needs to be said that when Lester Sumrall started Bethel Temple, a Chinese class was started which later evolved into the Chinese church. Regular church services later were held in rented facilities at the corner of Recto (then Azcarraga) and Reina Regente Streets in Manila. Today, we have two AG Chinese congregations in Manila (Binondo Full Gospel and United Bethel Church).

In the early 1960s the ministry to the deaf was started at Bethel Temple. Through the years, missionaries and nationals became involved in this special ministry. An educational institution was established to provide training not only to the children but also to those who plan to minister among the deaf. A number of congregations extend ministries to the deaf people.

The Assemblies of God should be credited with pioneering the “hotel ministry” strategy.<sup>19</sup> It was in 1973 when Otis Keener, an AG missionary in Hong Kong made a long distance call to Wesley Hurst in Springfield, MO saying that a function room at the Furama Hotel in Hong Kong was engaged and thus the beginning of the hotel ministry not only for the international community in strategic cities of the world but to the have’s and have-not’s. Again this was quite a shift, for the Pentecostal message was attractive to the masses or to the lower class of people

In the Philippines, this strategy was right on time as the renewal in the Roman Catholic Church has started slowly. It was reported that in 1969, there were only a handful of Roman Catholics who were into the renewal brought about by the appeal of the Vatican Council II in the mid-1960s and what has happened in the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana and other places where Roman Catholics began to experience the Pentecostal baptism. In 1978, there were more than 30,000 Roman Catholics in the Philippines who were involved in the charismatic

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<sup>19</sup> For a more comprehensive study see Alex Fuentes, “A Church in a Neutral Turf: A History of the Hotel Ministry in the Philippines,” 6:1 (March 2004), pp. 81-96.

movement.<sup>20</sup> Because Roman Catholic devotees viewed attending a non-Roman Catholic church as a sin, the “neutral place” like a hotel ballroom was used of the Holy Spirit to provide a real scriptural foundation to the renewal taking place. I should note, however, that those who “broke ground” to work among the Roman Catholics were viewed by some AG ministers as “compromisers” resulting to a very parochial perspective. It needs to be said that when the hotel ministry was flourishing here in the metropolis, the original idea reflected on a “white paper” indicated that these groups will “cooperate” with the AG and not necessarily affiliate.<sup>21</sup>

The hotel ministries were “less denominational” in form and structure to maintain the “neutral turf” concept. Although the white paper stated that all those in the ministerial staff are to be AG credential holders, the way the congregation was run and the services formatted did not necessarily followed the more traditional AG format. There was even a time when a resolution was floated in a General Council session to “revoke the credentials of those who are pastoring non-AG churches.”<sup>22</sup>

The sense of urgency to evangelize the world by the Pentecostals because of its pre-millennialist position gave impetus to the aggressiveness of Pentecostals to witness and plant churches. Coupled with the strong belief in the leadership of the Holy Spirit rather than appointments made by committees and boards, the Pentecostals blazed trails and pushed the darkness by bringing the light of the gospel. This brings us to a third element.

### 3.3 Dynamic, Daring Faith and Pioneering Spirit

The beginnings of the Pentecostal movement in any country were met with persecution. For instance in the Philippines, the representatives of the main protestant bodies in America who came to the country agreed to divide the country and assign the denominations to specific areas. This

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<sup>20</sup> Andrew Francis, *Charismatic Renewal in the Philippines* (Manila: Studio 5 Designs, 1980), p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> This “white paper” was presented to the Executive Officers of the PGCAG around 1982-83 by the groups ministering with the Charismatics namely James Long along with those who serve International Charismatic Service while the Longs were in furlough, Paul Klahr and Evan Squires of Asian Christian Charismatic Fellowship, Virgie Cruz and Eli Javier of New Life International Ministries which later became Monterey and now Lord's Assembly.

<sup>22</sup> The writer was present at the said General Council.

was called the “comity.” This was still the mentality prevailing when Sumrall came in the early 1950s and more so when he built Bethel Temple a stone’s-throw away from Central United Methodist Church which was then pastored by an American missionary, and Cosmopolitan Church about two city blocks away. Ellinwood-Malate Church was also in the vicinity. This raised eyebrows, although Manila was regarded as an “open city.” The “turf” mentality was in a sense an obstacle to the rapid evangelization of the Philippines which to this day is still predominantly Roman Catholic.

The Pentecostals were almost brainwashed by the maxim, “live by faith.” This was the stance of those who came to Bible schools to study without any financial provisions from their parents or from their church. Somehow, many of these “survived” the Bible school years. Those who were “sponsored” had to work. Even “paying students” during our time had to contribute an average of an hour of work a day to the school. No student was regarded as a “pensionado.” Being part of the family, you had your work assignment not only in keeping the premises clean but even guarding the premises. This was before the days of security guards.

Except for some who were the beneficiaries of missionaries, the nationals who graduated from the Bible schools planted congregations as they were “led by the Spirit.” Well meaning sponsors from overseas catered to a number of workers who did not have any local financial backing in their pioneering thrusts. The infamous “Osborn support” rained as an unfortunate example. Evangelist T. L. Osborn supported a number of Filipino workers who pioneered churches, however some of the same workers abandoned their congregation when the financial support ceased and thus churches that were started were closed. What was intended for good degenerated into anomalous transactions and corrupted many of our simple workers. Some leaders used this financial pipeline for church politics.

As a rule, the Assemblies of God did not appoint ministers to serve in a particular parish. Some other Pentecostal bodies do. In contrast to the Methodist practice, for instance, at the annual conference, the appointments are made by the Bishop. A pastor may move each year according to this system. This system may have created a sense of security, but, the same may have also discouraged aggressiveness in pioneering new churches. Not so with the AG. Usually, the daring faith and the pioneering spirit combined, moved workers into uncharted territories, thus, the rapid expansion of the work.

We should not forget, however, that the missionary enterprise is made up of redeemed sinners and occasionally, “turf wars” would rise.

The constitutional provision (later amended) of a 7-kilometer-distance between assemblies<sup>23</sup> was viewed as a guide rather than a law to be obeyed, regardless. The mavericks among us had their field day in this open-city perspective. There were and still are accompanying problems. No human system is foolproof. In the passing of years, when the AG has somehow gained some respectability and substantial land holdings, the thirst for power showed its ugly head. The schisms in Bethel Temple, later the split in the General Council which all landed in the courts of the land and other isolated cases, negated the growth the movement experienced in the 1950s and early 60s. I was right in the middle of these crises and on several occasions had to stand up in court although I was not a defendant, as our lawyer did not show up, I had to move for the postponement of the hearing.

Bethel Bible Institute was not spared, the school was brought to the Department of Labor and Employment for not paying minimum wages and allegedly, the school was a profit-making institution. How the law was twisted brought us all to our knees, for there was no other recourse in a country where the justice balance favors those with connections and those who can pull strings. Pastors and even missionaries fell prey to the insidious ploys of people with hidden agenda. It was unfortunate that the AG at that time and maybe even to this day has not been blessed with lawyers with competence, integrity and fear of God. At one time, the whole AG was brought to court by a travel agency for allegedly not paying for the travel arrangements of nationals and missionaries to attend the Far East Conference in Seoul, Korea. The truth was all the payments were given to the agent who unfortunately did not remit the same to the agency.

Although it was not viewed by others as wise and expedient that the two factions within the AG can be reconciled through God's intervention, there were those who took steps of faith and started prayer groups among some of the protagonists. These led to a unique general council convention in 1978 when the two factions held the general council on the same campus at Bethel. Sessions during the day were separated with joint evening services on the athletic field with David Cawston as speaker. Out of this council came a joint manifest presented to the court the cases filed by the faction led by Cres Tandog, who served as the General Superintendent of the break away group, declaring among

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<sup>23</sup> "District Charter," Appendix C of the "Rules of Church Government of the PGCAG" (Valenzuela, Philippine, 1981), C-7 # 5, "Distance between Assemblies." This was amended in April, 2000.

other things that it was agreed that all the cases be dropped and a joint council be held in May 1979 to elect a new set of General Council officers. Those were difficult days because a number of those from our faction was not keen on this approach. They would rather see the cases drag year after year. After all, the continued support of Springfield was enjoyed. I recall in Northern Ilocandia District Council in April 1979, both Tandog and myself were on the platform, being the General Superintendents of the two factions, the late Rev. Esteban Lagmay introduced Tandog as General Superintendent while I was simply addressed as "Brother Javier." Many years later, when Lagmay passed away, the family had to beg me to come and preach the funeral service and I had to plead with Fermin Bercero, the current president of Bethel Bible College, to take a leave from his doctoral classes to officiate the wedding in my stead which I had previously committed to.

Those were dark days in the history of the Assemblies of God and the work of God in the Philippines. After the joint convention in May 1979, many of the evangelical leaders were rejoicing with me in a meeting I attended, saying that we were the only group that split but was reconciled to each other. We thought that was the end of our troubles. But it was not. The developments which followed reflected our short memory and the penchant of some of us to be legalistic and even pharasaical. Those who triumphed are expected to be magnanimous. But it was not so, within our ranks were those who never forgot the humiliation they received from the earlier conflicts. So instead of the new set of officers being more forgiving and reconciling, they ran after those who were perceived to have caused confusion during the May 1979 joint convention. Thus this small group led by Rev. Edilberto Medina began to secretly work out with the Securities and Exchange Commission a claim that they were the rightful and legal Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God. I took a leave from the general superintendency although I remained president of Bethel Bible College, meanwhile the Lord led me to ministries among the charismatics. I was reelected as General Superintendent again in 1988. The matter was finally decided by the Supreme Court sometime in 1988 in favor of the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God (PGCAG). It is really difficult to be humble when you are right. Occasional publications in the newspaper declaring us as impostors took its toll even on our spouses at the height of the conflict. We were maligned, humiliated and our rights trampled upon. But God helped us. He built iron into our souls! We did not run away from the thick of battle as others did and took refuge abroad. We stood by our brethren here. While there were those who were giving

orders by telephone, we were on the frontlines. There were those who faithfully interceded for us. We saw the best and the worst among us. The first conflict which rocked the AG in the Philippines was in the early 60s at Bethel Temple Manila, followed by the 1973 split where the dichotomous organizational structure where there were two different heads: the General Superintendent heading the ecclesiastical functions and the president heading the corporate functions. This was like a volcano waiting to explode. These conflicts stemmed from a desire for power and the grabbing of the same if need be. Except for Rev Medina and one or two others, all his followers returned to the fold of the PGCAG.

We need to sound the alarm and put an end quickly to tendencies of some to behave like despots or demigods whose hunger for power defies imagination. We must guard our ranks against church politics. It is a mockery to invoke the will of God before an election while secret campaigning and even vote padding were practiced. This may be as dangerous as narcopolitics—influence of drug lords over the politicians. We need to put a stop to emissaries who troop the regions before election time to campaign for a candidate for the top position of the movement. It might be an act of wisdom if we can make sanctions against those who perpetuate such diabolical schemes. It is diametrically opposed to what we have believed all these time that “promotion does not come from the east nor the west, rather promotion comes from the Lord.” It is obvious that this will erode the trust that our constituents have to the system. This is more subtle than the doctrinal aberrations we face from time to time from internal and external influences. It is important to nurture that dynamic and daring faith instead of being dazzled with money and promises.

