

# THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES

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## Early History and Development

### Pioneering Years

On Sunday morning, March 5, 1899, just barely a month after the first shot of the Philippine-American War (1899-1903) had rung out, a different type of drama unfolded at *Teatro Filipino*, home to Spanish plays and musicals, in Quiapo, Manila.<sup>1</sup> Taking center stage this time at the well-known theater was not a Filipino stage actor, but Bishop James M. Thoburn (1836-1922), the renowned American Methodist missionary from India. Thoburn intended to establish a Methodist Episcopal Church (hereafter MEC) mission in the Philippines, albeit on the coattails of American superior firepower, which ended almost four centuries of Spanish rule and suppressed Filipino aspirations for independence. Oblivious to the ongoing skirmishes between Filipino and American troops in the outskirts of the city, Thoburn, proceeded to hold a service that morning. In his diary he wrote:

At 9:20 A.M. I went to the theatre and found a dozen soldiers at the door and a few others. We went in and somewhat slowly over seventy persons came in and took seats in the main floor while from thirty to 50 Filipinos stood without the railing. Things moved slowly at first but when I began to preach the Spirit wonderfully helped. Seldom in my life have I felt preaching to be a luxury.<sup>2</sup>

The event quickly put into motion the birth of Methodism in the Philippines. The bishop's message was so moving that "Captain Plummer," a Manila resident of twenty years from Albany, New York, broke down into tears. The stevedoring businessman became the main benefactor and one of the founding members of what would later become the MEC "American Church" or Central Church. Also moved, despite language limitations, was an affluent Spanish-speaking Filipino who later invited Thoburn to preach in his home. Though the request was never granted due to the unavailability of an interpreter, it nevertheless underscored the character of early Filipino interest towards the new religion. While the bishop's appeal for a collection elicited embarrassed laughter from some in the audience, the amount they collected helped validate his plans. The ninety-two dollars, mostly foreign currencies, that filled the two hats that were passed among the audience reassured him that the "people were ready to support the work."<sup>3</sup>

While Thoburn's visit was the first-ever trip to the Philippines sanctioned by the MEC Missionary Society (later renamed Board of Foreign Missions in 1907), the official missionary-

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<sup>1</sup> James M. Thoburn, 5 March 1899, Diaries and Journals, 1857-1918, Allegheny College Library, Meadville, Pennsylvania. See also Homer C. Stuntz, *The Philippines and the Far East* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Pye, 1904), 420-21. Cf. Luther J. Oconer, "The Culto Pentecostal Story: Holiness Revivalism and the Making of Philippine Methodist Identity, 1899-1965" (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 2009), 66-69.

<sup>2</sup> Thoburn, 5 March 1899, Diaries and Journals.

<sup>3</sup> Thoburn, "Notes from Manila," 3; "News from Manila," *World-Wide Missions*, December 1899, 6. Thoburn's account is also corroborated in Arthur W. Prautch, "Beginning of Methodism in Manila," *GIAL*, February 1901, 59-60. Hereafter designated as *GIAL*.

sending body of the denomination, we must take into account three other MEC “pioneers” who preceded the bishop. On August 28, 1898, barely two weeks after Admiral George Dewey’s capture of Manila, Chaplain George C. Stull (1858-1933) of the Montana Conference inaugurated what he claimed to be the “first distinctive Protestant religious service” in the country although without the intent of organizing a Methodist Church.<sup>4</sup> Another MEC minister who came before Thoburn was Charles A. Owens (1857-1935), a former missionary from Liberia.<sup>5</sup> Hastily appointed by Bishop Charles McCabe during the Puget Sound Conference, Owens reported organizing a “Methodist Church” among the soldiers on November 24, 1898, preaching “more than forty times” and holding revival services in a borrowed tent attended by soldiers and some locals. The resulting conversions and baptisms from these efforts, however, proved to be short-lived, not only because of the temporary nature of troop deployments, but also due to the irregular nature of Owen’s appointment. He and his wife were sent packing home shortly after Thoburn’s visit.<sup>6</sup>

On December 17, 1898, another accidental pioneer who arrived in Manila, primarily to cash in on America’s new colony was businessman Arthur W. Prautch, the son of German immigrants from Wisconsin and former MEC missionary who had worked under Thoburn in Bombay. Converted under the preaching of famous evangelist Dwight L. Moody in Chicago in 1882, Prautch was recruited by the MEC for mission work in South India, where he would become known for his work among the Gujaratis.<sup>7</sup> Prautch’s twelve-year missionary career, however, came to an abrupt halt when he withdrew from the Bombay conference in 1897.<sup>8</sup> Thoburn later reinstated him as a local preacher, putting him and his wife in charge of pioneering MEC work in the city. The Prautchs, with the help of Chaplain Stull, oversaw the English service at the theater and later in a rented hall a few blocks away at Plaza de Goiti, which they named the “Soldier’s Institute,” a recreational center intended to keep American soldiers away from liquor and other temptations. Aside from Stull, among American Methodists who assisted the Prautchs were Jay C. Goodrich of the MEC Newark Conference and agent of the American Bible Society in Manila; E.W. Hearne, secretary of the Young Men’s Christian Association (hereafter YMCA) in Manila; and a number of military chaplains.<sup>9</sup>

Although Thoburn intended to grow MEC work in the Philippines initially around American soldiers and civilians, Filipinos entered the picture much earlier than he anticipated. On May 28, 1899, at the request of five Filipino Freemasons, Prautch and Chaplain Stull opened a Spanish service for them with the aid of interpreters. This was the beginning of the “First

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Stuntz, *Philippines*, 21-23; George C. Stull, “The Stull Letter,” *Journal of the Seventeenth Session of the Montana Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1903), 21-22.

<sup>5</sup> “Charles A. Owens,” *Official Journal of the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Eight Annual Session* (1936), 71.

<sup>6</sup> “Appointments,” *Journal of the Puget Sound Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Fifteenth Session* (1899), 23; Charles A. Owens, “From Manila,” *World-Wide Missions*, September 1899, 6; James M. Thoburn, “Bishop Thoburn’s Report,” *World-Wide Missions*, June 1899, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Van Buren Knox, *A Winter in India and Malaysia among the Methodist Missions* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1892), 23-26.

<sup>8</sup> *Official Minutes of the Sixth Session of the Bombay Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1897), 8, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Arthur W. Prautch, “Beginning,” 58-61; Francis W. Warne, *Light in the East: India, Malaysia, the Philippines Part II: The Philippine Islands* (Chicago: Missionary Campaign Library, 1900), 54-55; Dionisio D. Alejandro, *From Darkness to Light: A Brief Chronicle of the Beginnings and Spread of Methodism in the Philippines* (Quezon City, Philippines: United Methodist Church Philippines Central Conference Board of Communications and Publications, 1974), 19.

Filipino Church” (later to become Knox Memorial MEC). Among the first Filipinos to join these services were Don Paulino Zamora, a sea merchant, and his twenty-three-year-old son Nicolas Villegas Zamora (1875-1914). On August 6 the young Zamora, who once studied for the priesthood in Manila, eventually became the first Filipino preacher for the congregation. The young Zamora proved to be not only an eloquent preacher, but a crowd-drawer as the nascent congregation grew in numbers. Zamora, together with Prautch, soon opened seven preaching places in and around Manila where he labored with great success.<sup>10</sup> One of these stations was Malibay, where most of the people and their leaders became Methodists. On the recommendation of the *municipal presidente* (municipal mayor), the services were held in an old Roman Catholic Church damaged during the fighting between American and Filipino forces.<sup>11</sup> Another important point begun by Zamora was Pandacan, a suburb in southeast Manila, where a chapel was dedicated on August 12, 1900, the first Protestant edifice erected in the country.

When Thoburn arrived on March 6, 1900 for a second visit, there were already more than six hundred Filipinos who had already thrown their lot behind Zamora and, therefore, virtually stood on Methodism’s doorsteps, but without any designated clergy to administer the sacraments to them.<sup>12</sup> This was further complicated by the fact that the Presbyterians had already baptized some of the prominent families at the Institute, including the Zamora family a few months earlier.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, to address the enthusiastic advance of Filipino work and, most likely, to outflank the Presbyterians, Thoburn proceeded swiftly to seal Zamora’s status within the MEC.<sup>14</sup> A few days later, after organizing the first Philippine Islands Quarterly Conference of the Malaysia Annual Conference, he and his small band of Methodists licensed Zamora as local preacher, and after much discussion agreed to ordain him, although in an unusual manner. After arrangements made by Thoburn, the South Kansas Conference, which was in session at that time, acting on Thoburn’s request, voted to admit Zamora on trial, elect him to deacon’s orders under “missionary rule,” and to transfer him back to the Malaysia Conference. Hence, on March 10, 1900, Thoburn ordained Zamora, making him the first Filipino to be ordained into the Methodist ministry.<sup>15</sup>

On February 26, 1900, two weeks prior to Zamora’s ordination, four missionaries from the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society (hereafter WFMS) arrived: Anna Norton, Mary A. Cody, Julia Wisner, and Cornelia C. Moots. Dr. Norton was primarily tasked with medical work, but later pioneered Sunday School and Epworth League work in the city. Cody and Wisner were responsible for establishing a Methodist Girls School, and Moots was to serve as evangelist and temperance worker among American soldiers.<sup>16</sup> The women’s arrival also signaled the coming

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<sup>10</sup> Warne, *Light in the East*, 56-57; Prautch, “Beginning,” 60; Francis W. Warne, “Jottings from Manila II,” *Indian Witness*, 4 May 1900, 3.

