

The catholicity of the episcopal church in the Philippines

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9. The Catholicity of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines

Winfred B. Vergara, *The Episcopal Church in the Philippines*

Historically, catholicity emerged out of the context of disharmony and conflict in the community of faith, not from global Christian unity. Existential conflicts, religious and political ferments, schisms and factionalism, and reformation and counter-reformation have defined the church in its catholicity in every corner of the world, not least in the Philippines.

The Roman Catholic version of Christianity came to the Philippines in the sixteenth century in the context of Spanish colonization. Combining the sword and the cross, Spanish *conquistadores* and Roman Catholic friars secured these islands and subjected them to both the king of Spain and the pope. For almost four hundred years (1521 to 1898), Las Islas Filipinas (named in honor of King Philip II of Spain) were a colony of the Spanish Empire and extension of the Roman Catholic Church.

This dual approach of Hispanization-Catholicization was effective in subjugating the natives with a minimal amount of bloodshed, but on the whole it was an invasive disruption of the natural order of societal development and nation-building. Before the coming of Ferdinand Magellan in 1521, the native inhabitants were already engaged in trade and commerce with Indian, Chinese, and Arab traders. With regards to culture and religion, pre-Spanish Filipinos believed in *anitos* ('deities') organized under one Supreme Being, called *Bathala* by the lowlanders and *Kabunian* by the highlanders. Politically, they were on the way to developing inter-island connectivity, shown in the confederation of Madyaas in the Western Visayan islands. The pre-Spanish Filipinos were thus already on the road toward becoming a nation, without the prodding of Spanish colonization (Vergara 16).

The colonization-catholicization imposed upon the Philippines bore the same ambiguity as that of Westernization-globalization imposed on third-world nations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While it brought Christianity and European civilization, it also destroyed the nascent cultures and traditions of a peace-loving people. Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama, speaking in 1975 at the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi, said of Westernization-globalization:

If Western civilization were simply a demonic monster, then what we ought to do is to have a “program to combat western civilization.” The fact of the matter is that western civilization is not simply a demonic monster; it is an ambiguous monster. It has a paradoxical wounding and healing effect upon the other civilizations it comes in contact with. It combines both guns and ointment. (Paton 23)

Spanish colonization as a whole aborted and fractured the natural evolution of pre-Spanish Philippines. When the Spanish invaders conquered the islands of Leyte, Cebu, and Samar, they employed the classic European strategy of *divide et impera* (‘divide and rule’), pitting inhabitants of one island against another. Native settlers who had formerly lived as *Barangays* (named for their inter-island boats) began to distrust and fight against each other. After the death of Magellan at the hands of native chief-tain Lapulapu in the Battle of Mactan, various other expeditions (those of Loaisa, Cabot, Saavedra, Villalobos, and Legaspi) were authorized by Spain to conquer and secure the Philippine Islands for the Crown of Spain and the Pope of Rome.

Spanish settlers introduced the *encomienda* system as they had in the many Latin American countries that they had earlier colonized. Spanish *conquistadores* were granted “trusteeship” over the natives they conquered and their land. This system resulted in slavery of the natives as well as various kinds of feudal aggrandizement – land-grabbing, exploitation, and other abuses. Natives loyal to the *encomienderos* obtained their patronage, but those who resisted were subjected to persecution and dispossession of their lands and properties. The Spaniards commonly exacted tribute and forced labor from the natives, whom they called *Indios*, likening them to the Mayans, Incas, and Indians of Mexico and the Americas. The Spaniards also kept the Filipinos fragmented by teaching the Spanish language only among the *caciques* and *illustrados* (rulers and professionals) and by forming a sharp cultural and educational divide between the rich *hacenderos* (landowners) and the poor *sacadas* (plantation workers).