#### 3.4 The Recognition of the Ministry and Leadership of Women

Although, women pastors are a dying breed, a legacy of Pentecostals is the recognition of women in ministerial leadership. In the United States, however, women church workers had some rough sailing because of the prevailing culture. At one time, the executive leaders expressed concern about the predominance of women on the mission field. It was only in 1935 that the US General Council acted to provide ordination to women. In most cases, the women who were ordained exercised their leadership together with their husband-pastor. In the Philippines, women are ordained just like the men. In the local AG, at least, women were elected to executive posts in both the national and district councils. In our

local congregations, in most cases, there are more women than men who serve on the board of deacons/trustees. We were blessed with women ministers who were leaders in their own right. It appears that in the earlier days of the AG in the Philippines there were outstanding women workers whom God raised in the different regions of the Philippines. It will require another paper to list all of them from the north to the south. I will be amiss if I do not mention the colorful life and ministries of the late Rev. Virgie Cruz Roberts and Rev. Trinidad Esperanza Selekty. Sis. Virgie pastored for many years and broke ground on new territories. Sis. Trinidad on the other hand was a recognized Christian educator in her own quiet ways and has extended credence to the General Council with her integrity.

### 3.5 Practical Ministerial Training and Spiritual Credentials over Academic Abilities

The AG leads all evangelical groups in the number of overseas Bible schools which in the late 1980s numbered about 330 schools. This main strategy in national leadership development is so varied in levels and programs. This is regarded as the foundation of spiritual and ministerial formation. Somehow, this thrust is consistent with what Pentecostals affirm that all are called, empowered and responsible to obey the Great Commission.

It must be recalled that because of the liberalism and elitism of seminaries in North America, D. L. Moody and A. B. Simpson saw the need for Bible Institutes where practical training for all kinds of people can be provided. Although, in many instances, the placement of graduates is left to individuals, and consequently, a number would feel at a loss at times, it also reinforced the importance placed on the leading of the Holy Spirit on individual lives. It is not difficult to see that the curriculum leaves much to be desired, but a student who makes an application to the Bible school program can make it to the harvest field where his or her gifts can be used effectively.

Today, many young graduates and ministers are looking for mentors. In the recently concluded National Assembly of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches, held in Davao in July this year, it was rightly observed in one of the workshops conducted that the denominational leaders of today are more like CEO's who stay in offices to run the "machinery" rather than mentors and pastors helping those who are in the

field.<sup>24</sup> They become visible only before election time. In reality, however, the ministry can never be learned from an institution. Most of the ministry is learned “on the job.” One does not become a preacher after taking two semesters of homiletics or pulpit speech; we develop our preaching as we preach. What the Bible school offers as terminal programs are sufficient for those who are to minister. One of the things formed in the Bible school is skills needing life-long development.

While I do not feel that the seminary or further education beyond the Bible school is for everybody, neither do I subscribe to the anti-intellectualism and anti-formal education attitude displayed by some quarters. It is still so vivid in my mind. After graduation from Bethel, while pastoring, I enrolled at a local university with Union Seminary in sight after finishing my undergraduate degree. News reached me that some of those who were at Bethel thought that I backslid. This was a reflection of the attitude at that time with regard education beyond the Bible school. Today, the opposite almost obtains. Many Bible school graduates seek additional education. Peter Wagner’s criticism against North American seminaries<sup>25</sup> is illustrious:

- 1) Seminaries consider academic achievement more important than ministry skills.
- 2) The highest priority of professors is often to impress academic peers, not to train students.
- 3) The seminary irresistibly tends to enrich irrelevance through faculty tenure and required courses.
- 4) Seminary faculty members rarely are or have been pastors themselves, and almost none have been successful pastors.
- 5) Seminaries are accountable to accrediting associations, not to the churches for which they are presumably training pastors.
- 6) The nature of academia is to produce a critical spirit throughout the community.

The same indictment may be true of seminaries in the Philippines where most of the faculty members are fulltime educators. It is to our advantage if our leaders become very vigilant with regard to this inasmuch as the kind of ministers coming from our ministerial training

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<sup>24</sup> Workshop conducted by Trainers of Pastors International Coalition at the National Assembly, Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches, Davao City, July, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Churchquake!: How the New Apostolic Reformation Is Shaking up the Church as We Know It* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1999).

institutions will determine to a large extent the kind of congregations we will have.

Let us take a quick look at any Bible school in our country. I am convinced that the school does not need not copy any of the existing Bible schools, rather, the sponsoring body, such as the district, should determine the direction of the school in accordance with its program and thrust. If the sponsoring body has a plan to extend its borders into areas where there are no churches as yet, the school should be strong in church planting and pastoring. Those who are eyeing on other church-related services like the putting up of pre-schools and others should enroll elsewhere and be certified accordingly. Let the Bible school concentrate on its reason-for-being, that is, the training of ministers needed by the sponsoring body. The stake holders of the school should be serious enough and fully support with finances and the right personnel the ministerial institution. The graduates should be equipped to plant and/or pastor a church whether in the rural or urban area. If my observations are right, what people are looking for these days are not academic degrees. They are looking for those with the touch of God upon their lives. People discern if one is a man or woman of God or not. This is non-negotiable.

### 3.6 The indigenous Principles

I was a freshman at Bethel when a special lecture was conducted for the whole school (faculty and students alike) led by the late Glenn Horst. This special lecture was on the book by Melvin Hodges.<sup>26</sup> With the very dynamic presentation by Horst, the ideas of Hodges came alive. These did not see immediate outcomes in my ministry until later. The actual experiences of Hodges on the field (South America) were not theory. These were tested. The concept was not necessarily new. The works of Roland Allen have been regarded as a classic,<sup>27</sup> but the Pentecostal dimension of Hodges made the difference.

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<sup>26</sup> Melvin Hodges, *On the Mission Field: The Indigenous Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953).

<sup>27</sup> Gary McGee, "The Legacy of Melvin L. Hodges," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 22:1 (January 1998), pp. 20-24 claims that the book by Hodges is "the most significant work on missions strategy and theology that the Pentecostal Movement had produced."

Although our Filipino AG pioneers were mostly “returnees” from the United States<sup>28</sup> and thus were somehow supported by their American friends, the majority of the ministers and workers sacrificially served without support from overseas. Our ministers were not sufficiently remunerated financially. But they served well. They did not view themselves as hirelings. This is in contrast with what is being modeled today among the AG in the Philippines in that success is often associated with how strongly you are “connected” and “plugged in” to sources of finances overseas. This is tentacles of teachings of the “gospel of prosperity.” In the process, we have lost a long held value of simplicity and honesty. Instead we learned to make reports “evangelistically” prepared not only to impress, but to generate funds that are usually for self-aggrandizement. Unknowingly, we have given the impression that our spirituality is measured by the size of our budgets and the kind of motor vehicle we drive.

We need to honestly evaluate the context where we move and minister. Ultra-nationalism does not have any room in this global enterprise. One cannot demand that the work be turned over prematurely to someone who may not be ready for it. We may simply want to exercise authority without the accompanying responsibility. Some of us could readily get rid of the foreigner as long as they leave their money with us. On the other hand, one can perpetuate an attitude of being beholden to the rich and powerful. This slavish stance had further remove any self-esteem left in us. Should we declare independence and promote self-sufficiency? Is this biblical? Should we be dependent on human sources and forget that our ultimate source is the Lord himself. We have made ourselves vulnerable to those who are looking for people whose loyalty can be bought. The indigenous principles are entirely different from isolationism. It is really inter-dependence modeled in the scriptures, where there is a sense of accountability and the right exercise of authority.

### 3.7 The Love for the Scriptures

It cannot be denied that the Pentecostals considered the scriptures to be the unique work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the love for the word of God marked the devotion of the Pentecostals. Consequently, in Pentecostal

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<sup>28</sup> Trinidad E. Selekty, “Six Filipinos and One American,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4:1 (January 2001), pp. 119-29.

Bible schools, the heart of the curriculum was the study of the English Bible.

The Pentecostals adopted the Sunday school concept of John Wesley and George Fox where it became the primary church program of Bible study for all ages. The Bible is the center and foundation of the Sunday school curriculum. Everyone was encouraged to have a personal copy of the Bible. In the earlier Sunday schools, credit for bringing a Bible was added to attendance marks. Public reading of the scriptures was part of the church services where the Bible readings were not printed on a bulletin, but read directly from the Bible either in unison or read responsively. Churches conducted Bible studies either in the church or in the homes and the Bible became an open book. The place of the scriptures in every affair of life was recognized.

Although Pentecostal hermeneutics then may not be as sophisticated as it today, the love for the word of God remains a beautiful legacy. When some countries closed their doors to traditional missionary work and forced the Christians to go “underground,” what was left of the Bible that were not confiscated and destroyed became so precious that many underground Christians in these countries copied the Bible by hand from the only copy left for distribution to the brethren. These underground churches by and large are full gospel or Pentecostal churches.

#### 4. Conclusion

Without a doubt, there are those among us who may view the legacy differently. The impact of the Pentecostals carries the variety similar to that of a mosaic. The pieces may vary in size, shape or color, but they form a coherent piece that reflects the hand of the Holy Spirit. This empowering enables people from all walks of life and living under different ideologies move as one to fulfill the mandate to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. No Ceasars, Maos or Ayatollahs can quench the fire.

I close this reflection with a simple chorus which was sung in the 1960s which expressed the hunger of those who have experienced the move of the Spirit in their lives,

It shall flow like a river,  
 The Spirit fall like the rain  
 It shall rise as the dawning of glory o'er the land

And the knowledge of the Lord shall fill all the earth  
And the Spirit of the Lord shall fall.

It shall fall on the women  
It shall fall on the men  
It shall fall on the children again and again  
And the knowledge of the Lord shall fill all the earth  
And the Spirit of the Lord shall fall.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The title of the song is "It Shall Flow like a River," sang in the early 1960s without information about the composer. New choruses, not included in the published hymnals such as *Assembly Songs* and then *Melodies of Praise*, were introduced by visiting evangelists to Bethel Temple and/or Bethel Bible Institute in Manila. From these two entry points, the choruses then spread minus the notes and other particulars.

A REFLECTION OF A MISSIONARY TO THE PHILIPPINES:  
GARY A. DENBOW INTERVIEW

Dynnice Rosanny D. Engcoy

This interview is part of the oral history project of the Asia Pacific Research Center of Asia Pacific Theological Seminary. The interview took place in Columbia, Missouri, U.S.A. on August 10, 2001. The initial transcription was provided by Doris A. Denbow on November 13, 2003.

Denbow and his family served as missionaries in the Philippines from 1977 to 1981. In these four years they were greatly involved in the early years of the Charismatic movement in the Philippines, which started in Manila. Thus, this piece serves a multiple purpose: as a sample of the oral history project, a record of a missionary family, and also as a window to the socio-religious environment at the dawn of the Charismatic movement in the Philippines.