<sup>11</sup> J. Tremayne Coplestone, *Twentieth Century Perspectives (The Methodist Episcopal Church, 1890-1939)*, Vol. 4 of *History of Methodist Missions* (New York: The Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, 1973), 196-197.

<sup>12</sup> Warne, *Light in the East*, 56-57; Prautch, “Beginning,” 60; Warne, “Jottings from Manila II,” 3.

<sup>13</sup> See James B. Rodgers, *Forty Years in the Philippines: A History of the Philippine Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1899-1939* (New York: The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1940), 32-33.

<sup>14</sup> See Thoburn, 6 March 1900, 13 March 1900, Diaries and Journals.

<sup>15</sup> See *Ibid.*; Cornelia C. Moots, 26 February 1900, Diaries: January-July 1900, Cornelia Chillson Moots Papers, 1899-1923, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey; *idem*, *Pioneer “Americanas” or First Methodist Missionaries in the Philippines* (Bay City, MI: Cornelia Chillson Moots, 1903), 26-28.

<sup>16</sup> Cornelia C. Moots, 26 February 1900, Diaries: January-July 1900; *idem*, *Pioneer*, 26-28.

of the first regularly appointed male missionaries and missionary couples from the Missionary Society. The first to arrive was Thomas H. Martin on March 26, 1900 who was briefly tasked to pastor the American Church and later to pioneer MEC work in the Northern Luzon provinces of Tarlac and Pangasinan. On May 9, Jesse L. McLaughlin and his wife Myrtle Ward followed. McLaughlin became the first presiding elder of the newly formed Philippine Islands District Conference, which was held on August 20-24, 1900.<sup>17</sup> By 1901, more reinforcements came from both the Missionary Society and the WFMS. Notable among them was Homer C. Stuntz who became presiding elder, and as pastor of the Central Church (American Church) led an aggressive campaign to build a permanent home for the congregation. On December, 1901, the Central MEC chapel was completed on the corner of San Luis and Nozaleda Streets in Ermita, an important section in the City of Manila.

Aside from the Soldier's Institute, the Bethel Seamen's Institute in Binondo, the Chinese section of Manila, also became an important hub for MEC revival work among soldiers and sailors. Moots claimed that Filipinos, often attracted by the sound of loud singing, usually crowded outside the building during their meetings.<sup>18</sup> But they did not have to wait for long as the enthusiasm generated by the meetings finally spilled over to Filipinos when Prautch opened a separate service for them by late 1900. Filipinos singing with "more spirit than tune" attracted passersby; "two soldier ushers invited them in, [and] the place was always packed with thirty or more at the outside door," Prautch recalled. But the testimonies proved to be more powerful than the singing. This was the case for Honorio Feliciano, a fisherman, who "entered one evening by hearing the singing as he was passing along the street. He was interested in hearing his own people testify in his own language, and this led to his conversion." Feliciano would later organize his neighbors at the fishing village of Bancusay, in the nearby suburb of Tondo, to build the St. Peter MEC, the second MEC chapel in the country. In addition to Feliciano, Bethel eventually produced about sixteen other prominent preachers for Tagalog Methodism, typically from the working class, who supplemented the work of Zamora in and around Manila. Included among them was former clerk Felipe Marquez, who later pioneered MEC work in northern Philippines; Luis Ocampo and his wife Nicolasa, pioneer preachers in Bulacan Province; Enrique Cortez and his wife; and druggist Jose Salamanca of Cavite.<sup>19</sup>

## Expansion and Growth

The work of Zamora and the other intrepid Filipino evangelists was pivotal in the spread of Methodism throughout Manila, and the nearby towns of Malabon and Navotas in the Province of Rizal. It is also important to note, that this early expansion was along the coastal towns and villages around Manila Bay. Although there were a few Filipino nobility or *principalia* who would convert to Methodism, most Filipino Methodists came from the lower middle class to lower class. A description given by Presiding Elder Stuntz in 1901 affirms this:

Our Methodist church has 1,100 probationary members in the city and vicinity of Manila, largely from among the poorer people, but they are self-respecting, industrious men and

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<sup>17</sup> Jesse L. McLaughlin, "Philippine Islands District," *GIAL*, February 1901, 61-62; William G. Fritz, "Evangelistic Work in Manila," *GIAL*, September 1901, 426-427; Alejandro, 24.

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<sup>19</sup> Arthur W. Prautch, "Report of the Soldier's Institute in Manila," *GIAL*, September 1901, 427-28; idem, "Reminiscences," *Philippine Christian Advocate*, 20 December 1902, 9. Hereafter designated as *PCA*.

women with trades and occupations, from which they support themselves. Many are fishermen. Several are printers. Some are gardeners and others merchants.<sup>20</sup>

On April 26, 1901, the MEC agreed to take the provinces north of Manila as a result of comity agreement with other Protestant bodies to divide the islands into territories.<sup>21</sup> Thus, Methodist expansion followed the Manila-Dagupan Railway, the mass transit that connected Manila and the Province of Pangasinan, a route that took twelve hours to traverse. From train stations, missionaries and their Filipino counterparts would also branch out to nearby towns and barrios that would welcome them.<sup>22</sup> By the end of 1901 and throughout the three years that followed, Methodist congregations have begun sprouting in the provinces of Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Pangasinan, Bataan, and Nueva Ecija. The most successful of these new churches were mostly accompanied by mass conversions, which came about through the influence of barrio (village) officials and patriarchs or matriarchs from the *principalia* class, mostly freethinkers disillusioned with the Roman Catholic establishment. Some of these freethinkers even began these congregations shortly after hearing the gospel preached in Manila and taking copies of the Bible and other evangelical literature back to their families and communities.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, there were a few congregations that sprouted from seeds sown by Presbyterian missionaries (prior to the comity agreement in 1901), independent missionaries, American soldiers, and colporteurs of the American Bible Society who ministered to them even before MEC representatives reached them.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, one will not be surprised to note that by 1904, the MEC in the Philippines after five years of existence, had already outpaced MEC membership rolls in Japan, Korea, Mexico, South America, and Africa, which had all been established decades earlier.<sup>25</sup> The 1904 General Conference also recognized this that it passed an enabling act organizing the Philippine Islands District of the Malaysia Annual Conference into the Philippine Islands Mission Conference. Bishop William F. Oldham, missionary bishop for Southern Asia presided over its first session on March 15, 1905. With fourteen full members—eleven missionaries and three Filipinos, the conference was also divided into two districts: the Manila District, which covered Manila, Rizal, Bulacan, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija and Bataan; and the Northern District, the predominantly Ilocano-speaking region in the country, which bordered from northern Tarlac, Pangasinan and all the way to Ilocos Sur and Abra.<sup>26</sup>

As it continued its phenomenal advance, the MEC also sought to consolidate its evangelistic push through the recruitment and training of indigenous workers. Hence, on August 25, 1903, the first Manila Bible Institute, a month long training institute, was launched. About

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<sup>20</sup> As quoted in “Notes on Missionaries, Missions, Etc.,” *GIAL*, September 1901, 432.

<sup>21</sup> Frank C. Laubach, *The People of the Philippines: Their Religious Progress and Preparation for Spiritual Leadership in the Far East* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1925), 204-06.

<sup>22</sup> Devins, 300-301; Willard A. Goodell, “From the Provinces,” *PCA*, 20 December 1902, 10.

<sup>23</sup> See Oconer, “Culto Pentecostal,” 88-90. See also, for example, what happened in Villasis, Pangasinan through the work of Teodoro Basconcillo in “Pangasinan,” *PCA*, 1 July 1903, 7. Another example is found in Alejandro, 51-52.