For three centuries, intermittent native rebellions took place in various localities, but they never succeeded in eliminating Spanish colonization because of the collusion between the colonial state and church. Military might and religious pacifism joined together; political and ecclesiological structures converged to colonize the mind and the spirit. As the Spanish government enacted and enforced the law, the Roman Catholic “friarocracy” made sure that parishioners accepted it and acquiesced to Spanish rule. The Spanish religious orders (Dominicans,

Franciscans, Jesuits) preached to the masses about submission to authorities and acceptance of poverty while accumulating “papal lands” for the Roman Catholic Church. In many cases, they were directly involved in the tobacco industry and in conditioning the minds of the masses to pay government-imposed fines, taxes, and forced labor. The two novels of Dr. Jose Rizal (*Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*) indicted the Spanish friars’ immorality and abuses and their instrumentality in exploiting the poor.

Finally the long-awaited national revolution broke out on August 28, 1896, with the “Cry of Balintawak” led by Andres Bonifacio. Even after the death of Bonifacio and the internal power struggle in the Katipunan, the revolution against Spanish colonial government went on for two years, finally ending with the triumph of the forces under General Emilio Aguinaldo. On June 12, 1898, Aguinaldo proclaimed the independence of the Philippines in Kawit, Cavite. Aguinaldo was also declared the first president of the first Philippine Republic.

The revolution put an end to almost four centuries of Spanish sovereignty over the Philippine Islands, but the first Philippine Republic was short-lived. Without telling Aguinaldo and his men, the government of Spain signed a treaty with the United States ceding territorial rights over the Philippines. Signed on October 1, 1898, the Treaty of Paris enabled the United States to take possession of the Philippines. In exchange for ceding its Philippine territory, Spain received a payment of \$20 million from the United States.

The Filipino revolutionaries felt betrayed by the Treaty of Paris. So when the American occupation forces arrived, the Aguinaldo government resisted the new colonizers. The Philippine-American War, which began on June 2, 1899, when a drunk Filipino soldier was shot by a soldier of the American Army on San Juan Bridge in Manila, ended on July 4, 1902, with the surrender of General Aguinaldo and his men in Palanan, Isabela, and the dissolution of the first Philippine Republic. This brief but costly war sealed the fate of the Republic and altered the Filipino cultural landscape. Filipinos had to adjust to new colonial masters as American imperialism took over from Spanish colonization. Americanization brought about the introduction of English, separation of church and state, disestablishment of the Roman Catholic Church, and introduction of the American style of democracy. The US granted independence to the Philippines on July 4, 1946, in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Americanization and Birth of a Filipino Church

The major rallying cry for unity among the nationalistic Filipinos began with the martyrdom of three Filipino priests: Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora. These three had agitated for the Filipinization of the clergy and the secularization of the parishes, which were dominated by orders of Spanish friars. Their campaign for religious reforms was not only directed at the church and its religious orders but also at the colonial government that protected the abusive friars. Perceived as a threat to the establishment, the three priests were unjustly implicated in a mutiny of Filipino workers in a Cavite arsenal. After being found guilty on trumped-up charges, they were sentenced to death by garrote and executed on February 17, 1872. Their martyrdom inspired the national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, to lead a propaganda movement and to work for religious and political reforms. Dr. Rizal was martyred in the same place as the other three, *Bagumbayan* (now Rizal Park in Manila). The martyrdoms motivated the masses to form the Katipunan, the revolutionary movement that spearheaded the Philippine Revolution of 1896–1898.

The vision of the Katipunan was to see the Philippines become a free and independent nation enrolled in the world family of free and independent nations. This vision was aborted with the coming of the Americans, who instead of safeguarding the sovereignty of the Philippine Republic seized the islands as their own possession. Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain), opposed the treaty in the *New York Herald* on October 15, 1900:

I have read carefully the treaty of Paris, and I have seen that we do not intend to free, but to subjugate the people of the Philippines. We have gone there to conquer, not to redeem. It should, it seems to me, be our pleasure and duty to make those people free, and let them deal with their own domestic questions in their own way. And so I am an anti-imperialist. I am opposed to having the eagle put its talons on any other land.¹

In effect, the aspiration of the Katipunan for the Philippine Republic was nipped in the bud with the coming of the Americans, but it was only one part of Filipinization, the political vision. The other part was the religious aspiration of the Katipunan to see a catholic church of Filipinos, by Filipinos, and for Filipinos. Their political dream was not fulfilled, but their “struggle for religious freedom” continued (Whittemore chap. 16). This aspect of the vision succeeded with the birth of La Iglesia Filipina Independiente. Filipino

¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_twain#cite_ref-56, acc. 28 Feb. 2010.

historian Teodoro Agoncillo called the IFI “the only tangible product of the Philippine Revolution of 1896–1898” (Agoncillo and Guerrero 108).