When the interview took place, Denbow was the pastor of Christian Chapel, Columbia, Missouri. He was recently appointed as the president of Central Bible College, Springfield, Missouri, U.S.A.

(Legends: "E" for Rose Engcoy, the interviewer, "D" for Gary Denbow, the interviewee.)

1. Call

- E: Good afternoon, Pastor Denbow. It is really a great privilege for me to have this opportunity to ask you about your first-hand experiences in the Charismatic movement in the Philippines. Let's start with the basics. How did you get your calling to be a missionary?
- D: We have a program here in the United States called Speed-the-Light. It is a program through which our young people raise funds for missionary vehicles and for missionary equipment. I was on a seventeen-night Speed-the-Light tour when I was the District Youth

Director for the Southern Missouri District (of the AG, USA). David Grant and I were going from place to place, and by the end of the tour, I knew I was to do more than just give money or raise money. So I submitted myself to the call. I went to see Wesley Hurst (Regional Director) at what is now the Asia Pacific Office at the Division of World Missions in Springfield, Missouri. He wanted me to go to Jogjakarta in Indonesia to start a student center. We submitted ourselves to do that, raised money, and were ready to go, but never could get a visa. So we ended up in the Philippines in October, 1977. That's how it all began.

- E: Did you specifically choose to come to the Philippines or were you assigned to go to the Philippines?
- D: We were assigned there because we were waiting for a visa for Jogjakarta, Indonesia. The wife of Brother Dwayne Turner (another US AG missionary to the Philippines) had become ill and they had to come home, and so Brother Wes Hurst called and said, "I want to send you there for a few months until we can get a replacement. Then after a few months, your visa will come through and you will go on to Indonesia." By the time I had been there a few months, they then needed a director for the International Correspondence Institute (ICI) office in Manila, and they asked me to go there and stay in the Philippines instead of going on to Indonesia. It was in 1980 before I ever even got to visit Indonesia.

## 2. Ministries in the Philippines

- E: Please give us a summary of your ministry involvement in the Philippines within the span of four years.
- D: Our first assignment was (to serve as) Dean of Immanuel Bible College (IBC), filling in for Dwayne Turner. We knew that would be temporary because we knew we were going on to Indonesia. After a few months, Bill and Alvera Farrand were assigned to IBC. In a meeting in early January of 1978, they asked us to stay in Manila and work at ICI. So, for the next two years, I was the ICI Director in the absence of John Burnett. When he came back, I stepped down as Director and became the Evangelism Director of ICI. During that three and half year period that we were in Manila, we also started the church now pastored by Herald Cruz and Peter Banzon out in

Quezon City. We taught dozens of Bible studies and prayer groups meeting around the city of Manila. I was on staff at the Far East Advanced School of Theology (FEAST), now Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, for three years teaching both on the campus and teaching at on-site courses. I did crusades and revivals all around the Philippines and served on boards and committees that I was asked to serve on. But the daily Bible studies and the ICI office, the pastoring of the church and teaching at FEAST were my main duties, I guess you would say.

- E: You mentioned that you helped in a church that is now pastored by Pastor Banzon. Do you know the name of the church now?
- D: Well, when we started, it was known as Holy Spirit Fellowship. It has had two or three names through the years, and I am not really sure right now what the name of the church is. They have already celebrated their twenty-second anniversary.
- E: Looking back, what would you say would be your ministry thrust when you were in the Philippines?
- D: When I was in Manila, the ministry thrust was the daily involvement I had with Bible studies that had sprung up in offices and restaurants and churches and homes. Most of them were weekly; some of them were daily. And, they were attracting people that had never been attracted to Assemblies of God (AG) churches, because they were attracting people who had recently been baptized in the Holy Spirit or had been to a Life in the Spirit seminar and had come to know the Lord through those seminars. They were so hungry for the gospel that we literally spent day after day, week after week, for three years just trying to keep up with all the invitations to teach those Bible studies. Some of them became regular, so we went every week at a given time, and we developed a core of leaders in those places. One of them even became a church. That was the main thing that I did during the day, every day.
- E: You said that you first came to the Philippines in Cebu City, and that was in 1977. Please describe the Philippines when you first came, in terms of common practices and beliefs of the people of the church, the spiritual atmosphere, the ministry opportunities that were present, both in Cebu and in Manila.

## 3. Philippine Assemblies of God in the Late 1970s

- D: The AG Church, which even at that time was the major Pentecostal church—of course, now, it is one of the major evangelical churches in the Philippines—the AG Church at that time was split, and there were two leaders. The General Council met in two different sessions with the two different leaders. Churches were known by the name of the leader that they followed. So, in a particular town there could be two AG churches: one belonging to one of the groups and the second to the other group. There were court cases over who was going to use the name, who owned the properties, etc. There was not a sense of revival among the churches because there was all this talk about the split and all this talk about the trouble.
- E: This was in 1977?
- D: Yes, between 1977 and 1978. And it was pervasive, especially through the Visayas, because in many places our works were still young and struggling, and then to have this split loyalty just hurt even more. But when we moved to Manila, we found the same thing. We found animosity, hurt, pain and a desire to get back together, but no one seemed to know how to do it. So, our people in the AG were basically holding on; they were basically trying to keep going through all this trouble and to somehow get these court cases settled. Well, in late 1978 and early 1979, the door began to open for some of us to go into Bethel Temple, which at that time was not a part of the church that the U.S. AG was relating to.
- E: This is Bethel Temple, Manila?
- D: Yes. I was invited to preach there. Dwight Palmquist was invited to preach there as well. And I began to preach there about once every two or three months on a Sunday night, and we began to build relationships. Then some of the other brothers who were a part of the split, that we were not necessarily working with at the time, began to invite me to preach for them.
- E: Do you remember who the pastor of Manila Bethel Temple was?
- D: It was Brother Dan Marocco. And in that period of time he brought Brother (Lester) Sumrall and David Sumrall out to help him. And then, when Brother Marocco left, Brother Sumrall stayed. But we began to build relationships with Brother Marocco, Brother Tandog, Brother Lazaro, Brother Lagmay, Brother Alcantara, and Brother Lapasaran. And then in 1980, we were privileged to have a meeting

where the entire general council met and was brought back together. It was a wonderful meeting where God's grace prevailed. In my opinion, it was at that point that opportunities for growth in the AG really began to come, because, as long as there was a split, people were too concerned with the split. It was even difficult for us to bring in people from the outside, new converts who needed a church. And there was so much involved in the split situation that we were hesitant to even do that. But when the split was resolved, and our churches began to grow and to flourish, our pastors began to work together. I think at that time there were about 650 AG churches all together; and they were strong enough to do some things that they couldn't do when they were split about in half. And the tide began to turn at that point to lay the groundwork in the 1980s for what happened in the Decade of Harvest in the 90s, when more than 200 churches were added every year. But we really saw God work a miracle to bring those factions of the church back together.

#### 4. Involvement with the Charismatic Movement in Manila

- E: Let's move on now to how the AG got involved with the Charismatic movement in Manila. Would you please relate to us how this started?
- D: Well, Sister Virgie Cruz felt led of God to begin developing relationships. She would say of herself that she was just a poor farm girl from Bulacan, when in reality, God had gifted her with a tremendous ability to touch people's hearts. And through some contacts that she had, the door was opened for her to do some Bible studies in the homes of some very wealthy people who were connected to large churches, to the Cursillo movement, and to other things that were going on in the Philippines at that time.
- E: Was the Cursillo movement strong during this time?
- D: It was involving a number of people and gaining strength. But, at the same time, people that had been involved with Cursillo began to be hungry for more of God, and so they began to invite Sister Virgie to come into their homes and to teach them the Bible. So doors began to open for her in places where she never thought she would get to go.

- E: Do you remember who were the first Roman Catholic people who invited her?
- D: I think Sister Virgie's son is going to have to help you with some of the names, but I do know that they were people who were in some way involved with a group that started at Ateneo University in Quezon City. They were people who had either read a book like *Nine O'clock in The Morning* by Dennis Bennett or had read Pat Boone's book, *New Song*. And, maybe they had read some of the other Charismatic materials that had come out of the movement in the United States, such as Full Gospel Businessmen, Women's Aglow, those things had been started in some places and had begun to attract attention. So, by the time Sister Virgie began holding these Bible studies in homes, invitations began to come that became more than she could handle. So she first involved Brother Dwight Palmquist and then, when he went back to the province to do evangelistic work, she turned to me, and she and I partnered together for three years. We partnered together in the starting of the church, Holy Spirit Fellowship; We partnered together in the conducting of many of these Bible studies because we attempted to use ICI material. So, she would find an open door, and then she would tell the folks about ICI and they would invite me in, and I would bring the materials with me, and Sister Virgie would go on and start another Bible study. I would come behind her with discipleship materials. One of those, for instance, was in the Social Security System (SSS) building in Quezon City, a large office building with hundreds of workers in the government center area in Quezon City, right around the big circle there. She had founded a Bible study there with some of the workers after the wife of the leader of the SSS had been to a Life in the Spirit seminar where she had been exposed to Sister Virgie's teaching. At that time, these Life in the Spirit seminars were huge, with people wanting to find out more about the Lord. But honestly, there were not enough teachers in the Catholic Church; so Sister Virgie began to teach those things.
- E: So the Life in the Spirit seminars started with the Roman Catholic Church?
- D: Yes, it started with the Roman Catholic Church. Materials were brought to the Philippines, but as I said, they didn't have enough people to teach them. So, since Sister Virgie was already teaching at these Bible studies, they turned to her, and she began to teach their Life in the Spirit seminars. And then I began to teach them, and so

on. Well, the wife of the SSS head had been touched at one of these seminars and she went to her husband and told him to open up the building; and we started a mid-week Bible study at noontime. That grew to an average attendance of 350. We would meet from 12:05 to 12:55 p.m. Some of the workers would sit at their desk and eat their lunch; others would come in from other parts of the building. I would carry a guitar in, or someone else would carry a guitar in, and we would sing, I would preach, or I would have a guest to preach, and then we would involve the people in ICI Bible studies, trying to get them through all the basic courses.

Out of that group came pastors, workers, missionaries and eventually a church, because within the next year or so, after we left in 1981, the Catholic Church put out a circular letter that said that Protestants were not to be allowed in their churches to teach Bible studies any longer. They honestly tried to bring all the Bible studies back under the church umbrella. At that point, many of the Bible studies decided they didn't want to be under that umbrella, and they wanted the teachers that they had had; and it was at that point that there was a breaking off from the Catholic Church in a lot of areas. And these fellowships, that had been quasi-Catholic, now looked for someone to affiliate with. They looked for someone to be their leaders and basically turned from the priests, because many of the priests were not familiar with the Charismatic movement, were not born again by biblical standards, and were not filled with the Holy Spirit, and could not lead these groups. So, it was at that point that some of these groups became churches; but, they were not forced to become churches by the workers, but by the Catholic Church itself, which basically put them out.