<sup>24</sup> For MEC congregations that trace their beginnings to the Presbyterian mission, see, for example, T. Valentino Sitoy, *Several Springs, One Stream: The United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Heritage and Origins (1898-1948)*, vol. 1 (Quezon City: United Church of Christ in the Philippines, 1992), 96-98; cf. “Notes on Missionaries,” 432. For congregations, influenced by American Bible Society colporteurs, see Jay C. Goodrich, *Bible Work in the Philippine Islands* (New York: American Bible Society, 1906), 12-14.

<sup>25</sup> Stuntz, *Philippines*, 453-54

<sup>26</sup> Alejandro, 59-60.

fifty licensed male local preachers from Manila and as far as Pangasinan participated.<sup>27</sup> This later paved the way for other Bible Institutes in the provinces, and was continued as an annual training event in the many years that followed. Clergy education was eventually institutionalized with the establishment of the Florence Nicholson Training School on October 11, 1905 at the mission house in Cervantes Street, Manila adjacent to the First Filipino MEC. Opening with three faculty members and five students, the school would later operate cooperatively with the Presbyterian's Ellinwood Seminary in 1907, and subsequently in the years that followed, with other seminaries to form the Union Bible Seminary (now Union Theological Seminary).<sup>28</sup> The training of women workers also was also of paramount importance to the blossoming mission, which, therefore, led the WFMS to open the Deaconess Training School to prepare young women for evangelistic work. Recruited from various MEC congregations in Manila and the provinces, ten teenage girls matriculated during the first school year, a modest beginning for what would later become the Harris Memorial Deaconess Training School (now Harris Memorial College, hereafter Harris).<sup>29</sup> Aside from Harris, the WFMS also established a similar and yet simplified version of Harris in the north, the Lingayen Bible Training School for Women in Lingayen, Pangasinan. It formally opened its doors on January 3, 1908 to students who were called to serve as "Bible women," mostly to support the expanding evangelistic work in the northern provinces.<sup>30</sup>

The emergence of training institutions meant to reinforce the evangelistic thrust of the denomination was not the only sign of its growth and advance, however. Methodists also actively engaged in social projects as part of their efforts to build rapport with, and subsequently, reach the masses with the gospel of Jesus Christ. On December 10, 1906, WFMS missionary Dr. Rebecca Parrish opened the Bethany Hospital and Dispensary, which occupied five rooms on the first floor of Harris in Sta. Cruz, Manila. The hospital was renamed the Mary Johnston Hospital when it relocated to Tondo on August 18, 1908. It also opened a School for Nursing that same year.<sup>31</sup> Aside from hospital work, another important aspect of Methodist missions in the country was its dormitories for high school and intermediate students. We should note that the MEC did not engage in education in the Philippines, as it typically did in other fields, because the American colonial government was already providing free education to the masses. The first dormitory to emerge was at Lingayen, Pangasinan in 1907, which was to serve as "Christian home" for boys attending the provincial high school. That same year, Harris also opened its facilities to seven girls attending schools in Manila, but was later discontinued. Several dormitories were later organized mostly in major centers in the north, in the towns of Tarlac, Lingayen, Dagupan, Aparri, Tuguegarao, and Ilagan, which proved to attract more converts to Methodism. Manila would follow suit in 1912 with the construction of a boys dormitory (later to

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<sup>27</sup> "Instituto Biblico," *PCA*, 1 September 1903, 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> See *The Florence B Nicholson Bible Seminary of the Methodist Episcopal Mission, Manila, P.I.* (Manila: The Methodist Press, 1907), 4-5; "Training School for Methodist Preachers," *PCA*, November, 5; Alejandro, 125.

<sup>29</sup> Liwliwa T. Robledo, "Gender, Religion and Social Change: A Study of Philippine Methodist Deaconesses, 1903-1978" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Denver, 1996), 72-74; cf. Winifred Spaulding, "The Deaconess Training School," *Third Annual Session of the Woman's Conference of the Philippine Islands' District of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1904), 64.

<sup>30</sup> Alejandro, 95.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-97; cf. *Official Journal of the Third Annual Session of the Woman's Conference of the Philippine Islands Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1907), 10-11.

become Rader Hall) on Isaac Peral St. and girls dormitory on Nozaleda St. (later transferred to Sampaloc to become the Hugh Wilson Hall).<sup>32</sup>

Philippine Methodism's continued to grow exponentially, and consequently, after nine years after the first MEC worship service in Manila, it reached another important milestone. On March 3, 1908, after having attained the required conditions set forth in the Book of Discipline, the Philippine Islands Missions Conference unanimously voted to become the Philippine Islands Annual Conference. By this time, there were already twenty-five clergy full members, eight of whom were Filipinos; seventeen probationary Filipino ministers; 526 local preachers; 84 local churches; and a constituency of 12,550 full members, and 15,052 probationary members from south Manila to Vigan and Aparri in the north.<sup>33</sup> By 1913, Filipino Methodists had already exceeded the combined membership of all the other Protestant denominations by more than ten thousand, despite being supervised by a much smaller missionary force.<sup>34</sup>

## Major Schisms

While Methodism in the Philippines experienced phenomenal success in its early years, it was, however, not immune from internal conflicts which affected its advance and helped shape its identity. Just a year after the formation of the Philippine Islands Annual Conference, a major schism ensued and at the forefront of this disaffection was the highly esteemed Nicolas Zamora, whom we have noted earlier was responsible for much of Tagalog Methodism's early advance. This dissension, however roots back to the founding of an indigenous missionary society in 1904 known as *Ang Kapisanan ng Katotohanan* (The Truth Society) by leaders from the Tondo Circuit, the most vibrant circuit in the Manila District. Intended as an indigenous version of the American MEC Missionary Society, the *Katotohanan* was composed of laymen who intended to carry the gospel into districts and towns where Americans could not go. Monthly collections of one peso from each of its members enabled the group to aggressively engage in missions by supporting two Filipino missionaries to the Province of Bulacan. Despite the society's positive implications for the mission and the accolades it received during its inception, missionaries in Manila, nevertheless, increasingly asserted control of the society's affairs in the years that followed. The group's sense of autonomy ran counter to the centralizing tendencies of the MEC mission.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the tenuous relationship came to a head two years later when the group threatened to bolt the church as protest against missionary control with their work. Bishop Oldham, however, appointed Nicolas Zamora to Tondo to pacify them.<sup>36</sup> Though Zamora was reported to have deterred the disaffection, his appointment to Tondo had an opposite effect.

Eventually, Zamora's nationalistic sentiments, and long-standing grievances against missionaries and mission policies, would coalesce with the Tondo groups' aspiration for ecclesiastical independence. This was further catalyzed by Zamora's sour relationship with

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<sup>32</sup> Alejandro, 109-110.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-88.

<sup>34</sup> See Anne C. Kwantes, *Presbyterian Missionaries in the Philippines: Conduits of Social Change (1899-1910)* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1989), 152-54.

<sup>35</sup> "The Growth of a Circuit," *PCA*, October 1904, 2-3. See also See Ruben F. Trinidad, *A Monument to Religious Nationalism: History and Polity of the IEMELIF Church* (Quezon City, Philippines: Evangelical Methodist Church in the Philippines, 1999), 113; cf. Alejandro, 44.

<sup>36</sup> See the report of Marvin A. Rader in "Manila District," *Official Journal of the Third Annual Session of the Philippine Island Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1907), 33.

Harry Farmer, his district superintendent, which led to a verbal confrontation in early 1909.<sup>37</sup> Thus, on the morning of February 21, 1909, before a congregation of several hundreds at St. Paul's Church in Tondo, Manila, Zamora bid farewell and announced from the pulpit that he was withdrawing from the MEC.<sup>38</sup> In a gathering with other Tondo-based local preachers and exhorters that same day, Zamora and two other ordained Filipino clergy decided to surrender their credentials and form the *Iglesia Evangelica Metodista en las Islas Filipinas* (The Evangelical Methodist Church of the Philippines, hereafter IEMELIF).<sup>39</sup> Almost all of the Tondo members and about a hundred more from the neighboring First Filipino Church joined them.<sup>40</sup> The movement initially spread among the Tagalogs and Spanish-speaking Filipinos, but soon met success in some churches north of Manila and even among Ilocanos in Nueva Ecija. Of the estimated thirty thousand Philippine Methodists at that time, approximately fifteen hundred joined the secession.<sup>41</sup>

Another major schism took place more than two decades later, the Stagg Schism. While independence issue was the cause célèbre for the Zamora schism, the Stagg schism centered on a moral issue. In 1928, Melecio de Armas, minister for sixteen years in the Manila District was accused of immorality. Initial investigation exonerated de Armas, but was revived by the Manila District two years later upon pressure by a Samuel W. Stagg, the young and popular pastor of Central MEC. The church, by this time, had become the "Central Student Church," an upscale congregation, which catered to Filipino students, intellectual elites and well-known government dignitaries. The ensuing investigation and controversies would pit Stagg against the senior missionaries. Stagg later dismissed the investigation as a "travesty," and proceeded to carry the fight in the court of MEC public opinion. He presented evidence and vilified "corrupt" missionaries and their Filipino allies through a series of mimeographed open letters, but not without irritating others and raising doubts as to his intentions.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, Stagg's mimeographed assaults did pay off. The case was elevated to the Annual Conference session of 1932 which finally found de Armas guilty of adultery and expelled him from the ministry. However, when de Armas' camp appealed the decision before the General Conference, its appellate court overturned the decision based on technicality.<sup>43</sup> In the ensuing fallout following the reversal, Stagg positioned himself as a champion of morality, working to "clean up" the mission as he unleashed vitriol against the senior colleagues.<sup>44</sup> While Stagg's attempts resulted

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<sup>37</sup> See William F. Oldham to Adna B. Leonard, 23 February 1909, *Oldham, W.F.*, Missionary Files, 1846-1912, United Methodist Church Archives – GCAH, Madison, New Jersey; cf. Richard L. Deats, "Nicolas Zamora: Religious Nationalist," in *Studies in Philippine Church History*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969), 335.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. "The Defection in the Philippines," *The Christian Advocate*, 29 April 1909, 7.