Proclaimed on August 3, 1902, at Centro de Bellas Artes in Manila by labor leader Don Isabelo Delos Reyes, Sr., the IFI chose Father Gregorio Aglipay as its first Obispo Maximo. Aglipay was a Roman Catholic priest who had served as military vicar general in Aguinaldo’s revolutionary army. He was a staunch nationalist and a leader in the Filipinization Movement in the Roman Catholic Church.

The IFI assumed a nationalistic stance, signified by its motto, *Pro Deo et Patria*. With the leadership of Aglipay and Delos Reyes, the IFI became a *de facto* substitute for the failed first Philippine Republic. Under American rule, the Filipino people could not sing their national anthem in public, so they came to the IFI churches and, in their shelter, participated in the *Balintawak Mass* (Vergara 99). In this contextualized mass, the altar was draped in the Filipino flag, and the national anthem (“Lupang Hinirang”) was sung as the bells rang and the sacraments of bread and wine were elevated.

The birth of the IFI as a Filipino church independent of Rome captured the imagination of the Filipino masses; within a year as many as thirty percent of Roman Catholic parishes had converted to the IFI. In Batac, Ilocos Norte, Aglipay’s home town, almost all the people turned “Aglipayan.” In parishes across the country, congregations drove out their Spanish priests and replaced them with those appointed by Aglipay. In Pandacan, Manila, for example, when the parish priest preached against Aglipay, the women parishioners drove him out and camped in the church to prevent him from returning. They waited for Aglipay to appoint a priest before resuming services.

The IFI as a reformed, indigenous catholic church grew rapidly until 1906, when the Roman Catholic Church finally unleashed its Counter Reformation and sued the IFI over possession and occupation of parochial buildings and cemeteries. Ruling in favor of the Roman Catholic Church, the US Supreme Court ordered the IFI to return these church buildings and papal properties. Dispossessed of their houses of worship, the faithful members of the IFI underwent humiliation and extreme struggles for survival, rebuilding from scratch and wandering in a theological wilderness, seeking their legitimacy as a Filipino catholic church. Their amazing perseverance under fire from the Roman Catholic Counter Reformation and relentless theological assault was ultimately rewarded on April 7, 1948, when the Episcopal Church (ECUSA) bestowed on the IFI the “gift of apostolic succession” and consecrated three IFI priests as the first IFI bishops. Later, in 1961, the two churches signed the Concordat of Full Communion.

This political and religious historical development provides the context for the catholicity of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines (ECP), a sister church of the IFI and daughter church of ECUSA. Discussion of ECP's catholicity is especially significant today, as after more than a hundred years of being a missionary diocese, it has achieved full autonomy as a province of the Anglican Communion as a self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating Christian denomination, co-equal with the IFI, the Episcopal Church, and the Roman Catholic Church.

The Episcopal Mission in the Philippines

The seeds of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines were planted from the margins of Philippine society at the turn of the twentieth century, within the vortex of rapid socio-cultural and political change, a transitional milieu signaling the end of the Spanish colonialism and the advent of American imperialism. In the same manner that Spanish colonization brought Roman Catholicism, American imperialism brought Protestant Christianity to Philippine shores. American missionaries who came to the Philippines were also agents of American imperialism.

