

# Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies

**Philippines Pentecostalism**

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

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

---

<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

<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

---

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 Kagalanggalangang 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

---

<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

---

<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

---

<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).

Balangué, 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

---

<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. Cappal, *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> Cappal, *International Assemblies of the First Born*, p. 24.

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

<sup>25</sup> Cappal, *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

---

<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.

---

<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

---

<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

---

<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

---

<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.