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THE PENTECOSTAL LEGACY: A PERSONAL MEMOIR¹

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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.² My

¹ 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.³ 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."⁴ 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

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

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

⁴ Sumrall, *The Dove and The Eagle*, p. 15.

miraculously by the power of God.⁵ 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....”⁶

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.⁷

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*.⁸ 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

⁵ Sumrall, *The Dove and The Eagle*, p. 15.

⁶ Sumrall, *The Dove and The Eagle*, p. 15.

⁷ Sumrall, *The Dove and The Eagle*, p. 12.

⁸ 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 meeting of Oral Roberts.

prophetic utterance before a handful of people, "I will build the biggest protestant church in Manila and the Philippines."⁹ 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."¹⁰ In 1956, the

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

¹⁰ 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,¹¹ 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.

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).

¹¹ “History of ATS” (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.¹² Additional researches were made by Menzies (*Anointed to Serve*)¹³ and by Blumhoffer of Harvard University (*The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism*).¹⁴ 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.

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

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

¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ Numerically, the movement has grown and the

¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

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

¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

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.

¹⁷ 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.”¹⁸

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

¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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

¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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.²¹

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.”²²

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

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

²¹ This “white paper” was presented to the Executive Officers of the PGCG 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.

²² 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 assemblies²³ 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

²³ "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.²⁴ 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 seminaries²⁵ 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

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

²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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,²⁷ but the Pentecostal dimension of Hodges made the difference.

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

²⁷ 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 States²⁸ 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

²⁸ Trinidad E. Seleky, “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.²⁹

²⁹ 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.