<sup>39</sup> Isaac B. Harper, "The Zamora Defection," *PCA*, March 1909, 3; cf. Richard L. Deats, "Nicolas Zamora," 335; cf. William F. Oldham to Adna B. Leonard, 23 February 1909.

<sup>40</sup> See Alejandro, 102.

<sup>41</sup> See Deats, "Nicolas Zamora," 336.

<sup>42</sup> The sequence of events surrounding the de Armas case is summarized in Romeo L. Del Rosario, "The Schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Philippines in 1933" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1982), 387-426. Among a number of documents from Stagg detailing the case, see, for example, Samuel W. Stagg to the Board of Foreign Missions, 2 February 1933, Stagg, Samuel Wells (Rev. & Mrs.), 1922-1933 Folder 5, Missionary Files (Microfilm Edition), United Methodist Archives Center - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

<sup>43</sup> See Del Rosario, 405-16.

<sup>44</sup> See Samuel W. Stagg to Ernest E. Tuck, 16 September 1932; "To the President and Secretary of the Annual Conference," TDS; Stagg Samuel Wells (Rev. & Mrs.), 1922-1933 Folder 5, Missionary Files (Microfilm Edition), United Methodist Archives Center - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.



in the recall of one senior missionary, they also backfired—the missionary board also recalled him. Notwithstanding, Stagg, with the support of his loyal members at Central, defied the order. He further widened his range of attacks against his bishop, Bishop Edwin Lee and the missionary board secretaries in New York.<sup>45</sup> He managed to remain in the country until the Annual Conference and take a prominent role in the events that were to unfold.

The full ramifications of the General Conference decision did not become apparent until the first day of the Conference session on March 22, 1933 in San Nicolas, Pangasinan when de Armas' name was restored to its rolls by order of visiting Bishop Herbert Welch, who presided in the absence of Lee. Subsequent motions and appeals made by Stagg and Cipriano Navarro, a well respected Filipino clergy from Pangasinan and one of Stagg's associates produced little results that day. By the fourth day, after hearing closing arguments on the matter, the die was cast when the bishop reiterated his incapacity to ignore the General Conference's decision. This led Navarro to announce his withdrawal and move "that we here and now declare ourselves independent from the American General Conference." Navarro and Stagg left, along with forty-three other ministers (from a total of 106 present), seventeen deaconesses and Bible women, four WFMS missionaries, and a number of lay persons.<sup>46</sup> This was the beginning of what would later become the "Philippine Methodist Church." The biggest fallout was at Central where a significant number of the congregants, under the leadership of Stagg and Navarro left to form what would later become the "Cosmopolitan Church."<sup>47</sup> Shortly after the conference, De Armas resigned, and this led more than half of the seceding ministers to return in the weeks and months that followed.<sup>48</sup> Not all followed suit, nevertheless, since de Armas' withdrawal did little to appease other deep-seated issues that had nothing to do with the moral issue, such as antagonism between seceding and loyalist missionaries, resentment of seceding nationals towards certain missionaries, infighting among nationals, and varied attitudes about autonomy, among others. The de Armas case was a perfect storm waiting to happen.<sup>49</sup> A year later, only nineteen clergy remained with the "New Movement," while the rest returned to the MEC. It was also estimated that the MEC lost more than sixteen hundred members to the schism.<sup>50</sup> On May 1948, the seceding denomination joined the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, United Brethren, Disciples, and other small Protestant groups to form the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (hereafter UCCP).

### **Philippine Methodist Evangelism and Holiness Revivalism**

Methodism's early success in the Philippines, however, did not happen in a vacuum. A number of interrelated factors endemic to Philippine society—and not found in other arenas—helped account for this phenomenal advance. First, the almost four centuries of Roman Catholicism in the country had instilled some form of Christianity among Filipinos and, although mostly drawn from Spanish medieval Catholic spirituality of the Iberian-type, admittedly eased

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<sup>45</sup> See Samuel W. Stagg to John R. Edwards, 5 January 1933; Samuel W. Stagg to the Board of Foreign Missions, 2 February 1933. For details, see Del Rosario, 426-51.

<sup>46</sup> Francisco S. Galvez, "Daily Proceedings," *Official Record Twenty-Sixth Session Philippine Islands Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1933), 10-28; Cf. Del Rosario, 460-74.

<sup>47</sup> Del Rosario, 475-85.

<sup>48</sup> Eusebio Manuel, "Why I Stay in the Mother Church," *Philippine Observer*, June 1933, 5.

<sup>49</sup> The "background causes" are summarized in Del Rosario, 640-50.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 510-13.

the way for Methodism and other Protestant missions to establish their work in the country. MEC missionaries, in due course, would overcome some of their biases against Roman Catholicism by acknowledging its contributions. “Catholicism with all its errors is vastly better than no God, no Savior, and no Holy Spirit,” one missionary once conceded in contrasting the conspicuously few conversions among Chinese immigrants in Manila with Filipino conversions.<sup>51</sup> Methodism was clearly not in uncharted territory.

Second, even before Methodism landed on Philippine shores in 1899, a pre-existing Filipino membership and leadership base predisposed to Protestant Christianity was already waiting to be organized. These were individuals who were critical or who fought against the Spanish colonial government and welcomed the disestablishment of the Roman Catholic Church in the country. Methodism essentially provided religious expression to these people to voice their repudiation of the old religion. Among them were a number of Manila-based liberal-minded elites or *ilustrados*, mostly *mestizos* (of mixed Filipino, Spanish, and Chinese heritage), who were no strangers to years of injustice often inflicted by Spanish clerics and/or had been awakened against Roman Catholic practices through exposure to the Bible since it was first smuggled in the country in 1889.<sup>52</sup> Paulino Zamora and his son Nicolas belonged to this group.<sup>53</sup> The elder Zamora was also among the five Freemasons who requested Prautch to open a Filipino service at the Soldier’s Institute in 1899, promising to “fill every meeting with Masons.”<sup>54</sup> Methodism also drew its initial membership and a great number of its local preachers from the Manila suburb of Tondo, where revolutionary ideals flourished prior to the Revolution of 1896. It was here where the Zamora schism in 1909 found its roots.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, Nicolas Zamora and a number of prominent preachers and lay members were former revolutionaries who fought during the 1896 Revolution against Spain, and some even saw action during the Filipino-American War.<sup>56</sup> While these individuals were patriots, the Methodist evangelistic meetings enabled them to express their newfound religious liberty and to repudiate any vestiges of Spanish hegemony in the country. Hence, when Methodism expanded northward beginning in 1900, its preachers were most successful in towns where the Aglipayan movement (later to become the Philippine Independent Church), a revolution within the Roman Catholic Church led by disillusioned Filipino clergy, was strong. Methodism found a large following in northern Tarlac, where the religious revolution was initially conceived.<sup>57</sup> Thus, reflecting on the movement’s

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<sup>51</sup> Daniel H. Klinefelter, “The Chinese Work,” *Official Journal of the Third Annual Session of the Philippine Islands Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1907), 60; Kenton J. Clymer, “Methodist Missionaries and Roman Catholicism in the Philippines, 1899-1916,” *Methodist History* 18, no. 3 (1980): 177.

<sup>52</sup> See Sitoy, *Several Springs*, 6-7; William Canton, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, 5 vols., vol. V (London: John Murray, 1910), 150-51.

<sup>53</sup> Trinidad, 48-52.