##### 5. Holy Spirit Fellowship

- E: You said that you pastored the Holy Spirit Fellowship. How did the fellowship start?
- D: Sister Virgie and I had Bible studies that we were responsible for. I think at one time, I was responsible for about twenty-five Bible studies a week, which meant I was going morning, noon, and night. Your husband, Lemuel Engcoy, was driving for me a lot of times because I would have very little time to even eat between preaching engagements all day long. Well, we had all these Bible studies

going, and we just couldn't train leaders fast enough. We saw a need to train leaders, and so we actually started that service with the idea that we would have a Sunday morning meeting that would be geared toward leadership training. We would preach and teach to the leaders, setting an example for them, giving them messages that they could take back to their Bible studies during the week. What we thought of doing in the beginning was more of a laboratory type situation where we would demonstrate how to do this. We started this ministry in Quezon City near the Scout Streets.

E: Not in University of the Philippines (UP) yet?

D: No. We started there, and we had 240 the first Sunday.

E: Leaders? Prospective leaders?

D: We had some people who just "came to be coming," but we had people born again. There is a good story there, too. We had people who were born again that Sunday, and then we had leaders that we developed. We went from there to Greenhills, and from Greenhills to the campus of UP, to the laboratory hotel that they had on the UP campus.

E: So, you pastored this church for three and half years?

D: Yes.

E: Then when you left?

D: Sister Virgie became the pastor. She kept the church basically until she turned it over to Pastor Peter Banzon, back in 1985-86 when Sister Virgie needed to leave the Philippines, when there were some threats on her life—bomb threats and murder threats. When she did, she basically turned it over to Pastor Peter Banzon, her son-in-law.

E: Was it Monterey (Christian Fellowship) already at that point?

D: Yes, it was Monterey. They dedicated the facility in 1985 and they probably were there for two or three years before they had to move out; and when they moved out, they moved down near where East Avenue joins EDSA, and then from there they started another service in another place. It is New Life Fellowship or something like that; I don't remember exactly the name.

## 6. Responses of Protestant Churches

E: You mentioned about how the Roman Catholic Church already drew the line to close the door to other Protestants to teach the people. How about the Protestants themselves? How did they respond to seeing Protestant ministers conducting services among the Roman Catholics?

D: In the middle 1970s, Sister Virgie told me there were a lot of suspicions and questions from the AG leadership as to what she was doing. Among the missionaries there were a lot of questions. There were many questions about, “You are going to these Bible studies week after week. Why aren’t these people coming out and joining our churches?” But, as I told you earlier, our churches were in somewhat of a disarray because of the conflict in the general council.

It was also at that time, I think it was 1975, that Paul Klahr saw the possibility of bringing some of these early Charismatics in to a service. So, in 1975 he started the service that is now called International Charismatic Services (ICS) and has its own building in Mandaluyong. But he started a service in the Holiday Inn; at least its long tenure was in the Holiday Inn. It might have started in another place but moved to Holiday Inn in 1975. And from that came the possibility that we could have an English service that would reach into the homes of people who were well-to-do or who were English-oriented or who were internationals in the city—and many of them had been touched through one of these Bible studies—because when that opened, Sister Virgie began to suggest to people to go to the Holiday Inn on Sunday.

When I left in 1981, there were ten five-star hotels in Manila, and every one of these hotels had a Charismatic service going on. Some of those, like ICS, eventually bought property and became a church. And the one we started in the building in Quezon City, which met for a long time in a hotel, became a church. Some of them rented business office-type property along EDSA in Cubao. And, in the middle 1980s, you could drive down EDSA and you could see banners in many of the windows where fellowships had started; but that all really stemmed from Paul Klahr starting at the Holiday Inn in 1975.

When that happened, and then when our church started, and when we began to feed young men and women into the Bible school, and when our church began to support..., we had two Philippine

missionaries go out at that time and when our churches began to support those missionaries...

E: The Viscas?

D: No, it was prior to that. It was Elisa Tibung who went to Taiwan. She is now married, and I cannot remember her married name. Before her, Cresmerio Fernandez went to Vietnam; and that is when they were supported from the Philippines. And when our churches began to support these people and care for them, they began to see we were going to bring these people into the AG, but it was going to take a while. So there was suspicion at first among the leadership and the pastors of the AG.

So, what I intended to do when I was there, even though I was doing a lot of these Bible studies, I locked into local churches and went on a regular basis to speak. For instance, my wife and I were regular speakers every month at Pasig First Assembly with Brother Lobarbio. I attended sectional and district meetings, and every opportunity I would have, I would speak. So, I intended to let the brothers know I was a part of them. And then when they asked me what about this Charismatic work, I would tell them, "This is just an open door God has given us for this particular time."

During the time I was there, for the most part, the Charismatics were really not welcome in most of our AG churches. The reason was, in my opinion, maybe multiple reasons, but the key reason seemed to be, and again my opinion only, that many of our pastors felt threatened by members who were much more educated and from a different walk of life. And they really didn't have the training, or confidence is probably the best word to use, to step out and invite these folks. When that barrier was crossed in a few churches, it really helped the other pastors see that they could also do that. And in particular, I think of Brother Irving De Mesa in Cavite who crossed that line, and he began to see that he could minister to that group of people in his town in Cavite City.

E: Would you say the "elite?"

D: You know, not just the elite; but back at that time, I would say the emerging middle class. Not just rich people, but educated people. People that were working, but they owned a car. You know, they had a nice house, and not just the elite. Although many times the elite formed the core of our Bible studies because they had a big house. Honestly, I have spoken in the sala of a mayor's home in a city of

the Philippines with 300 people fitting in the sala. You can imagine the size of the sala. So we had those kinds of people. But we also had a lot of people who were well educated and who had positions of leadership, principals of schools and college faculty members and people like that, architects and engineers, who were looking for spiritual reality.

E: So the Charismatic movement at this time primarily attracted the educated or the professional group?

D: Yes, it did. And not because we just set out to attract them, but that's where the doors were open, in the professional offices and in the schools.

E: Would you call Rev. Paul Klahr's church a Charismatic church, or was it just a precursor to the Charismatic movement?

D: No, it was a Charismatic church.

E: So, there were no Protestants? They were all Roman Catholics?

D: No, I think there were a lot of Protestants. But by "Charismatic" I mean that, from the beginning, they emphasized worship and baptism in the Holy Spirit; they emphasized small groups where people could come and be prayed over to be filled with the Spirit. It had internationals, it had Filipinos who were Catholics, it had just a cross section of people who had come to find some reality in serving God there. I think it was a mixed group from the beginning; but I would consider it a Charismatic church from the beginning, simply because it involved people from all different walks of life and religiously a very mixed group of people. And they were all gathered around that one central truth of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That marked us; that and spiritual worship: lively chorus singing and the kind of worship that has been developed today. That, along with Pentecostal baptism and speaking with other tongues, marked us.

E: And that was what made it Charismatic?

D: Yes.

## 7. Theological Emphases among Charismatic Fellowships

E: My next question is related to that. What messages or themes were emphasized during that time? You did mention the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Any other message or theme emphasized?

D: Sister Virgie was so strong on family life that, if she had an opportunity to preach to a group twice, she would preach the first time about Jesus, his saving grace and his gift of the Holy Spirit, and the second time on proper family relationships. She saw back in the middle 1970s just a real breakdown of the family. Now, I am sure if she were alive today and in the Philippines, she would see the problem having escalated and multiplied. So she taught all of those early Charismatic Bible studies about proper husband-wife relationships. And, of course, as a woman she taught more from the woman's perspective on what the woman should be and do. There were many women in our office Bible studies and she would tell them to bring their husbands. So, we would have meetings as all the women brought their husbands at night at a rented place. Sister Virgie would teach the husbands what kind of men they should be.

We saw dozens of families put back together. And, in fact, in the church that I was privileged to be a part of and start, we actually had a man come up to the altar after a service and say, "I have been living with my second (woman), but I am going to bring my wife next week because I am rededicating my life and I want her to rededicate her life." The next week, she came, and we saw that family rejoined together.

At the very first service of the new church when we started, we had a man come in and sat on one side, while a woman sat on the other side. Out of 240 people there, these were two people I did not know. He was an engineer; she was a teacher. They came in, and when I gave the altar call at the end of the message, they stood and they prayed the sinner's prayer with me. And, when they stood, they looked across the building and saw each other; they were husband and wife, but they had been estranged. They both gave their hearts to the Lord, and then they met at the altar at the conclusion of the service and embraced. That brother is now a pastor of an AG church in Australia along with his wife, and they now have three children God has given them. It is a wonderful family that the Lord has given them over the years. But on that first Sunday, the emphasis was on putting their family back together, and that is exactly what happened.

That was Sister Virgie's big emphasis. It was salvation, baptism of the Holy Spirit, and family life. And I usually came along with more verse-by-verse Bible study, and the emphasis was to just ground those people in the word of God, to get them solid in God's word. So I would either take an ICI book and teach it, or a book of the Bible

and just teach it week after week, a chapter at a time, and get the people grounded in the Lord.

#### 8. Catholic Doctrines

- E: How did you handle the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church about Mary and about the Santo Niño?
- D: You know, we taught about the Holy Spirit, and for the most part the people were getting born again and filled with the Holy Spirit and making their own decisions. I think I can say this for Sister Virgie, although she can correct me when I get to heaven if I am wrong, we just didn't talk about the controversial aspects between us. We talked about Jesus; and we talked about the Holy Spirit; and we talked about life in Christ; and we preached very strong and straight about what we would call the priesthood of the believers. We didn't call it that, we didn't use that word, but we would talk about how we could have a personal relationship with Christ. We talked about how we could be filled with the Spirit and his Spirit would teach us how to pray, and we would lead people into the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And so, I never got up in any Bible study I was ever at and took off on Mariology or on icons or saints or images.
- E: So nobody ever asked this question?
- D: At times they would ask the question, and I would divert. You have to know, these were brand new Christians, and we were walking on very thin ice because we were in places sometimes right in, maybe in a wing of a Catholic church. At times, we were in the nunnery; we were in the rectory of the church. At times, our Bible study met right inside the church; so we were there at their invitation, and I just always felt like I would be better off not to make issues out of our differences, but to emphasize our sameness.
- E: So you would just divert the question?
- D: Yes. If they would ask me specifically about praying to Mary, I would just open the Bible and I would give them some scripture passages about praying in the Spirit and just say, "You know, you have to do what you feel led to do. Here is what the scripture says, and let's leave it at that." Now there are times when a priest would come to our Bible study, sent by the church, because some of our

Bible studies were large and they would hear about it. So they would send a priest out to do a mass.

E: A mass and Bible study at the same time?

D: Exactly. A priest would come in; he would know that it was not his group, and I would say, "Do what you need to do." I would back out of the way. I would not make an issue of it. And most of the time that's what happened: the priest would turn to me and say, "You have the Bible study ready, so when it comes time for the homily, I will turn to you." So, I would do the homily and he would do the mass. And we worked together on that, and I have done that with a number of priests. It got to a point where I would preach funerals with priests. At one point, with a monsignor with all of his regalia on, we were together at the committal service for the body. One of the people who had been touched through one of the Bible studies, with her judge husband, requested me to do the music at the committal service. So here was the priest doing all of his ritual, and then when it came time for the music, I was singing along with my guitar, *Amazing Grace*. And then he went on, and then I finished with *How Great Thou Art*. By the time I got finished, the priest himself was moved, and he said, as we walked back out together out of the cemetery, "You know, we really do say a lot of the same thing, but in different ways." And that was sort of what we felt.