As the American occupational forces were rearranging the political and military landscape of the post-Spanish Philippines, American Protestant missionaries fanned out on various islands to mark their mission fields and drew up plans to establish their mission headquarters. The separation of church and state under the American neocolonial government unleashed a new religious freedom for Filipinos long oppressed by the Spanish friars. The fields were ripe for harvest. The schism that had led to the IFI had broken the monopoly of Roman Catholicism over the Filipino faithful as well as providing opportunity for American missionaries to offer their denominations as alternatives. As one observer said, "The *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* shook the Roman Catholic tree and the Protestant denominations were picking up the fruits that fell" (Vergara).

Against this background of religious opportunism and cultural adventurism the mission of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines took shape. Unlike its Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Unitarian counterparts, the Episcopal mission was directed neither to proselytize Roman Catholics nor to compete with the IFI but to evangelize the non-Christians, those who had not been reached by Spanish missionaries and who were not served by these other churches. Credit for the thrust of the Episcopal mission goes to Charles Henry Brent, the first Episcopal missionary bishop to

the Philippines. At the first formal conference of Episcopal missionaries, held in Manila on January 3, 1903, Brent defined his mission:

Our function as a Church is not to win all the people we can to ourselves or to spread a thin coat of "Episcopalianism" over the entire archipelago. Rather it is to bear our witness and to do our work thoroughly at carefully chosen centers which will become in time spheres of influence for large sections of the country where the need is greatest. . . . It is unchristian to "set up an altar against another altar." With this in mind, we should set out to evangelize in areas where Christianity had not penetrated. (Botengan)

Brent and the Episcopal missionaries set their sights on four fronts: the American forces and expatriates settled in Metro Manila, the non-Christian Chinese immigrants in Manila's emerging Chinatown, the non-Christian tribal Igorots in the Mountain Province of Luzon, and the non-Christian Tirurays and other indigenous tribes in Muslim-dominated Mindanao. The first recorded Episcopal Church service in Manila was conducted on September 4, 1898, by Chaplain Charles Pierce, who organized a congregation of the Anglo-Americans who had come with the first occupation forces. Work among the Chinese immigrants in Manila began in 1901 through the efforts of another military chaplain, John Marvine, who baptized fifteen Amoy-speaking Chinese just before his regiment was sent to China to suppress the Boxer rebellion (Malecda 24).

The seminal work of these two chaplains formed the basis for ECU-SA's development of a Philippine Episcopal mission. Acting on a testimony presented by Bishop Frederick Graves of Shanghai, on October 11, 1901, the Episcopal General Convention voted "to create the Philippines as a Missionary District" and elected Brent, then rector of St. Stephen's Church in Boston, as its first missionary bishop (Malecda 24).

Upon his arrival in Manila on August 24, 1902, Brent immediately set out to introduce American life to the Filipinos. With a substantial amount of money, he established a settlement house in Tondo, Manila, where Filipinos were given lessons in sewing, writing, and singing. A kindergarten was opened, and an American Army nurse, Clara Thatcher, began operating a dispensary in the same house. This was the beginning of Brent's "three-legged strategy of mission" – churches, hospitals, and schools: evangelism, medical services, and education.

The three-pronged strategy, directed to the spirit, the body, and the mind, would dominate almost all mission stations of the Episcopal Church. In Bontoc, Mountain Province, the Rev. Walter Clapp sent a Bontoc con-

vert named Pitapit to the US to study medicine. After completing his studies, Pitapit returned to the Mountain Province and became an outstanding physician and pioneering church leader. A similar development took place in 1904, in Sagada, where the Rev. John Staunton, an engineer-priest, established a printing press, which provided funding for St. Andrew's Training School; a dispensary, which became St. Theodore's Hospital, and a chapel, which later became St. Mary's Church.

The Baguio-Benguet Mission started a year before the Bontoc Mission. In December 1902 Brent sent Staunton there. He established the House of St. Mary the Virgin, later to become the Church of the Resurrection and then the Cathedral of the Resurrection. From the Baguio-Benguet Mission, a school for general education, primarily for Igorot children, was started. Because it opened on Easter of 1906, it was named Easter School.