<sup>54</sup> Laubach, *People of the Philippines*, 180-81. Filipino Freemasons in Spain greatly supported anti-friar activities in the Philippines, and aided the ill-fated mission of the BFBS in Manila on 1889. See John N. Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement: 1880-1895: The Creators of a Filipino Consciousness, the Makers of the Revolution* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1973), 144-53.

<sup>55</sup> “The Growth of a Circuit,” 2-3.

<sup>56</sup> See Trinidad, 53-54; Arcadio G. Cabildo, “Maikling Talambuhay Ni Obispo Nicolas Zamora,” *Ang Ilaw*, January-September 1975, 4.

<sup>57</sup> See Daniel F. Doeppers, “The Philippine Revolution and the Geography of Schism,” *Geographical Review* 66 (1976): 163-69. For a comprehensive history of the movement, see John N. Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy: The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalist Movement, 1850-1903* (Quezon City, Metro Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1981).

contribution to MEC growth, Stuntz, acknowledged that the movement “loosens this fruit from the tree, and we gather it.”<sup>58</sup>

Finally, the above factors were further augmented by the homogenous nature of Philippine community life. The individual-centered message of salvation of evangelical Protestantism had to make way for the more communal “mass movement” or mass conversion to Methodism in a number of towns and villages or small communities called *barrios*. This pivoted mainly around the conversion of the *principalia* class or elite members of the community, mostly *mestizos* who carried the title “don” or “doña,” or those belonging to the few landed elite, as was the case in Central Luzon.<sup>59</sup> In Manila, the conversion of the town of Malibay, as mentioned in the previous section, to Methodism illustrates this point. When the *municipal presidente* (town mayor) and other officials turned Methodists, almost the whole town, about three to four hundred people, followed suit, even opening up the old Roman Catholic church their ancestors built for Methodist worship services.<sup>60</sup> MEC’s feat in Malibay would be repeated in a number of villages and a few towns north of Manila. For instance, after the conversion of Doña Narcisa Dimagiba on November 1901 through the preaching of Nicolas Zamora in Bancusay, Tondo, she began preaching to her neighbors in Atlag, a small fishing village in Malolos, Bulacan. Eight months later a chapel was dedicated, with about two hundred *barrio* folks having turned Methodist.<sup>61</sup> Methodism, nonetheless, scored its biggest coup in Central Luzon, in the town of Mexico, Pampanga, where *principalia* brothers Don Vicente and Don Mariano Cunanan were converted along with Mayor Tomas Lazatin, most of the town’s political scions and about a thousand people. The Cunanans and Lazatin were among the first licensed local preachers of Pampanga Methodism.<sup>62</sup>

Complementing this influx of membership was an evangelistic strategy consistent with Methodist heart religion, but, in most cases, engulfed in classic Protestant Reformation themes. In a country that never knew any form of Christianity except Roman Catholicism, Methodists pragmatically presented themselves more as Protestants than Wesleyans to easily distinguish themselves from Catholics. As standard staples encouraged among their preachers and adherents, anti-Catholic principles co-existed with, if not surmounted, Methodist essentials to help dictate early Filipino Methodist identity. Though Methodists retained their zeal for evangelism by heavily relying on street preaching, they vigorously preached, in most instances, the Reformation message of *sola fide* to counter long-held beliefs and customs of Roman Catholics. This was precisely what one missionary and a band of Filipino preachers did in a town in Pangasinan in 1905 when they preached “salvation and pardon through faith in Jesus Christ only,” which simply meant advocating a message of salvation by “direct religion without

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<sup>58</sup> Stuntz, *Philippines*, 495.

<sup>59</sup> See Brian Fegan, “The Social History of a Central Luzon Barrio,” in *Philippine Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy and Ed C. de Jesus (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1982), 97-98. See also Benedict R. Anderson, “Cacique Democracy in the Philippines: Origins and Dreams,” *New Left Review* 169 (1988): 3-33.

<sup>60</sup> Copplestone, 196-97; Stuntz, *Philippines*, 442-45.

<sup>61</sup> Nicolas V. Zamora, “Our Gospel Crusade in the Philippines,” *Christian Herald*, 22 July 1903, 610; “Narcissa,” *Woman’s Missionary Friend*, January 1909, 14; “Woman’s Conference,” *PCA*, April 1906, 8.

<sup>62</sup> “Mexico Methodist Church,” *PCA*, 1 August 1903, 9; Homer C. Stuntz, “Pampanga Province,” *Minutes of the Fourth Session of the District Conference of the Philippine Islands of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1903), 40; William A. Brown, “Report of W.A. Brown,” *Official Journal and Reports of the Fifth Annual Session of the Philippine Islands’ District Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1904), 29-30.

the mediation” of saints or priests.<sup>63</sup> Evangelistic passion often easily gave way to bellicose attacks against Roman Catholicism, and this has led more people to Methodism.

Although anti-Catholic polemics would persist among Filipino Methodists for years, Methodist missionary attitudes towards Catholicism, to some extent, improved over time.<sup>64</sup> Relative to this growing détente was a realization among missionaries of the need to shift from a crusade against Catholicism to a crusade against sin. In 1901, for instance, Stuntz complained that “the social life of the convert is beset with difficulties. Smoking is a universal habit. Women, men, and children all smoke,” and one affluent convert who even built an MEC chapel at his own expense was the owner of a local cockpit. “The remainder of the Sunday he spends at the cockpit gate taking his entrance money from the crowd that throng the places,” Stuntz lamented.<sup>65</sup> But in the years that followed, there was an increasing concern to raise the standards of membership from that of merely enrolling converts to that of “building them up towards righteousness.”<sup>66</sup> Such feeling ultimately reached its peak shortly after the Zamora Schism in 1909, which missionaries easily dismissed not only as misplaced jingoism, but also as a lack membership quality or true conversion among early convert. They felt that they were merely producing Protestants and not Methodists! Hence, this shift resulted in the vigorous promotion of holiness revivalism in the fabric of Philippine Methodist life and culture by bishops and missionaries who were significantly influenced by myriad manifestations of the Holiness Movement in the United States. Through time, a number of male and female missionaries and Filipino workers would essentially emerge as holiness evangelists in revival gatherings or “culto Pentecostal” (Pentecostal meetings), making impassioned appeals to their hearers to receive the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” as a source of spiritual empowerment and holy living. A number of prominent visiting Holiness evangelists from the United States also helped perpetuate this culture, among them was the famous Henry Clay Morrison, founder of Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. Pentecostal meetings helped revitalized the denomination and shape Filipino Methodist identity through the years. They persisted for decades until the Second World War when public meetings have been difficult to hold.<sup>67</sup>

Holiness culture pervaded Philippine Methodism during the period, that Filipino Methodists pronouncements regarding society mostly centered on morality issues or perceived public “evils” such as cockfighting and other forms of gambling, liquor saloons, tobacco use, dance halls, prostitution, and movie theaters. It was in this backdrop of high moral ideals that the Stagg Schism emerged. In the 1950s, the Pentecost language perpetuated by this *culto Pentecostal* culture would also result in a series of schisms and defections involving a number of Filipino Methodists who would embrace Pentecostalism as a result of the Assemblies of God healing revivals in Manila in the 1950s. In the past two decades, the same Pentecostal revival has made a come back through the influence of the Charismatic movement within the United Methodist Church (hereafter UMC) in the Philippines. The emergence of the Aldersgate United Methodist Renewal Fellowship (hereafter AUMRF), the only Charismatic renewal movement in a Philippine Protestant mainline denomination today, harkens back to this Pentecostal impulse, for example. Launched in 1992 by a group of United Methodist ministers and laypersons, which

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<sup>63</sup> Harry L. Farmer, “Street Preaching in Pangasinan,” *PCA*, October 1905, 11. Cf. Nicolas V. Zamora, “Solo á Jesus,” *PCA*, 1 July 1904, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Clymer, 177.

<sup>65</sup> Homer C. Stuntz, “Missionary Outlook in the Philippines,” *GIAL*, October 1901, 452.

<sup>66</sup> “Untitled,” *PCA*, November 1904, 2.