There was just this motto that we had between us that in all things liberty, and where there was some doctrinal issue, we had charity to try to understand each other. And it was hard for me, because I am from Missouri, from the Bible belt, and hard-nosed, but I saw the value of preaching the gospel, letting the gospel work, and letting it bring the fruit that the gospel should bring. Thus, I reduced my messages to basic Bible content; I did it in an animated way and with a lot of music, and it was fun. But, I just did not make enemies. I made that choice.

#### 9. Role of Other Partners

E: Were there other Filipinos who were with you in this activity?

D: I usually did not go alone, but had somebody with me. And some of the things were started by Sister Virgie, and she always had a carload of people with her, because she was always training

someone. But, there were enough people that came up under our ministry so that when we left, we didn't stop anything. It just kept going, but under Filipino leadership. Eventually Brother (Eli) Javier, who was the general superintendent (of the Philippine AG) at the time, was brought in to a lot of these Bible studies and was introduced to this whole concept.

I like to think, rightly or wrongly, history will tell, that the great revival that the general council (of the AG) experienced during the 1990s in the Philippines was a lot the result of all the seed planting that we did in the late 1970s and early 80s. Sister Virgie spread an enormous amount of goodwill; and she never hid who she was. So, she would be in a place and there would be two or three thousand people there, and she would not deny that she was an AG minister. And yet, she would love, train and help them and pray for them and spend all night with them; and they began to get a real good feeling towards the AG. When they could not go back to their Catholic Church because of the edict that was put out, they came to us. Many of them, hundreds and hundreds of them, came to us.

- E: Do you have information as to why the edict was given by the Roman Catholic Church, even when you said you were not bringing them into the church?
- D: Well, Jaime Cardinal Sin wrote the letter; and I think it was even published in the newspaper. You can have a move of God, but at some point you are going to have to straighten out theology. You are going to have to deal with theological issues. And you have people like Sister Virgie and me preaching, many times between groups, many of whom were Catholic, talking about the born again experience. If you remember, that became almost a catch phrase. People would say, "Are you born again? Are you with the 'born again'?" It became both an adjective and a noun. I think it was the desire of the Catholic Church to sort of draw some lines and say that this "born again" is not Catholic theology. And the effort I think was to try to pull the people back into Catholic theology, because they were losing those people. At that point, they were losing many of those people who, with their born again experience, no longer prayed to Mary; no longer prayed to the saints; no longer attended mass because mass had become empty to them, as now they had the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In fact, they began to lose large numbers of people. At some point after that, the large Catholic Charismatic group really began to blossom and grow in the Philippines. I heard

somewhere recently that it might have eight million adherents in this group.

E: The El Shaddai?

D: The El Shaddai. But that was just a small group back in the early 1980s. That really didn't become a force for the next ten years probably. And that probably grew out of the Catholic desire to bring this group back in under the Catholic Church.

E: By the way, were there other AG missionaries, or even non-AG missionaries, who were also involved in the Charismatic movement besides Brother Paul Klahr and yourself?

D: Yes, Brother Jim Long became the pastor of the ICS church, and Dwight Palmquist was involved; when he was in Manila, he was always with us. There was Tom Hynes, an AG missionary who later switched to non-AG affiliation, who started the service. It was actually a part of the service at Holiday Inn. He then took a group and went out to the Manila Gardens (Hotel). I think he is probably still in the Philippines and has started his own denomination. Jerry Halloway was with the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, which I think in the Philippines back then was called the New Testament Church of God. He started a service at the InterContinental Hotel in Makati. Those were the early ones; and since that time, I think a lot of different people have been involved.

#### 10. Implications of the Charismatic Explosion

E: Do you remember any specific event that led to the mushrooming of the Charismatic movement?

D: Before I came to Manila in 1977, there were some large meetings at Ateneo University. There were some Charismatic leaders that came in, and I think at one point David DuPlessis visited.

E: From the United States, you mean?

D: Right. Well, originally from South Africa, but from the United States, and I know that those things had a lot to do with opening the doors early. There were Bible study groups that came out of some of those early Charismatic meetings.

E: Do you remember the World Map meetings of Ralph Mahoney?

- D: Yes.
- E: Do you think that would have an effect on the Charismatic movement?
- D: I think that had some effect, but in the World Map meetings that I attended, Brother Mahoney was ministering to pastors a lot. And what the Charismatic movement was doing was ministering usually to Catholic lay people. So the value of the World Map meetings that I remember was that it began to open the eyes of our traditional Pentecostal pastors in a lot of places. Now, he did invite other people in.
- E: Where there were Roman Catholic priests?
- D: Right. He invited other people in. But I remember, in the meetings in Cebu, for instance, there were a large number of our AG pastors who had this as a first exposure. They were first exposed to the fact that a Catholic Charismatic could have the Holy Spirit and that we could introduce that to them, and that is what I think World Map did. Now I think all these things worked together. I think the meetings that were held, the crusades that were held, the eye-opening events that were held, all worked together to break up the fallow ground and to plant the seeds that needed to be planted.
- E: Most of the activities began in Manila. Do you know how these reached the other islands of the Philippines?
- D: From what I understand, people would become involved in a Bible study in Manila. Back at that time, everybody seemed to be from the province. You know, Manila was just growing by leaps and bounds. People were moving in because jobs were there. And so I would give the lesson and then one particular fellow would say, "I am from Bicol, and I've just gotten saved, and I am taking my friend and this Friday we are going to take the bus to Bicol. We'll get there Saturday morning, and we are going to spend all day Saturday teaching Bible studies in our barrio, and then we will take the bus on Sunday and come back and be back to work on Monday." There were people that began to immediately make sacrifices to tell the story of what they had found. And so, a lot of the early work was done by people who worked in Manila, lived in Manila, and then who traveled back and forth to their homes out in the provinces or would take vacation or holiday and go to their families and would take the gospel with them.
- E: That would be mostly in Luzon?

D: A lot in Luzon, yes. But, you know the Filipino's network—the word got around. There were circuits that different speakers got onto. Sister Virgie began to be invited all over. We had an open door for a lot of roads. We had an open door in the military because again some contacts were made high up in the military. I was invited onto military bases, where the new recruits were in basic training, to do two hours with every new recruit. I mean, I spoke to hundreds of recruits in the army, the marines, the navy, because the commandant of that particular base in some way would have been touched by the Charismatic movement and would want all of his basic training troops to have this opportunity to be born again. And so, they would invite us in and march 300 marines into the room. They would all sit on the floor, and we would preach for two hours. Unheard of stuff! The doors were just open. If you preached to 300 troops, they are from all over the country, and they would just go right back out and tell the message. But the work in Manila was central to what else was going on. That is for sure.

#### 11. Then and Now

E: Let's go to your reflections. Please compare what is happening in the Philippines today with what happened back then in the early 1980s.

D: Here is what I gather from the last time I spent five days with the leadership of the Philippine AG, back in 1996, and I have had a lot of correspondence with them. We were on a retreat, and I was the speaker with them for five days.

The Charismatic movement has given way to church planting. We were, at the beginning, church planters. When AG missionaries went to the Philippines, just like when they went to many other countries, they planted local churches; and then built Bible schools to train leaders for those local churches. A little different need today, but what the church has turned to do is to become very powerful through church-planting. And our pastors these days are not so afraid to reach the up-and-outers, as well as the down-and-outers. So, when you go into large churches like Word of Hope in Manila, like Roxas First Assembly, or Mount Hope in Iloilo, when you go into those churches, you will see a cross section of people. You will see the tricycle drivers and the administrators of the big businesses, etc., because our pastors have confidence in the Gospel. They have seen it

work. So we have gone from the Charismatic movement, I think, to the church-planting movement. I heard Brother Sobrepeña say that he wants to see 5,000 churches. That will probably make the AG the second largest church in the Philippines, behind the Roman Catholic, if indeed that happens. I wouldn't doubt that, at this point, in number of churches, we are the largest group in the Philippines among the evangelicals. So that is where I think we are headed.

Now, with the advent of all of these new people, and many of them are already professionals, I think what is going to have to happen is we are going to have to change the Bible school setting, curriculum. I think we are going to continue to have young people coming out of our churches into the ministry. At the same time, I think we are going to have 30- and 40- and 50-year-old people who, once they find Christ and hear the call to the ministry, need a year of training. They are already engineers, they are already nurses or doctors, or whatever, but they feel the call to the ministry. And they need basic Bible training, e.g., one year of training. I don't know how that is going to happen. I know that in Roxas City it happens through a church-based Bible school, which I hear there are many of those cropping up around the Philippines, and that is where Global University comes in. That is probably where the future success of the Bible schools is going to be, like Bethel Bible College extension in Cubao. From an outside observer, now having been out of the country and not having lived there for a long time, that's what I see happening. From Charismatic to church planting, and from dealing with people out in the barrio, so to speak, dealing now with a cross-section of people. Reflecting too, probably, how Manila has matured and changed over the last few years.

E: And the great need for trained leaders.

D: Yes, a great need.

## 12. Final Words

E: If you would be able to speak to the Filipino churches of the twenty-first century, what would be your message to them?

D: Well, when I was among them, I preached faith. And, I would probably go back in among them preaching faith. I would probably try my best to raise their faith as leaders to believe God to do what it

might seem impossible to do. "But, with God, all things are possible." So, I would teach and train them that they are the head, not the tail; that they are not behind, but they are in front. That this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached into all the world for a witness, and the gospel has with it what, in this theology, we call "redemptive lift," that when you preach the gospel, the gospel gets into someone's heart and it lifts them, and faith causes them to be able to do things, to see things, that they have never seen and they've never done before. And, to a great extent, I preached that message among our pastors back twenty years ago. I would still probably preach that message today: that faith will help them to have a church on main street; faith will help them to have a big building. Faith will see them through to be able to accomplish great things, rather than to depend on outside resources, meaning the United States or Great Britain; rather than depending on somebody to send it in, believe God to send it down.

- E: Dr. Denbow, thank you very much for the challenge that you are giving to the Filipino pastors. And we pray that the Filipino pastors will arise and take that lead that you are envisioning for us. God bless you, too, as the pastor of Christian Chapel in Columbia, Missouri.

FACTS AND FIGURES:  
A HISTORY OF THE GROWTH OF  
THE PHILIPPINE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD<sup>1</sup>

Conrado Lumahan

1. Introduction

From its humble beginning in 1940, the Philippine Assemblies of God (AG) has grown rapidly to 3,800 local congregations at the rate of nine churches planted every week.<sup>2</sup> Despite its significant growth, the AG in the Philippines in general, or the AG in northern Philippines in particular, has not put much effort into preserving its heritage in the form of factual historical records. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to present a historical overview of the Assemblies of God in northern Philippines. The research will begin with a broad study of both Catholicism and Protestantism in the Philippines; then narrow down to focus on the growth and development of the Assemblies of God in northern Philippines.