While the missionary enterprises in Manila and the Mountain Provinces were great successes, the mission in Mindanao was more challenging. Like the Igorots of the Mountain Province, the Muslim Filipinos in Mindanao had for centuries resisted Spanish Catholicization. But unlike the Igorots, who had welcomed the American missionaries, the Filipino Muslims did not. Islam was already a well-developed religious system in the Philippines when the Spaniards came. Every attempt by Roman Catholic missionaries to convert the Muslims had been met with rejection and sometimes armed resistance. They were not about to change their stance in the American era. Realizing the futility of trying to convert Muslims to the Episcopal Church, Brent focused his attention on a mission of witness by opening a school for Muslim children in Zamboanga (later Calarian School) and establishing a dispensary that later became Brent Hospital. The Episcopal mission expanded from Zamboanga to Cotabato for a mission to the Tirurays and to other areas of Mindanao and Zulu.

Brent's most daring project in Mindanao was the "roving dispensary" (Malecda 26). It was a boat named *Peril*, which traveled from shore to shore, from island to island, with nurses providing medical care to local residents. Many Muslims were attracted to this ministry of compassion. Unfortunately, on April 2, 1917, when the US was drawn into World War I, Brent was invited to be the chaplain of the US Expeditionary Force in Europe. After Brent left the Philippines, the *Peril* Project, the Zamboanga Hospital, and the School for Muslim Girls that he had started all closed.²

² Brent later became an advocate for ecumenism and interfaith unity and was one of the pioneers of the Faith and Order Conference, a WCC precursor.

Filipinizing the Episcopal Mission

In the history of the Episcopal mission in the Philippines, racism and paternalism intersect and foreign rule and local empowerment collide. Just as it took forty-six years (1900–1946) for the American government to allow Filipino self-government, “it took almost four decades for [the Episcopal Church] to produce its first Filipino clergymen and more than half-a-century to produce its first Filipino bishop.”³ The journey for Filipino autonomy was long and hard. The reason? “The local people were not yet ready.” It took two world wars to make American missionaries see the need for empowerment of the local clergy.

The departure of Brent from the Philippine mission left a deep hole to fill, but it also ushered in the need to train and prepare for eventual takeover by the native clergy. This process began during the time of the second missionary bishop, Gouverneur Frank Mosher. In 1932 Mosher opened the Sagada Training School for Lay and Clergy Ministry. It became the forerunner of St. Andrew’s Theological Seminary. Among its first students were Eduardo Longid and Mark Suluen.

On October 13, 1937, the ECUSA House of Bishops elected Robert Wilner as suffragan bishop of the missionary district. In his first address, he said that the most urgent missionary work in the Philippines would be the “establishment of native ministry” (Malecdan 27). In 1938, the name Philippine Episcopal Church was adopted in place of the Missionary District of the Philippine Islands. True to Wilner’s promise, on January 25, 1939, three graduates of Sagada Training School – Longid, Suluen, and Albert Masfere – were ordained deacons. These three young men from the Mountain Province became the first Filipino clergy of the PEC (Malecdan 27). In 1940, Mosher’s successor, Bishop Norman Spencer Binsted, ordained Longid, Suluen, and Masfere as priests.

A major breakthrough in native empowerment in the PEC happened during WWII. Because of the presence of American military bases in the Philippines and Japan’s “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” the Japanese Imperial Army invaded the Philippines and occupied the country from 1941 to 1944, interning all American missionaries, including Bishop Binsted. With no foreign bishop and no monetary support from the United States, the life and work of the Philippine Episcopal Church were left in

³ episcopalchurchphilippines.com/ecp 4, acc. 27 March 2010.

the hands of the three native priests. PEC historian Bishop Edward Malecda has commented “At no other time in the history of this Church was it truly autonomous” (Malecda 27).

When World War II ended in 1945 with the surrender of Japan, Binsted repatriated all the missionaries who had survived the Japanese concentration camps. Only he and the Rev. Harry Burke remained to lead the work of post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation and to resume missionary tasks with the help of the native clergy. While digging through the debris of the Episcopal Cathedral and Bishopric in Manila, destroyed by Japanese bombing, Binsted discovered land titles, deeds, and stock and bond certificates belonging to the cathedral chapter. From their sale, Binsted purchased a large piece of land in Quezon City, which came to be called Cathedral Heights, later the seat of PEC’s national offices.