<sup>67</sup> See Luther J. Oconer “Holiness Revivalism in Early Philippine Methodism.” *Methodist History* 44, no. 2 (2006): 80-93; cf. idem, “Culto Pentecostal,” 102-108.

included future bishop Solito K. Toquero (now retired), the movement attracts more than a thousand Filipino United Methodists to its annual Aldersgate Conference in Baguio City.<sup>68</sup> Though the movement has increasingly attained mainstream acceptance and support from bishops in recent years, it continues, however, to spark new tensions that either leave churches divided over issues pertaining to liturgy and practice or result in the exodus of individuals or small pockets of Charismatic Methodists from the denomination.<sup>69</sup>

### **Developments in Methodist Worship: Inculturation in Worship and Music**

The inwardly-focused, pietistic and world-denying religiosity of evangelical Protestants did not hesitate to discard indigenous cultural expressions as being primitive, inspired by superstition and unchristian. Thus, the earliest forms of worship in Philippine Protestant congregations used hymnals from the mother churches in the United States, along with the organ, the piano, and occasionally, where a more mobile instrument was needed, the accordion. English hymns were translated into the local languages. Early Filipino Protestants were spiritually nourished by these hymns and they came to love them. Because of the importance of hymn singing to their meetings, Filipino Methodists have begun publishing hymnals with the release of the Tagalog hymnal in 1903 then followed by other editions in different dialects through the years. While we need to remember that the gospel hymns owed their appeal to a preceding indigenous Filipino musical culture “enriched” by the presence Iberian Roman Catholic sacred music,<sup>70</sup> they also gave something more than what their Catholic predecessors had given. Despite their reference to American or Western evangelical experience, the “heart religion” motifs of the hymns, which were mostly sung in the subjective or first person obviously appealed to Filipinos, who sang them with great fervor in their worship services. The hymns, especially when sung in the local vernacular, articulated not only their communal aspirations, but also their personal longings even while allowing them to connect to a higher power.<sup>71</sup> Thus, given the importance of hymn singing in their worship services and special meetings, one does not have to wonder why early Methodists were derisively compared to toads by their irritated neighbors. “Frogs have many friends, they sing quack, quack, quack all the time but who cares to hear them,” complained one woman to her Methodist husband.<sup>72</sup>

The order of worship followed traditional patterns of worship in most Protestant services—a prelude begins the service, followed by a call to worship, some type of introit, then congregational singing. If there is a choir, the choir will sing. Other churches also employ soloists. Sometimes a responsive reading from Scripture, or some credal affirmations like the Apostles’ Creed, or the Lord’s Prayer are recited. The sermon either precedes or follows the offertory which is accompanied either by singing or by instrumental music. Intercessory prayers sometimes with people coming to kneel at the altar rails may be included. Then more hymns are

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<sup>68</sup> See Jose L. Padang, *Primer for United Methodists*, 2006 ed. (Tarlac City, Philippines: Marion Walker Scholarship Foundation, Inc., 2006), 79-81. The IEMELIF Church also had a Charismatic schism in 1992 when 15,500 pastors and members left to form the IEMELIF Reform Movement (IRM). See Trinidad, 367-70.

<sup>69</sup> Oconer, “Culto Pentecostal,” 3-4.

<sup>70</sup> See Leo E. Rempola, “Christian Missionaries Enriching Philippine Music,” in *Supplement to Chapters in Philippine History*, ed. Anne C. Kwantes (Manila: OMF Literature, Inc., 2002), 3-4.

<sup>71</sup> Oconer, “Culto Pentecostal,” 132-133.

<sup>72</sup> As quoted in Wilhelmina Erbst, “Manila District W.F.M.S. Work,” *Woman’s Conference of the Philippine Islands Conference* (1912), 124.

sung, such as a hymn of dedication, followed by an altar call, then a closing hymn, the benediction, the recessional and a postlude. But while worship traditions imported from another cultural setting could be effective owing to the work of the Holy Spirit being able to break these barriers, when the native expressions are deemed foreign to one's spiritual home, a split occurs within the believers' psyche. Should they deny part of who they are in terms of their cultural identities or should they inculturate and maintain their integrity, belonging to their faith-family and social and cultural community at the same time?

In the 1960 and 1970s, this question was at the core of several liturgical reform movements not only in the Philippines but in various parts of the world where Christianity had been brought from Europe or North America and where the gospel needed to be transplanted in the native soil of those contexts. Gradually, the influences from this movement seeped into Protestant worship traditions. Guitar and other indigenous instruments gradually found their way in worship. Church poets and musicians came together to write lyrics to their own hymns and compose music to accompany those hymns. One of the early manifestations of this indigenization was the National Council of Churches in the Philippines' (hereafter NCCP) *Ang Pilipino Himnal* in 1974.<sup>73</sup> The Divinity School of Silliman University, a school founded by Presbyterians, and Congregationalists spearheaded the indigenization efforts mostly on musical themes from the Visayas and Mindanao regions. However, their latest hymnal produced recently was more broadly inclusive of other regions comprised by the UCCP. Also complementing the move to indigenized hymnody was the thrust to contextualize Protestant liturgy. The Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music (AILM) based at the Philippine Episcopal Church's Saint Andrews Seminary in Metro Manila, is at the forefront of this development. It provides professional training in church music, creative liturgy, worship in the arts, dance and theatre for worship leaders, not only in the Philippines, but also from other Asian countries. It continues to be a resource in the efforts to contextualize worship for Filipino Protestants.

In the 1970s the influence of Filipino popular music also found its way into Philippine church music, and consequently into Methodist worship. This began through the initiative of Far Eastern Broadcasting Company (hereafter FEBC), a non-denominational evangelical media ministry widely known for DZAS, its radio station in Karuhatan, Valenzuela. In 1978 FEBC launched its "Hymnody Project" to develop music that was "truly Christian and uniquely Filipino" with fifteen young Filipino musicians and composers participating. The project, consequently, resulted in the formation of *Papuri!* (Praise!), FEBC's attempt to offer an alternative to the Philippine pop music industry by producing songs articulating the evangelical faith.<sup>74</sup> A number of Filipino Methodists have contributed songs or have recorded songs with *Papuri* since its inception, most notable among them was Edward Granadosin, the son of UMC Bishop Paul Locke Granadosin. *Papuri*'s repertoire of songs have become a standard staple by choirs and solo performers in United Methodist churches from the 1980s through the turn of the century. United Methodist Arnel de Pano, a well-known contributor to *Papuri*, continues to be at the forefront of translating the idiom of pop music into forms for worship. His compositions are in Tagalog and English for individual and choral singing.<sup>75</sup> Another popular *Papuri* composer

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<sup>73</sup> See *Ang Pilipino Himnal* (Manila: National Council of Churches in the Philippines, 1974).

<sup>74</sup> See *Papuri!*'s Web site, "Papuri!," <http://febc.ph/papuri/> (accessed November 9, 2010).

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, YouTube video, "Dakilang Katapatan by Arnel de Pano," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljM9LYQFXOM> (accessed November 2, 2010). For some information on de Pano, see Online Registry of Filipino Musical Artists, "Arnel de Pano," [http://www.opm.org.ph/registry/artist\\_profile.php?artist\\_id=225](http://www.opm.org.ph/registry/artist_profile.php?artist_id=225) (accessed November 9, 2010).

and singer, Gary Granada, has written religious songs, some of which are included in the UCCP hymnal mentioned above. The United Methodist Church in the Philippines is at a beginning stage of producing their own music. In January 2008, they produced a CD titled “Filipino Methodist Hymnal Volume 1.”<sup>76</sup>

The influence of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement in popular evangelical culture has paved the way for the infusion of “praise and worship” music into the life of the church. Instead of the usual songs about God or songs that talk about evangelical faith experiences, as was common with the hymns, songs in the new genre are often sung directly to God, and are often distinguished by their simple lyrics and repetitive choruses. While songs by “praise and worship” famous groups and artists from the United States, England and Australia dominate the genre and are widely popular in the Philippines, original Tagalog praise and worship songs have also found popular support in recent years. In United Methodist churches, the increasing influence of the Charismatic movement via the AUMRF and its annual Aldersgate Conferences in Baguio City has brought praise and worship music into wider acceptance. Thus, it is now typical for most United Methodist churches in the Philippines and Filipino United Methodist congregations in diaspora to have a worship band. Most churches have also added a praise and worship section before the prelude in their Sunday worship liturgy. Other churches have also organized separate contemporary services to cater to young audiences. Methodist young people have also actively participated in the move to create original Filipino praise and worship songs for their generation. In 2008, the United Methodist Youth Fellowship in the Philippines (hereafter UMYFP) produced the CD titled “Awit kay Yahweh: Tugon ng Bayang Pinili” (Songs to Yahweh: Response of a Chosen Nation), a collection of original praise and worship entries submitted by UMYFP members all over the country.<sup>77</sup>

## **Philippine Methodism in Philippine Society**

### **Methodist Institutions Moves Forward**

**Harris Memorial College.** The Deaconess Training School founded by Winifred Spaulding in 1903 would become the Harris Memorial College on July 1969 after getting government accreditation to offer Bachelors of Arts degrees in Kindergarten Education and Christian Education a year earlier.<sup>78</sup> Today, graduates of Harris who become commissioned deaconesses of the church continue to fill the needs of local congregations for directors of Christian education, student centers or social centers, for teachers of nursery and kindergarten age children, and for all types of *diakonal* work in church and society demanded of them.