2. An Overview of Philippine Christianity

The history of Philippine Christianity did not transpire in a vacuum. Roman Catholics came first which made the Philippines “the only Christian nation” in Asia in comparison with the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim neighboring countries, followed by Protestant/Evangelicals

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<sup>1</sup> This is an excerpt from my “Facts and Figures: History of Growth and Development of the Assemblies of God in Northern Luzon” (Master of Theology thesis, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio, Philippines, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> In November, 2004 David White, a church growth specialist with Teen Challenge, reported during the Special General Council Convention, Davao City, Philippines that the Assemblies of God has over 3,800 churches at the rate of nine churches planted every week.

which made the Bible available to the Filipinos, and then finally followed by the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement which majored in power evangelism.

### 2.1 Roman Catholic Christianity (1521-1898)

The Philippines is inarguably a religious nation. Their religiosity became a fertile ground for the coming of the Spaniards that led to the consequent Christianization en masse of the Filipinos. Father Pedro Valderama, who accompanied Magellan on March 31, 1521, celebrated the first mass on Philippine soil.<sup>3</sup> Magellan's coming to the Philippines on March 17, 1521 was eventually followed by systematic evangelization of friars, first by the Augustinians, who accompanied the expedition in 1564, followed by the Franciscans (1577), Jesuits (1581), Dominicans (1587) and Augustinian Recollects (1606) from Spain and Mexico.<sup>4</sup> The government of Spain gave the religious orders facilities to Christianize and civilize the inhabitants of the colonies. These noble dreams were originally stipulated in the last will and testament of Queen Isabella of Spain on October 12, 1504.<sup>5</sup>

Zaide revealed that the Christianization of the Philippines was a result of fear of the Spanish Armada and the conquistadors and faith in God due to the apostolic zeal and fervor of the missionaries.<sup>6</sup> They, without any other arms than their rosaries, crucifixes and virtues, won over the goodwill of the people. But, regardless of the reasons of their successes, the undeniable fact remains that in spite of the abuses<sup>7</sup> of the

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<sup>3</sup> Amparo S. Lardizabal, *Readings on Filipino Culture and Social Life* (Manila: Rex Books Store, 1970), p. 134.

<sup>4</sup> Antonio Isidro, *Principles of Education* (Manila: Alemer Publication, 1972), p. 318.

<sup>5</sup> Gregorio F. Zaide, *The Pageant of Philippine History* (Manila: Philippine Education Company, 1979), pp. 261-64. History depicts three main purposes of Spain's noble desire for the Philippines: God (the preaching of God to the pagan Filipinos), gold (the accretion of the natural resources of the colonies) and glory (the glory that would come to Spain as the world's colonizer).

<sup>6</sup> Zaide, *The Pageant of Philippine History*, pp. 234-60.

<sup>7</sup> The following are the obvious abuses of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities: moral decadence of both religious and civic leaders, brutality of the Spaniards against the inhabitants, especially those who disregarded the Roman Catholic tenets of faith, religious orders violations of the vow of chastity, and friars becoming some of the richest people in the land. These abuses paved the way for

missionaries and civic leaders, Catholic Christianity has left a legacy with the Filipinos. Had it not been for Roman Catholic evangelization, the Philippines would have become a Muslim country like Indonesia<sup>8</sup> and Malaysia, and would have been harder to evangelize. Indeed, Islam as a political, cultural and religious entity was introduced most probably in the late fourteenth and fifteenth century and was successful in the southern archipelago.<sup>9</sup>

For almost 400 years of Catholic Christianity in the Philippines, there were about 1,500 missionaries sent throughout the country, converting about 7,000,000 Filipinos.<sup>10</sup> What could be the factors for the success of the Catholic Christianity in the land? It might be due to the continuous and faithful evangelistic zeal of the religious orders, the absence of a national religion, and the fact that Filipinos' belief in bathala (deity) and life after death were similar to the Catholic faith. The arrival of the missionaries was timely and "the fields were already white to harvest."

## 2.2 Protestant Christianity (1898-1940): Comity Agreement

Protestant Christianity was introduced after the United States of America subjugated the Spanish Armada in the Philippines.<sup>11</sup> In 1898 the Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist leaders met together in New York to

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the propaganda movement: the *La Solidaridad* (1892) by Marcelo H. del Pilar in Barcelona, the *Asociacion Hispano-Filipina* (1892) by Mariano Ponce, the *Liga Filipina* (1892) by Dr. Jose P. Rizal and the *Kataastasang Kagalangalangang Katipunan* (Supreme Society of the Sons of the Nation), and most especially the writing of *Noli me Tangere* (1886) and its sequel *El Filibusterismo* published in Ghent by Rizal. The two books opened the eyes of the Filipinos that eventually paved the way for a revolution. See Pablo Fernandez, O.P., *History of the Church in the Philippines: 1521-1898* (Manila, Philippines: National Book Store, 1979), pp. 304-13; Federica M. Bunge, ed., *Philippines: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: n.p., 1976), p. 3

<sup>8</sup> Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country in the world today with a population of 171,135,000.

<sup>9</sup> David L. Londeberg, *A Look at the Lutherans: A Philippine Case Study* (Baguio City: D. L. L. Publications, 1976), p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Herman Wedewer and Joseph McSorley, *Short History of the Catholic Church* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1916), p. 216.

<sup>11</sup> A. Leonard Tuggy and Ralph Oliver, *Seeing the Church in the Philippines* (Manila: OMF, 1972), pp. 26-53 discussed the Spanish-American war.

discuss how to bring the evangelical message to the Filipinos. The result was a comity agreement of the missionary enterprises, dividing up places of ministry to avoid future conflicts among themselves and their converts.<sup>12</sup> This meant that only one Protestant church would be started in each area. The comity agreement, which led to the territorial division of the Philippines, was one of the greatest accomplishments of mission enterprises in the Philippines. The meeting was followed by another gathering in 1901 by the early missionaries in Manila to further discuss the comity agreement with three specific major agenda items: 1) "to organize the Evangelical Union," 2) "choose a common name for Protestant churches," and 3) "delineate the geographical work allotments for each church."<sup>13</sup>

From 1898 to 1905 there were different Protestant missions agencies joining the comity agreement, namely: Methodists (1898, most of lowland Luzon and north of Manila); Presbyterians (1899, Bicol, Southern Tagalog area and some parts of Western Visayas); Northern Baptists (1900, some parts of Western Visayas); United Brethren (1901, Mountain Province and La Union); Disciples of Christ (1901, Ilocos, Abra, and Tagalog towns); Congregationalists (1902, Mindanao except for the western end); and Christian and Missionary Alliance (1902, Western Mindanao and Sulu Archipelago). Manila was opened to all denominations and mission agencies.<sup>14</sup> The Seventh-Day Adventists and Protestant Episcopalists did not join because they wanted to go to all parts of the archipelago.<sup>15</sup>

What would be the evident mission thrusts of these Protestant denominations in the country? The American Protestant Missions (APM) heavily emphasized institutional ministry, and medical missions in their evangelistic and missions endeavors.

For a short time the comity agreement worked well, until the situation grew more intricate and splits transpired. The most notable of these involved the Methodists in 1909 when Nicolas Zamora broke away from the Methodist and founded the Iglesia Evangelica Metodista en las

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<sup>12</sup> Merlyn L. Guillermo and L. P. Verora, *Protestant Churches and Missions in the Philippines*, vol. 1 (Valenzuela, Metro Manila: Agape Printing Services, 1982), pp. 1-3.

<sup>13</sup> Guillermo & Verora, *Protestant Churches*, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Tuggy & Oliver, *Seeing the Church in the Philippines*, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> James H. Montgomery and Donald A. McGavran, *The Discipling of a Nation* (Manila: Global Church Growth Bulletin, 1980), pp. 41-51.

Islas Filipinas (IEMELIF). This shattered the agreement. Furthermore, Methodist Ilocanos from Northern Luzon moved into the areas of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines in Mindanao. Baptist Ilongos migrated from Iloilo to Central Cotabato, traditionally Christian and Missionary Alliance territory. As this kind of movement increased, the sharp boundaries between the different comity areas became obscured.<sup>16</sup>

Divisions came with growth and expansion, and personality clashes, racial tensions, the dynamics of nationalism, cultural differences, power struggles and other non-theological factors contributed to the schisms. In the 1920s the fundamental-modernist controversy in the USA affected the Philippines, causing further division. By 1921, some nineteen independent denominations were registered with the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) and important splits occurred among the Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians and Disciples of Christ. Several small denominations, some of them entirely under national leadership, emerged.<sup>17</sup>

However, the original desire for unity remained strong. In 1929, the United Brethren, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches formed the United Evangelical Church in the Philippines. In 1932, six of the smaller indigenous denominations formed the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Cristo. The National Christian Council was founded in 1929 as a successor of the Evangelical Union. This was followed in 1938 by the organization of the Philippine Federation of Evangelical Churches. With the coming of World War II, the United Evangelical Church underwent severe trying circumstances when the mission agencies were completely cut off from the USA. American missionaries were incarcerated and mission funds were unexpectedly discontinued. To better deal with the diverse Protestant groups, the Japanese pressed for the formation of the Evangelical Church in the Philippines which combined thirteen denominations in all. However, most of the larger denominations such as Methodist, Episcopal and independent churches refused to do so. After the war, the Evangelical Church of the Philippines fell into further fragmentation, but the Disciples of Christ, the United Brethren, the Unida de Cristo, the Evangelica Nacional, some individual congregations of the IEMELIF, the Philippine Methodist and the Presbyterian Churches remained intact and retained the name. In 1949 the United Evangelical Church and the Philippine Federation of Evangelical Churches

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<sup>16</sup> Tuggy & Oliver, *Seeing the Church in the Philippines*, pp. 136-40.

<sup>17</sup> Frank Laubach, *People of the Philippines* (New York: George H. Dora, 1925), p. 23.

underwent reorganization and changed its name to the Philippine Federation of Christian Churches. Today, Protestant and Evangelical churches and denominations are grouped into major councils of churches: The National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), organized in 1963; the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) organized in 1964; and the Philippines for Jesus Movement (PJM) organized in the 1990s.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity (1920-1953)

Although the churches explicated below are evangelical in beliefs, I would classify them as Pentecostal groups. These groups are the fastest growing religious bodies in the Philippines. The number of their adherence is second to Catholics.

#### 3.1 United Free Gospel Church

The United Free Gospel Church (UFGC) was the first Pentecostal church pioneered in the Philippine Island by two Ilocanos who were immigrants to Hawaii. It was started by Emerito C. Mariano and Antonio Corpuz, together with an American missionary, Joseph Warnick. UFGC planted churches in San Nicolas and Dingras, Ilocos Norte. In 1923, UFGC extended its ministry in Jones, Isabela through Emerito Mariano, a native of that town, and spread the Pentecostal message there. One of his converts Teodoro Lastimosa, became a minister and both had outstanding work in the nearby towns. Joseph Warnick died in 1927 leaving the Filipino ministers on their own, but they never stopped spreading the Pentecostal message in the towns and barrios.<sup>19</sup>

#### 3.2 Filipino Assemblies of the First Born

Before World War II broke out, Filipino converts who were baptized with the Holy Spirit in the USA, including Silvestre Taverner, Clemente

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<sup>18</sup> The majority of the independent Charismatic fellowships have membership in PJM.

