

# Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies

**Philippines Pentecostalism**

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

## 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

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<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.

The publication of this issue of the journal is made possible by the generous financial assistance of the Boys and Girls Missionary Crusade of the U.S. Assemblies of God. This fund has been made available by the Asia Pacific Regional Office of the Assemblies of God World Mission, Springfield, MO, USA. Rev. Russell Turney, the regional director, once served as the pastor of International Charismatic Service in Manila for many years before he assumed the current responsibility, which is referred to frequently in several articles in this issue. Thus, this assistance from Rev. Turney’s office has a special meaning for this special project.

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.

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