**Union Theological Seminary, Philippines.** Founded in 1907, as we pointed out earlier, the Union Theological Seminary is an ecumenical theological formation center jointly sponsored by the UCCP and the UMC. The seminary campus has since transferred to Pala Pala, Cavite is situated in 240 acres of land planted with 1,000 mango trees, an organic vegetable and herbal

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<sup>76</sup> See Pinoy Methodist in the 21st Century, “Filipino Methodist Hymnal vol. 1,” <http://homerwesley.blogspot.com/2008/01/filipino-methodist-hymnalm-vol-1.html> (accessed November 9, 2010).

<sup>77</sup> See Philippines Central Conference Web site, “Awit Kay Yahweh,” <http://umcphilippines.org/awit-kay-yahweh-cd/> (accessed November 2, 2010).

<sup>78</sup> Robledo, 210-211.

gardens and a seedlings nursery. Its rich resources make UTS an ideal site for programs aimed at heightening awareness of and developing the churches' leadership in the area of environmental stewardship and sustainable agriculture.

**Mary Johnston Hospital.** Mary Johnston Hospital is still the only Methodist hospital operating in the Philippines. Located in Tondo in Metro Manila, it is surrounded by urban poor communities which benefit from the free medical care, healthcare education and nutrition program that the hospital provides. A reputable school of nursing is attached to the hospital and it serves as a training center not only for nurses but also for doctors and other medical professionals.<sup>79</sup>

**Kapatiran-Kaunlaran Foundation Incorporated (KKFI).** Formely called Methodist Social Center, KKFI was started in Manila by missionary Madaleine Klepper in 1950 at the Hugh Wilson Hall, with milk-feeding for children, boy and girl scouts, tutoring classes, sports activities and camping, as well as livelihood skills training for mothers and young women.<sup>80</sup> Ministry with the students was a central focus of the center through its dormitories, recreational activities and fellowship among students. The Student Center at KKFI became a venue for forums among students who were wrestling with the ideological, social and ethical implications of living under Martial Law (1972-1980s). KKFI also has a ministry among street children, establishing the Gilead Center in the outskirts of Manila, providing them with lodging, meals and education.<sup>81</sup> Responding to needs of churches for skilled managers, KKFI provides management training workshops as well as training in community development for pastors and other church leaders.

## Higher Education

Under Spanish colonial rule, education was for the higher social classes. In an archipelago where more than one hundred languages and dialects were spoken, Spanish was the language of the elite. Under United States colonial policy, popular education was introduced to the masses, with English as the medium of instruction. It was for this reason, as we have pointed out earlier, that missionaries did not engage in educational work for the general population during the beginning decades of Methodism in the country. Education only became an urgent missional priority for the Methodist Church only after the Second World War. The first Methodist high school established in 1945 right after World War II was Thoburn Memorial Academy in Sanchez Mira, Cagayan. Other schools followed suit in this northern region of the Philippines – Eveland Memorial Academy, Northern Philippines Academy, and Aldersgate College. In Manila, Bethel Girls' High School was also started in 1945 at Knox Memorial Methodist Church. In 1946, Philippine Christian College (now University) was founded as an

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<sup>79</sup> See Kathy L. Gilbert, "Filipino Church Ministers to Destitute Families," *United Methodist News Service*, 18 October 2007, "Struggling Hospital Continues to Offer Free Health Care," <http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=1wL4KnN1LtH&b=2429867&ct=4537095> (accessed November 2, 2010).

<sup>80</sup> See KKFI Web site, "Sustaining 59 Years of Faithful Partnership in Service," <http://kkfikapatirankaunlaranfoundation.blogspot.com/> (accessed November 2, 2010).

<sup>81</sup> See Kathy L. Gilbert, "Filipino Church Ministers to Destitute Families," *United Methodist News Service*, 16 October 2007, <http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=1wL4KnN1LtH&b=2789393&ct=4521015> (accessed November 2, 2010).



ecumenical collaboration of the Methodists and the UCCP. Also in 1946, Wesleyan University-Philippines, established in 1946, continues to provide quality education at reasonably affordable rates. On the east coast of Luzon, Aurora Wesleyan College opened with the help of missionaries Richard and Eva Wehrman, while on the west, on the island of Anda, Pangasinan, Asbury College was set up. On the southern island of Mindanao, in the 1960s, other schools were founded including Greene Academy, and more recently, the Southern Philippines Methodist Colleges.<sup>82</sup>

### **Martial Law Years.**

The Martial Law years (1972-1981) and the succeeding period when President Ferdinand Marcos continued to rule the Philippines until his escape to Hawaii in 1986 was a time of turmoil and polarization not only in Philippine society, but also within the churches. The United Methodist Church in the Philippines was not exempted from the ideological, political and theological divide that characterized the social dynamics and discourse at the time. Both clergy and lay were split between progressives and conservatives, between those who stressed the prophetic ministry of protest and support for people's resistance against the dictatorship, and those who did not consider political activism as an appropriate Christian response to the situation.

Thousands were arrested and put in prison; hundreds disappeared, many of whom were never heard from again, including some of the churches' youth leaders. Military operations bombed villages where insurgents were suspected to be hiding. Despite government control of media, reports of military atrocities, torture and intimidation of political prisoners circulated. As the repression grew, so did the protest movement, with tens of thousands converging to rally and demonstrate even on short notice.

Ecumenical coalitions formed to advocate for human rights, civil liberties and basic rights of citizens. The NCCP set up its own Human Rights Desk, as did the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. They worked with the Roman Catholic human rights task forces to pursue human rights cases, including those involving their own priests, pastors, and lay people who had been arrested, tortured or who had disappeared. The United Methodist Church did not have such a formal structure set up, but several of its members participated in the ecumenical formations that spearheaded this work.

The assassination of opposition leader Senator Benigno Aquino when he landed in Manila on August 21, 1983 after being in exile in the United States galvanized the middle and more affluent classes of Philippine society. In February 1986, some of the top military leaders defected to the side opposing Marcos; the Roman Catholic leader Cardinal Jaime Sin called upon the people to support them, leading to the People Power uprising. Reports leaked out of Marcos losing the support of the United States, forcing the departure of the Marcos family and their closest supporters in February 1986.<sup>83</sup>

Senator Aquino's widow, Corazon Aquino became the president of the Philippines upon Marcos' departure. She reinstated democratic processes but failed to respond to the demands

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<sup>82</sup> See *New World Outlook* article, "Methodist-Related Schools in the Philippines: Preparing Leaders and Educating the Poor," [http://gbgm-umc.org/global\\_news/full\\_article.cfm?articleid=2246](http://gbgm-umc.org/global_news/full_article.cfm?articleid=2246) (accessed November 2, 2010).

<sup>83</sup> For a comprehensive account on the 1986 People Power uprising, see for example, Lewis M. Simons, *Worth Dying For* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1987).

of the poor for social justice and a more equitable distribution of wealth. A series of presidential elections brought the likes of the following into power: military leader Fidel Ramos, the first Protestant to be so elected in this heavily Catholic country; Joseph Estrada, a former movie actor; Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, daughter of a former president of the Philippines, and an economist; and most recently, Noynoy Aquino, the only son of Benigno and Corazon Aquino.

### **Philippine Methodists, Social justice and interfaith work**

Despite the post Martial Law re-establishment of democratic institutions, the Philippines continues to be cited by international human rights organizations, including the United Nations for its poor human rights record. Bishop Solito Toquero, who has since retired, was perhaps the strongest United Methodist bishop to take a lead on human rights advocacy, in collaboration with Roman Catholic and other Protestant bodies.

Besides the human rights issue, the United Methodist Church in the Philippines has focused a lot on the situation of overseas migrant Filipinos and their families, and the plight of indigenous tribes and communities.

**Overseas Migrant Workers.** Everyday thousands of Filipinos leave for work overseas where they hope to earn levels of income that they could not obtain in their own country. Skilled and unskilled workers, as well as professional Filipinos work in various types of work in the Middle East, as well as in Europe, North America and in Australia. It is not unusual for teachers and professionals to end up working as domestic helpers in Hong Kong, in Singapore and in other countries. Cited as “heroes” by the Philippine government, the dollar remittances sent by overseas Filipino workers to the Philippines is helping to prop up the Philippine economy. But the separation of spouses as well as of parents from their children have detrimental effects on the family, causing many social, emotional and spiritual problems. The Davao and Manila episcopal areas, in particular have put strong emphasis on this ministry especially among the families left in the Philippines. On the other hand, this Filipino diaspora has also provided a unique opportunity for the United Methodist Church to venture into starting new congregations among these communities abroad.