<sup>19</sup> Doreen G. Alcoran, "The Coming of Pentecostal Fire in the Philippines: A Historical Overview" (A Paper presented during the 11<sup>th</sup> William W. Menzies Annual Lectureship at Asia Pacific Theological Seminar on January 20-23, 2003).

Balangue, Rosendo Alcantara,<sup>20</sup> Domingo Mabalot, Pedro Yaranon and Felipe Calizar, returned home to the Philippines and started Filipino Assemblies of the First Born (FAFB)<sup>21</sup> in La Union, Ilocos, Abra and Pangasinan.<sup>22</sup> The FAFB was organized on November 24, 1949 and it was registered with the SEC on August 16, 1950.<sup>23</sup> In January, 1949 FAFB opened Messengers of the Cross Bible Institute in Sta. Catalina, Ilocos Sur which was later transferred to its permanent location in Caba, La Union.<sup>24</sup> In the 1960s, FAFB expanded its ministries in other provinces of Luzon, and even into Mindanao. Today FAFB has 197 churches all over the archipelago.<sup>25</sup>

### 3.2 Church of God World Missions of the Philippines

In February, 1946 Church of God (COG) missionary from the USA, Frank Poronda and his family came to the Philippines and resided in San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte. Before joining the COG, he had been a missionary to the Philippines under the Free Gospel Church, so he actually returned to a former field of ministry. Upon arrival he went to Ilocos Norte and convinced his former Free Gospel colleagues to join him. Being fluent in the Ilocano dialect, he was well-received by the Ilocanos. Mrs. Poronda

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<sup>20</sup> Rosendo Alcantara was also one of the founding fathers of the Philippine Assemblies of God.

<sup>21</sup> The Assemblies of God of the First Born, its original name was the first registered Filipino religious denomination in the USA in 1933. It was organized by the Filipino Assemblies of God Christians to distinguish themselves from the white Pentecostal bodies due to obvious racial discrimination. White Americans even derogatorily called Filipinos "brown monkeys."

<sup>22</sup> See Heredel P. Cappel, *International Assemblies of the First Born: Its Pentecostal Roots and Fruits* (Caba, La Union: Messengers of the Cross Theological College, 2001), pp. 16-24.

<sup>23</sup> Cappel, *International Assemblies of the First Born*, p. 24.

<sup>24</sup> Cappel, *International Assemblies of the First Born*, p. 25.

<sup>25</sup> Cappel, *International Assemblies of the First Born*, pp. 108-34. There are 29 churches for Ilocos Norte-Cagayan District; 26 churches for Ilocos Sur-Abra District; 31 churches for La Union-Benguet; 26 churches for Pangasinan District; 25 churches for Isabela, Quirino, Nueva Viscaya, Mountain Province and Ifugao District; 17 churches for Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Bataan District; 14 churches for Metro Manila-Mindoro District; 10 churches for Misamis Occidental District; and 19 churches Zamboanga del Sur-Lanao del Norte District.

and the children became ill and were compelled to return to the USA. Poronda stayed and worked alone in the country.

The ministry of the COG went on, and tremendous growth was evident. By 1952, there were already 14 ministers, 12 church buildings and 552 members. This was through a combined and concerted effort of the missionaries and local pastors.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.3 Foursquare Church

In 1949 the first foreign missionary came to the Philippines, but by that time Filipinos converted by the ministry of Foursquare founder, Aimee Semple McPherson had already planted congregations in Cavite, Iloilo City and elsewhere. By the same year Foursquare churches increased to thirteen churches in various parts of the country. The 1960s and 70s were times of rapid growth, both in quantity and quality. Bible colleges and Christian schools were instrumental in the massive growth. This impressive accomplishment was widely known through Jim Montgomery's *New Testament Fire in the Philippines*.<sup>27</sup> The Foursquare Church is one of the most prominent classical Pentecostal denominations in the Philippines today.

### 3.4 Miracle Life Fellowship

During World War II the Holy Spirit is claimed to have spoken to an American soldier in the Philippines to return to the "emerald islands" as a missionary. In fulfillment of that vision in July, 1953 Clyde V. Shields and his wife came to San Fernando<sup>28</sup> and established the first Pentecostal Church in La Union, called "Christian Center."<sup>29</sup> The church was subsequently known as "Miracle Church" because it was built on a "miracle mountain" due to God's answer to his prayer, "Give me this mountain."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Alcoran, "The Coming of Pentecostal Fire," pp. 6-7.

<sup>27</sup> Jim Montgomery, *New Testament Fire in the Philippines* (Manila: Church Growth Research in the Philippines, 1972).

<sup>28</sup> Romulo Lagmay, "News Reports," *The Bulletin* (September 1954), p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> "Bethel Party," *Bulletin*, October, 1954 (Philippine General Council of the Assemblies of God, Valenzuela, Metro Manila,), p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> Susan Chan, "Church History, Philippine Miracle Mission" (Unpublished paper, San Fernando, La Union, n.d.).

The church was opened on May 2, 1954. Romulo Lagmay, Lourdes Balas, Mary Mapanao, and Conrado Ramos were the first Filipino pastors who worked with the Shields.<sup>31</sup> In the early existence of the church, reports of healings and Holy Spirit baptism became regular phenomenon. Lagmay the pastor, wrote: "Healings are a common occurrence in our meetings. And many have been saved."<sup>32</sup> People crowded the church and seekers flocked to the altar.

### 3.5 Full Gospel Faith Temple

Miracle Life Fellowship, which became an independent church, housed Faith Bible Institute (FBI), which was started in 1956 by Mary Mapanao. FBI merged with Pentecostal Bible Institute (PBI) in 1958 due to financial difficulties.<sup>33</sup> But in 1968, Mapanao started another church, Full Gospel Faith Temple in Santiago Norte, San Fernando. She also started a Bible school along with her daughter and son-in-law, Ruth and Carlos Bisuelan, both teachers from PBI with two students.<sup>34</sup> Joseph Gatchel, a Pentecostal Church of God missionary from the USA, was the first president of PBI. The school was transferred to Catbangan, San Fernando, and became Pentecostal Bible College in 1971. In March, 1998 it was changed to Pentecostal School of Theology (PST). Because of the students and faculty's children, the Bible school was forced to start its church inside the compound in 1982. It was eventually known as the Christian City Church in 1992.<sup>35</sup>

### 3.6 Other Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches

Over a hundred Pentecostal/Charismatic groups which were organized after 1960 are not included in the scope of this study.<sup>36</sup> These

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<sup>31</sup> Lagmay, "News Reports," p. 19.

<sup>32</sup> Lagmay, "News Reports," p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> David L. Parkman, "The History of the Pentecostal Church of God Asian Missions" (San Fernando City; Pentecostal School of Theology, 2001), pp. 5-6.

<sup>34</sup> Carlos Bisuelan, "Church History of Full Gospel Faith Temple" (Unpublished paper, San Fernando, La Union, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Norman Baagen, interview with Amelia Patacsil, September 27, 2002 in San Fernando, La Union.

<sup>36</sup> See the list of these churches at glossary in the last page of this research.

churches were either affiliated with PCEC, PJM, or remained as independent groups. Many of them used "fellowship" or "ministry" instead of "church" because this word can be a religious obstruction to people. The Roman Catholic's perspectives on "church" is especially different from that of the Evangelical/Pentecostal churches.<sup>37</sup> Most of these groups are Pentecostal-like in beliefs but Charismatic in practice. The mushrooming of these churches in the northern Philippines is rightly described by Peter Hocken in his book *The Glory and the Shame of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches*.<sup>38</sup>

#### 4. The Assemblies of God

##### 4.1 The Early Beginnings (1940-1953)

The AG is one of several denominations, which forms the present-day Pentecostal movement. This movement grew out of an international religious awakening that began in the late nineteenth century. A deep spiritual hunger grew in the hearts of many Fundamental and Holiness churches. Prayer bands sprang up, and Bible conferences and revival meetings increased both in frequency and intensity.<sup>39</sup> This Pentecostal revival is not an American phenomenon but a world phenomenon.<sup>40</sup> It did not come from "below," but from "above." It came supernaturally and suddenly.

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<sup>37</sup> For the RC there is only one church that is, the Roman Catholic Church, but there are many Christian fellowships. RC insists on the universality and unicity of Christ over his (that is, Roman Catholic) church.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Hocken, *The Glory and the Shame: Reflections on the 20<sup>th</sup> Outpouring of the Holy Spirit* (Guildford, Surrey: Eagle, 1994), pp. 183-99.

<sup>39</sup> Conrado Lumahan, Sr., "The History of San Fernando Assembly of God" (Prepared for the 12<sup>th</sup> Church Anniversary Celebration in San Fernando City, Philippines (January 14, 2001), p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Seemingly, great revival and awakening came upon these groups simultaneously in such widely separated places as India (1905), the USA (1906), Canada (1906), Korea (1906), England (1907), Egypt (1907), Sweden (1907), Holland (1907), South Africa (1908), Germany (1908), China (1908), Chili (1908), Russia (1909), Argentina (1910), and Liberia. The information is based on the lecture notes of William Menzies in February-March, 2001 at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines for "Modern History of Pentecostalism" class.

December 3, 1925, eleven years after the organization of the AG, the Foreign Missions Department commissioned Benjamin H. Caudle and his wife as the first USA missionaries to the Philippines. The Caudles disembarked in Manila in September, 1926. Their missionary activities, though not very long, achieved some measure of fruition. The Caudles went back to the USA due to the wife's physical infirmity.<sup>41</sup> Their untimely departure was later followed by the arrival of Filipino pioneers, who initially "came to the United States searching for gold, but they found God instead."<sup>42</sup> The early pioneers included Cris Garsulao, Pedro Castro, Pedro Collado, Benito Acena, Rosendo Alcantara, Eugenio Suede, Esteban Lagmay, Rudy Esperanza, Servillano Ubaldo and H. P. Abrenica. Four were natives of Pangasinan and one was from La Union. Esperanza commenced a church in Rosario, Pozorrubio; Alcantara in Binalonan; Ubaldo in Caramutan, Villasis; and Abrenica in San Nicolas, Villasis, all in the Province of Pangasinan.

#### 4.2 Philippines District Council of the Assemblies of God

Occasioned by the visit of Esperanza in the USA to attend the Northern California-Nevada District through the invitation of Lagmay, the president of the Filipino AG in the USA, a covenant was made. Esperanza, when he returned to the Philippines, would organize the AG and Lagmay would stay to promote the work in the Philippines among the AG churches in the US.<sup>43</sup> PAG was originally a District of the US AG. Through the humble effort of Lagmay, Noel Perkin, Secretary of the Foreign Missions Department, appointed Leland Johnson, who was then a missionary on furlough from China to go to the Philippines.<sup>44</sup> Abrenica, Alcantara and Esperanza met the Johnsons in Manila and plans were laid for the PAG organizational convention.<sup>45</sup> On March 21-27, 1940 in San

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<sup>41</sup> Joseph Rommel L. Suico, "A Strategy of Social Action: A Filipino Pentecostal Perspective" (Master of Theology Thesis; Asia Graduate School of Theology, September 1993), p. 47.