Following his predecessors’ three-legged approach to mission, Binsted built the Cathedral of St. Mary and St. John, St. Andrew’s Theological Seminary, St. Luke’s Hospital, and Trinity College of Quezon City (now Trinity University of Asia). Together these institutions became the show-piece of the Episcopal mission in the Philippines. From the convergence of these post-war missionary actions Binsted set in motion the accelerated progress of training and eventual local takeover of leadership. In March 1957, he was replaced by Bishop Lyman Ogilby, who worked to strengthen local leadership.

On February 2, 1959, Benito Cabanban, from the Southern Philippines, was elected and ordained as the first Filipino bishop. In the same year, Eduardo Longid from the Northern Philippines was also ordained bishop. In the succeeding years, Constancio Manguramas, Richard Abellon, Sr., and Manuel Lumpias were also ordained bishops. The Filipinization of the Philippine Episcopal Church had begun.

The empowerment of native clergy leadership accelerated the growth of the church and strengthened its resolve to become an independent province in the Anglican Communion. In June 1978, its National Convention approved a proposed constitution and canons, and in May 1982 it proposed a “Covenant with ECUSA” to signify its goal for autonomy. In June 1985 its National Commission on Liturgy began to develop a Philippine Church Book of Common Prayer, and in September 1985, the PEC was given preliminary constitutional autonomy by the ECUSA. In May 1989, a special National Convention adopted the constitution and canons and elected Bishop Richard Abellon, Sr., as the first Prime Bishop of the

autonomous province. Finally on May 1, 1990, almost a hundred years after the first Episcopal service in Manila in 1898, a new province of the Anglican Communion emerged in Asia: the Episcopal Church in the Philippines (ECP).

From the Margins to the Mainstream

The inauguration of the ECP as an autonomous province on May 1, 1990, and the installation of Prime Bishop Abellon signified the coming of age of Filipino Episcopal Mission. This moment was also the beginning of the struggle ahead for financial autonomy. Third-world mission churches founded by Western and European colonialists often attain their independence by degrees of separation. Often the culture of dependency and co-dependency is deeply ingrained in the psyche of the sending and receiving bodies and in the yoke of benevolent paternalism and patronage embedded in its missionary structures.

For the ECP, the struggle to become financially independent was even more daunting than that to achieve official autonomy. At the time of its establishment as a province, sixty percent of its operational revenues came from the Episcopal Church's annual grant subsidy. From the time of Prince Bishop Abellon (1990–1993) and Prince Bishop Narcisco Ticobay (1993–1997), full financial autonomy seemed like a dream. The election on March 15, 1997, of the Most Rev. Ignacio C. Soliba as the third prime bishop of the autonomous province became the turning point in the ECP's quest for financial self-determination. Soliba was known for being courageous, determined, and blunt. His colleague and seminary classmate, the tenth Obispo Maximo of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, the Most Rev. Thomas Millamena, has said, "What Soliba says is what he really feels; he holds nothing back." With Soliba's leadership, the ECP declared that "by the year 2007, we envision [the ECP] to be a renewed church, fully self-supporting and reaching out to proclaim God's love in the far reaches of the nation" (Journey). This was a bold statement, affirming a commitment to end grant subsidy from ECUSA by December 2007. By 2004, the ECP was more than midway into the period of Vision 2007 but still relied on foreign subsidies for about 14% of its total budget. At that time, the ECP had exhausted every possible means of income generation and of local contributions. Floyd Lalwet, ECP legal counsel, recalls the critical moment in 2004:

