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THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PHILIPPINE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD AND THE ROLE OF EARLY MISSIONARIES¹

Trinidad E. Seleky

1. Philippine District Council of the Assemblies of God

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

1.1 Leland E. Johnson

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴ Johnson, *I Was a Prisoner*, p. 9.

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

1.2 Council Organized

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

1.3 Initial Growth

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵ Johnson, *I Was a Prisoner*, pp. 10-11.

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

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

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

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

1.4 War

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. Missionary Outreach

2.1 Mountain Province⁶

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.2 Eastern Visayas

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

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

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

2.3 Western Visayas

Warren B. Denton and his wife⁸ heard of the need of missionaries in Panay Island, Philippines from Glenn Dunn and his wife, who visited the island in 1940. Ten years later, when the door to missionary service closed in South China, the Dentons went to Panay Island. Their first eight

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.4 Iloilo

The Olsens¹⁰ were half-way through their itinerary in preparation to go to Indonesia when they were asked by Missions Secretary, Noel Perkin, if they would be willing to go to San Jose, Antique to supply for the Dentons while they were home on furlough. On March 12, 1953 the Olsens arrived in the Philippines. As they drove through Iloilo City en route to San Jose, God impressed on their hearts that they should pioneer a work in the third largest city of the Philippines. In a year they moved to Iloilo City.

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

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

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

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

2.5 Negros Occidental

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.6 Manila Area

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

Filipino minister, helped in the pioneer work. Lester Sumrall¹² came in July, 1952, and took over the work. He at once made it clear that he came to establish a Pentecostal church in the city of Manila. The people did not believe him as he pictured to them the beautiful church he would build in the city. Times and surroundings were very discouraging but Sumrall “wrestled with God” in prayer and believed God without doubting. On his first Sunday night service forty were present, the fourth Sunday, ninety. At the end of the year there were 423 in Sunday school. During Thanksgiving week in 1952, Evangelist A. C. Valdez, Jr. was invited for meetings held at the San Lazaro Race Track. Thousands went through the prayer line to receive help from God. Many were saved and healed and 359 candidates were baptized at the close of the meetings. Attendance at Glad Tidings Revival Center increased.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.7 Bicol Region

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

2.8 Mindanao

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

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

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

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