<sup>42</sup> John W. Kennedy, "Embracing the Challenge," *Pentecostal Evangel*, July 4, 2000, p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> Esteban Lagmay, *From Gambling to Pulpit* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), pp. 76, 92.

<sup>44</sup> Lagmay, *From Gambling to Pulpit*, pp. 91-93.

<sup>45</sup> Trinidad C. Esperanza, "*The Assemblies of God in the Philippines*" (Master of Religious Education Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, 1965), pp. 31-32.

Nicolas, Villasis, Pangasinan the organizational convention was held. Leland Johnson received his appointment as the district superintendent from US AG and acted as the president of the incorporation from 1940 to 1946. The elected district officials were: Esperanza, secretary; Castro, treasurer; Abrenica and Alcantara, presbyters.<sup>46</sup> The constitution and by-laws was adopted “wholesale” from US AG with a little revision that would suit the need of the council.<sup>47</sup> There were about eight ordained and licensed ministers and one missionary present. On July 11, 1940 the newly chartered organization was registered with the SEC with the name Philippines District Council of the Assemblies of God, Inc. (PDCAG).<sup>48</sup>

#### 4.3 The Relationship between PDCAG and USAG

The US missionaries worked closely with the nationals, and supported the Bible schools and churches. By 1953 many churches had been established through a mother-daughter church relationship. When the daughter church was grown up, the relationship changed from the parental relations to a partnership. It was during a convention in April, 1953 in Malinta, Ugong, Bulacan that the relationship was changed “from paternalism to affiliation.”<sup>49</sup> PDCAG became Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God (PGCAG) through an approved resolution.<sup>50</sup>

In April 1950, there were approximately twenty US missionaries in the Philippines, thirty ordained ministers, forty licentiates, and thirty exhorters in the PGCAG.<sup>51</sup> Currently, PGCAG has twenty districts all over the Philippines with more than 3,800 local congregations worshipping God either in their own church buildings, houses or rented

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<sup>46</sup> Esperanza, “*The Assemblies of God in the Philippines*,” pp. 31-32.

<sup>47</sup> Esperanza, “*The Assemblies of God in the Philippines*,” p. 52. The constitution and by-laws of the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God was adopted and revised in 1940, 1959, and 1964.

<sup>48</sup> Esperanza, “*The Assemblies of God in the Philippines*,” p. 32.

<sup>49</sup> Esperanza, “*The Assemblies of God in the Philippines*,” p. 54.

<sup>50</sup> Esperanza, “*The Assemblies of God in the Philippines*,” p. 56.

<sup>51</sup> See “Ministerial List,” *The Bulletin*, June 1950, pp. 21-22.

facilities,<sup>52</sup> with 3,201 ordained ministers, licentiates, specialized ministries and exhorters.

#### 4.4 Bible Schools

The Pentecostal leaders saw the importance of Bible training institutions. Bible schools have at least three perceived major contributions: 1) cognitive aspect (indoctrination), 2) practical aspect (evangelism and mission), 3) spiritual aspect (catalyst for revival and spiritual life). The pioneers, although ambivalent of higher theological training, insisted that the only way to conserve the fruits of revival and evangelism is through trained workers.

From the tenuous beginning of the history of the AG, Bible schools have played a prominent role in the growth of churches.<sup>53</sup> In 2000 the council has 35 Bible colleges and training centers in the Philippines,<sup>54</sup> six are in Northern Luzon,<sup>55</sup> including Asia Pacific Theological Seminary that is under the geographical jurisdiction of NLDC.

#### 4.5 Missionaries

Although the Philippines AG was basically a religion started by the balikbayan (returnees from overseas), missionaries through the years have significantly contributed to the growth and expansion of the AG. They have been instrumental in organizing the PGCAG, establishing Bible schools, training and equipping nationals, supporting Bible school

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<sup>52</sup> An outside report shows 2,853 churches in 1999: David White, *DAWN Philippines: A Report on the State of the Evangelical Churches in the Philippines* (Manila: Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches, 2000), p. 40.

<sup>53</sup> Benjamin Sun, "Assemblies of God Theological Education in Asia Pacific: A Reflection," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3:2 (July 2000), pp. 227-51 (234).

<sup>54</sup> Wonsuk Ma, "Philippines," *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, revised and expanded edition, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard van der Maas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), pp. 201-207 (201-202).

<sup>55</sup> Luzon Bible Institute, Binalonan, Pangasinan; Clark Bible Institute, San Carlos City; Asia Bible College, Baguio City; Assemblies of God Training Center in the Cordillera, La Trinidad, Benguet; Peniel Ministerial Academy, Baguio City; His Glory School of Mission, Tabuk, Kalinga, Apayao; and Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio City.

students, financing the planting of churches, church building, buying Bible colleges' vehicles through the Speed the Light funds, the digging of wells, fishponds, piggery, poultry projects and others. Now from many countries, missionaries have also conducted indoor and outdoor crusades that have resulted in the establishment of many congregations.

#### 4.6 Leadership

The pioneers, despite their imperfections and limitations, showed great strengths, contributing to the expansion and growth of the AG not only nationally, but also locally. Had it not been for their vision and strengths of their leadership, the AG would undoubtedly not have reached its identity as the fastest growing Evangelical/Pentecostal denomination. The strengths of the pioneers lie in their Christo-centric emphases, i.e., Jesus saves, Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit, Jesus heals, and Jesus the soon coming King, their Bible-centeredness, their mission-mindedness, and their indomitable conviction of the importance of Bible schools.

#### 5. Conclusion: Toward the Future

The healthy future of the Pentecostal movement is based on the strength of today. In the history of the growth of AG churches in the Northern Philippines, both divine and human resources are undeniable factors, as church growth is the work of both God and humans in the socio-economic and political contexts of the community. Therefore, in view of the New Decade of Harvest vision to plant 5,000 churches by 2010, we would do well to establish and implement the strategies and leadership qualities of the early pioneers.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Gary B. McGee, *People of the Spirit: The Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2003) with CD, hard, 661 pp., ISBN: 0-88243-099-8.

Gary McGee, long-time Professor of Church History and Pentecostalism at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri, has written the latest official history of this American Pentecostal denomination. *People of the Spirit* is unlike most denominational histories. The institutional and structural issues are muted, and it is certainly not a detailed analysis of statistics and the changing shape of the denomination. Although important events are cited, it appears that such data are brought in as inconspicuously as possible. Rather, McGee has sought to capture the ethos of this revival movement.

Immediately obvious to the reader is the large number of thumbnail sketches of individuals who represent the kind of persons who are the heartbeat of the movement. After all, most of the 12,000 churches in the Assemblies of God USA are small, averaging less than 100 members. Striking is McGee's reaching into the lives of lesser-known, ordinary people that he has selected, to express the inner reality of the movement. He has interviewed many people, and has allowed them to tell their own stories through a large number of direct quotations. He states in the introduction: "The founders of the Assemblies of God came from the working class. They were hardworking Americans who caught the vision of evangelizing the world in the last days before the second coming of Christ" (p. 11). This departure from the usual church history format gives an unusual personal charm to the book. To be sure, the prominent leaders of the denomination are given a proper place, but all the attention is not focused on these headliners.

The twenty-six chapters in the book are divided into six units. These units are arranged chronologically from the founding of the Pentecostal movement through the various epochs the author identifies as key markers. The serious reader is aided by a bibliography and recommended list of readings at the end of each chapter, so that topics, surfaced in the chapter that arrest the attention of the reader, may be pursued further. This, coupled with down-to-earth language and a strong narrative emphasis, makes this an attractive option, not only as a classroom textbook, but as a good choice for a teaching series in the local church.

McGee's special professional expertise lies in the study of the history of missions. The missionary passion that has dominated the Assemblies of God from its inception does not escape the author's

attention. The vibrancy of local church life is shown to be tightly coupled with a persistent sense of responsibility for world-wide missions. The first chapter, titled "Power from on High," demonstrates this by focusing considerable attention to the missionary impact of the Pentecostal revival (pp. 16-32).

In any religious organization, it is inevitable that problems and challenges will confront the church from time to time. To fail to acknowledge, at least the significant issues, would propel a denominational history into the category of hagiographa. McGee has not written a propaganda piece; rather, he has addressed some important controversies that have transpired within the fellowship without being distracted by these matters. A good example of this is discovered in Chapter 16, titled "Testing and Growth." The author provides the reader with an objective evaluation of how the denomination struggled with such issues as "The New Order of the Latter Rain," the "Healing Movement," and the fallout of this, and the fascination with "Prosperity" teaching (pp. 332-54). To be sure, McGee does not dwell on controversies that have burdened the denomination periodically, but he has done a reasonable job of keeping such matters in perspective. This gives the book a mark of authenticity.

A warm, personal, and highly readable book, this latest history of the American Assemblies of God will certainly have a large and appreciative following.

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Aldwin Ragoonath, *Preach the Word: A Pentecostal Approach* (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: Agape Teaching Ministry, 2004), paper, 239 pp., bibliography, ISBN: 097344680-3.

Preaching has always been central to the life of the church, and especially following the Reformation of Luther and Calvin. However, preaching takes on a different hue in the Pentecostal revival that has, and continues to bring about change to the entire church world-wide.

In his book *Preach the Word: A Pentecostal Approach*, Aldwin Ragoonath makes the assertion, "Pentecostal and Charismatic preaching is a type of preaching that is different from all other forms of preaching" (p. 1). He links this form of preaching back to Jesus and his apostles and in this book seeks to convince the reader of the uniqueness of the kind of preaching instinctive to the Pentecostal world.

His definition of Pentecostal is a classic view: those who have what he calls “a Spirit world-view” that includes “dreams, visions, revelations, curses demons roaming the world, spiritual guidance, angels guiding us, people speaking in tongues, miracles, exorcisms and things we cannot explain” (pp. 11, 31). For him, it is important that Pentecostals understand the difference this form of preaching is from other forms, for it is “through preaching that their doctrines and emphases are communicated” (p. 13).

The book covers a rather wide selection of topics meant to encourage those of Pentecostal persuasion. He begins with what is called Theology of Pentecostal Preaching in which he moves from the preacher and message to the traditional feature—especially of older Pentecostal churches—the altar service.

In his chapter on the History of Pentecostal Preaching, the author takes us back into the lives and sermons of those who were instrumental in the early beginnings of the Pentecostal movement, at the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles in the early 1900s. He provides an analysis of the way Parham and Seymour preached and how they handled the biblical text in their preaching. He also provides suggestions on how to go about building a sermon from a text.

In preparation for preaching at healing and deliverance services, he offers his logic as to the value of such services, along with organization of the services. From there he provides counsel on outlining sermons and their delivery.

Aldwin Ragoonath has obviously spent much time considering the importance of preaching to those who serve within the Pentecostal and Charismatic community. Throughout his writing, the author asserts that Pentecostals are not traditionally from educated classes: “Pentecostalism was born from working class people and reflects a simple view of the Word of God” (p. 89). With this in mind, his material may best refer to those Pentecostals who preach to people with a limited education.

I am grateful for the opportunity of reading and reviewing *Preach the Word*.

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