Rather than raise the hand of surrender in its commitment to end subsidy by 2007, the ECP went the opposite way. Instead of negotiating for an extension of the annual grant, it made a decision to effectively end subsidy by the end of December 2004. The ECP's Executive Council resolved that, starting January 1, 2005, [the Episcopal Church] subsidy, which still had three years to run until December 2007, shall no longer be used for budgetary operations but will instead be added to the ECP's Endowment Fund. . . . Strong opposition was raised against this move as it would place most dioceses in a very serious deficit mode. But the ECP went on, boldly, with Soliba saying "If we must die, we die early so that if we resurrect, we resurrect early." (Journey)

What followed in 2005 was like a miracle. All the fears of incurring huge deficits, being unable to pay clergy and lay workers' salaries, and needing to suspend expansion works turned out to be unfounded. The ECP not only survived the grim prognosis of financial bankruptcy but ended up with a surplus. Effectively, the ECP achieved full financial autonomy from its mother church on January 1, 2005 – two years before its official deadline.

The Uniqueness of ECP and Its Contribution to Catholicity

What is unique in the development of the ECP is that the church that began at the margins of Philippine society has succeeded in mainstreaming itself into national and universal Christendom. If there is a similarity, therefore, between the IFI and the ECP in Philippine history, it is this: the IFI was the product of the mission to the poor and the oppressed Christian Filipinos, while the ECP was the product of the mission to the lost and marginalized non-Christian Filipinos. The IFI emerged from the revolution against Spanish colonization in the lowlands; the ECP emerged largely from the empowerment of the American mission in the highlands.

As a branch of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, the ECP currently has around 150,000 members who are predominantly Igorots, the people who were once demonized by Spanish colonialists as, in the words of Igorot Mayor Thomas A. Killip, "half-naked natives, wearing g-strings, eating dogs and cutting off the heads of their enemies."⁴ These valiant tribes, who had never bowed to Spanish invaders, were victimized even by mainstream Filipino society as being uncivilized simply because

⁴ Killip's message, "Transformed by the Word: Transforming the World: The Episcopal Church in the Philippines 1901–2001," was part of a year-long centennial observance and commemoration, from Luzon to Mindanao.

they retained their indigenous cultures and traditions. The original word *Igolot* ('from the mountains') was bastardized to Igorot to signify the people's supposed inferiority, backwardness, or ignorance. This bigotry became ingrained in the consciousness of the mainstream lowland Filipinos, who themselves had suffered the Spaniards' derogatory label of *Indios*. In the 1950s, the first Filipino Secretary General of the United Nations, Dr. Carlos P. Romulo, wrote in his book *Mother America*: "The fact remains that the Igorot is not Filipino and we are not related, and it hurts our feelings to see him pictured in American newspapers under such captions as, 'Typical Filipino Tribesman'" (Romulo 59).

This remark ignited massive protest demonstrations, with Romulo's effigy burned in various rallies. Romulo tried, to no avail, to save face by claiming that he had meant it in technical terms (i.e., because they were not colonized by Spaniards, the Igorots were not technically considered Filipinos). A national consciousness emerged among the post-Hispanic, post-American Filipinos in understanding the Igorot communities as part of the new mainstream Philippine society. Much of this awakening can be traced to the ECP, whose superb institutions of learning, human, and Christian services, such as Trinity University of Asia, Brent Schools, Easter School, St. Luke's Hospital School of Medicine and Nursing, St. Andrew's Theological Seminary, and the Cathedral of St. Mary, are predominantly staffed or led by Igorot Episcopalians.

Brent, the ECP's founding bishop, also sowed the seeds of reconciled ecumenism when he became one of the organizers of the first world conference on Faith and Order in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1927, the forerunner of the World Council of Churches. His experience in the Philippines, particularly among the Igorots, aroused his strong concern for visible Christian unity:

The unity of Christendom is not a luxury, but a necessity. The world will go limping until Christ's prayer that all may be one is answered. We must have unity, not at all costs, but at all risks. A unified Church is the only offering we dare present to the coming Christ, for in it alone will He find room to dwell.⁵

The WCC, created on August 23, 1948, later branched out into such organizations as the Christian Conference of Asia and various national councils of churches. It is a fitting testimony to the legacy of Brent that in 2007

⁵ "Charles Henry Brent Missionary Bishop (27 March 1929)," satucket.com/lectionary/Charles_Brent.htm, acc. 28 Feb. 2010.

the WCC welcomed the Rev. Rex Reyes as the first Filipino Episcopalian to hold the title of General Secretary of the National Council of the Philippines. Reyes is an Igorot.