**Indigenous communities.** While most Filipinos born in the Philippines will claim to be indigenous to the Philippines, there are communities that are more uniquely indigenous in terms of their relationship with their ancestral land, their customs and traditions, their rituals and religious beliefs which they have retained despite the Hispanization and Americanization processes in their colonial past.<sup>84</sup> These communities tend to be marginalized from the mainstream society. Indigenous peoples constitute almost 16% of the Philippine population. Many challenges face them including displacement from their ancestral domains through intrusions by commercial logging, mining and agribusiness ventures, as well as government

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<sup>84</sup> The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) identified four elements that distinguish indigenous peoples from the rest of the national population, namely: (1) their special relationship with their ancestral lands; (2) the conservation, to some extent, of their vernacular languages, traditional social and economic institutions, and cultural and religious practices; (3) their subsistence-oriented economies, and (4) their self-identification as distinct societies and others’ perception of them as such. See UNDP document, “UNDP and Indigenous Peoples: A Practice Note on Engagement,” Microsoft Word document, United Nations Development Programme, New York, NY, [http://www.undp.org/partners/civil\\_society/indigenous/docs/ipp\\_policy\\_english.doc](http://www.undp.org/partners/civil_society/indigenous/docs/ipp_policy_english.doc) (accessed November 10, 2010).

projects such as tourism development and social forestry programs. These forces have destroyed their culture and severely affected their socio-political and economic practices. Policies and laws that mainly benefit foreign investors such as the Mining Act of 1995 have wrought havoc on the lives of these communities. A March 27, 2006 Rural Poverty Portal report of the World Bank identified the IPs as the poorest of the poor in the country.

All three episcopal areas of The United Methodist Church have instituted ministries among indigenous communities. The main emphases of these ministries are: livelihood and community development, children's education, congregational development and advocacy especially in regard to their right to ancestral domain. Some members of these communities, such as the Aetas in Luzon and the Bagobo tribe in Mindanao have produced pastors and deaconesses who are now serving in their own communities.

**Muslims and Philippine Methodists.** In the southern island of Mindanao, armed conflicts have erupted between government forces and Islamic separatist groups for many decades. But the origin of the conflict may be traced over a period of several hundreds of years. Historically, Islam was spreading from the countries south of the Philippines upwards to Mindanao and even as far north as Manila through traders and religious teachers. But Spanish colonization in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries contained that spread. However, despite having fought the Muslims in Mindanao for over three hundred years, Spain was unsuccessful in driving them out as they were able to do with the Moors in Spain. Racially, linguistically and culturally, the Philippines share the characteristics of the Malay world in southeast Asia. Considering the fact that they were never subjugated by Spain, Muslims in the Philippines have resented the "Filipino" designation since that name derives from the name of the Spanish monarch, Philip II after whom the Philippines was named.

The American colonial administration in the Philippines used the experience and tactics used in the war against Native Americans to "pacify" the Muslims in Mindanao, and were a bit more successful. According to a University of the Philippines history teacher, Ed Maranan, the U.S. Army devised a special weapon for this purpose: "the Colt .45 automatic pistol is said to have been crafted for the specific purpose of stopping the fierce Moro warrior dead in his tracks in his headlong attack against the foreign intruder."<sup>85</sup> The colonial strategy of the U.S. government cited by Ed Maranan's article included: 1) a series of migration programs for the peasants of Luzon and the Visayas islands, which gave land to these landless people but in the process took away ancestral lands that belonged to the Muslims and the indigenous tribes; 2) the introduction of large scale investments by American and Filipino businesses; and 3) the creation of a bureaucracy led by Christian natives, with the help of some Muslim elite families.<sup>86</sup>

It was in the context of the migration programs that Methodism came to Mindanao. Between 1920 and 1938, Ilocanos from northern Luzon arrived in Mindanao in quest of land. In 1952, Mindanao became an extension of the Northwest Philippines Annual Conference. In 1955, the mission became the Mindanao Provisional Annual Conference. Between 1955-1965, there was rapid growth in Methodist membership, leveling off in the 1980s. Now, the Davao Episcopal Area is made up of five annual conferences that covers not only Mindanao but parts of Luzon island in the north (the Bicol region), as well as the Visayas islands in central Philippines.

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<sup>85</sup> Ed Maranan, "Christians, Tribals, Moros," in *Rice in the Storm*, eds. Rebecca C. Asedillo and B. David Williams (New York: Friendship Press, 1989), 96. The Spanish used the word Moro to describe the Muslims in the Philippines, based on what they called their enemies in Europe, the Moors.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

While there have been many local dialogues and programs involving Muslims and Christians in Mindanao, such as through the Bishops-Ulama organization, a 2007 conference on peace building involving Muslims and United Methodists was a significant breakthrough.<sup>87</sup> In that conference, both parties signed a covenant pledging to act together to bring a peaceful end to human rights violations; to continue to hold peace dialogues; to education of members of local churches and masjids, especially children, about each other's faith; and to understand and respect each other's religious practices.

### **Philippine Methodism And Other Churches**

Methodists have always been ecumenical in outlook and orientation. They were among the earliest leaders of the ecumenical movement. This was true in the Philippines during the incipient stage of the ecumenical movement there.

**Relationship with the Roman Catholic Church.** But the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Protestant churches in the Philippines was rocky in its beginnings, as described above. Philippine church historian T. Valentino Sitoy, Jr. noted that early Protestant attempts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were thwarted by the Catholic colonial authorities in the Philippines in order to preserve "Catholic unity." While the Dutch had brought Protestantism to Indonesia as early as 1605 and had a flourishing Reformed Church mission in Taiwan from 1624 until 1662 when they were ousted; and while the British and American Protestant missions had begun in Canton (now Guangdong) in China in 1807, and from there spread its mission among the Chinese in Singapore, Java and Bangkok, it was only in 1903 when Protestantism could gain a foothold in the Philippines as a result of United States victory in the Spanish-American War in 1898.<sup>88</sup>

Antagonism and suspicion between Protestants and Catholics eased with the passage of time especially after the Second Vatican Council. Interestingly, ecumenical ties were strengthened in the Marcos years when Protestant and Catholic progressives developed alliances to oppose the dictatorship, uphold human rights, and support the aspirations of the poor masses for economic and social justice. The spirit of solidarity engendered by a common prophetic witness cemented personal and institutional ties that have gone deeper than what occasional ecumenical prayer breakfasts could ever strive to accomplish.

**Comity Agreement Among Protestant Missions.** It wasn't too long after Commodore Dewey defeated the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay on May 1, 1898 when American mission boards began to make plans to open mission work in the Philippines. Concerned about not repeating mistakes made in other mission fields which were characterized by costly rivalry and competition among themselves, a conference called by the Presbyterians was held on July 13, 1898 in New York City. Baptists, Methodists, Episcopal, Congregational and Reformed foreign

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<sup>87</sup> See Kathy L. Gilbert, "Muslims, United Methodists pledge to work for peace," *United Methodist News Service*, 24 July 2007, <http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=1wL4KnN1LtH&b=4611913&ct=4171843&notoc=1> (accessed November 2, 2010).

<sup>88</sup> T. Valentino Sitoy, Jr. "Comity and Unity," *Tugon* 9, no. 1-2 (1989): 2-3.

mission boards in the United States and Canada participated in this conference where they drew up an agreement on the most effective and equitable distribution of the territory. Subsequently, on April 25, 1901, "The Evangelical Union of the Philippine Islands" was formed for the purpose of bringing about "a spirit of comity, unity and cooperation" among its constituent members. The union was made up of the Presbyterian Mission, the Methodist Mission, the YMCA, the British and Foreign Bible Society and the American Bible Society. Later, the United Brethren, the Baptists and the Christians [Disciples] also joined.<sup>89</sup>

The comity agreement initially assigned to the Methodists the following provinces: Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, Bataan and Zambales; and to the United Brethren, the provinces of La Union, Ilocos del Norte and Ilocos del Sur. Later changes were made to this arrangement, including adding the provinces of Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya and Cagayan to the Methodist mission.

Needless to say, this agreement was not always easy to adhere to. After the Second World War, the influx of conservative Protestant missions which did not recognize the comity agreement, and the unresolved frictions among the denominations themselves were among the factors that led to the demise of the Comity Agreement.<sup>90</sup>

**The National Council of Churches in the Philippines.** The present NCCP had undergone several transmutations in its colorful history. From a council of representatives of churches, missions, and religious agencies called the National Christian Council formed in 1929, it metamorphosed into the Philippine Federation of Evangelical Churches in 1938. The Federation was an organization of churches that served as a venue of cooperation among them while keeping alive the ideal of a wider organic union. Finally in 1963, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines was inaugurated no longer with the intent for an eventual church union, but mainly as an instrument of interchurch cooperation and fellowship.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 120.