The formation of the WCC from the disparate Anglican, Protestant, and Orthodox churches must have influenced the world's largest Christian body, the Roman Catholic Church, in 1962 to call its own ecumenical council, the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (Vatican II).⁶ Long known for its counter reformation, inquisition, and exclusion of non-Roman Catholic enemies, in Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism the Roman Catholic Church now referred to Anglicans, Lutherans, and various Protestant Christians as "separated brethren." The *aggiornamento* ('renewal') that Vatican II began is best remembered for the liberating words of Pope John XXIII—"It is time to open the windows of the Church to let some fresh air come in" (O'Sullivan 17) – and his adherence to the axiom "In matters essential, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all matters, charity."⁷

The era of Eurocentric and colonial Christianity has come to an end. Christianity has become a planetary faith, and the church of Jesus Christ is present throughout the world in the diversity and plurality of languages, peoples, and nations. The first Pentecostal voices heard in Jerusalem were those of Galileans, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and Arabians, of people from Rome, Crete, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and Libya. In the twenty-first century, those languages are multiplied a hundred times over. Catholicity is inclusivity and diversity reconciled in, by, and through the lordship of Jesus Christ. Avery Dulles has written:

Catholicity demands that we accept Jesus as Lord, not because God demonstrably had to come to us in this way, but because he has in fact willed to make himself present in this wandering rabbi of first-century Palestine. Jesus Christ is, so to speak, the supreme concrete universal, for in the particularity and contingency of his human existence the plenitude of divine life is made available to all who will receive it. (Dulles, Catholicity 9)

⁶ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Vatican_Council, acc. 28 Feb. 2010.

⁷ The phrase *in necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas* probably comes from a 17th-century treatise by someone using the pseudonym Rupertus Meldenus ("Meldenus, Rupertus," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson, et al., 12 vols. [New York: Funk, 1910] 7:298).

On this manner of unconditional acceptance, the ECP exemplifies the supreme concrete universal Christ in the particularity of the Philippine experience. Coming from the culture of marginality, ECP moves toward the mainstream of catholicity and participates in the common task of Christian inclusivity. Bishop Brent wrote this now widely used prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, who didst stretch out thine arms of love upon the hard wood of the Cross, that all men everywhere might come within the reach of thy saving embrace: So clothe us with thy Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know thee to the knowledge and love of thee; for the honor of thy Name.⁸

The outstretched arms of love are the image of the church catholic, a church that continually reaches out to the ends of the cosmic reality. The church catholic is both *pleroma* ('fullness') and *soma* ('body'), both *sofia* ('wisdom') and Mother Church. The church achieves its full catholicity in a historically palpable way by evangelizing all peoples, praying and laboring so that the entire world may become the whole People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Toward this task of proclaiming the Good News in Christ, the ECP has a special role to play because of its experience in missionary history. The ECP can speak on behalf of the marginalized – cultural minorities, women, gays, youth, immigrants, refugees, migrant workers, poor, jobless, ethnic peoples, gypsies, wetbacks, the *massa perditionis*, *minjung*, *dalits*. The ECP can speak with credibility of what God has done in the particularity of its catholicity.

In the words of the first apostle:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had received no mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Pet 2:9–10)

D. T. Niles, a Sri Lankan theologian and ecumenist, wrote that "evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread".⁹ The ECP, a church founded from the margins of Philippine society, has found the source of life abundant and shows others where that life can be found.

⁸ satucket.com/lectionary/Charles_Brent.htm, acc. 28 Feb. 2010; see also BCP 58, 101.

⁹ thinkexist.com/quotes/d._t._niles/, acc. 30 March 2010.