

A History of Philippine Baptist Pastors 1898-2002^[1]

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Life and Ministry of Pastors During the Formative Years 1898-1935

Why they became pastors?

There were significant reasons why some Baptist converts decided to become pastors. First, they wanted to change for the better. There was a growing resistance against Spanish colonialism and Roman Catholicism that encouraged them to find alternatives and to commit themselves to a serious study of Christianity. Second, the coming of Protestant missionaries became an avenue whereby they were able to read the Bible. By reading the Gospel they became aware of their Christian responsibility and ultimately decided to become pastors. Yet the content of their pastoral ministry were based not only on the Bible but also on their culture and the American way of life as introduced by the American Baptist missionaries. (Page 29)

Socio-Economic Status of Pioneering Pastors

The majority of the early Baptist converts were poor peasants living in Western Visayas. Most of them were farmers and skilled workers from the countryside. A number of them worked as carriage makers and cocheros. Those who were in the educated class were hacienda owners and teachers in Spanish schools. As the Baptist mission commenced, some of them became apprentice in the Baptist printing press wherein they got hold of the Bible. Men and women pastors were instrumental in spreading the good news especially in the rural areas. They were respected and developed their social status as leaders of churches even if their economic status were almost the same as the members of churches they worked with. (Page 34)

Political Perspectives

The early Baptist Pastors had nationalist tendencies, since they were part of a people who resisted the unjust and exploitative Spanish colonial rule and who struggled to be free as a nation. At the height of the national fervor to achieve independence from Spain and then from American expansionism, Protestant missions came into the picture. It is not, therefore, surprising to know that many Baptist preachers were nationalists. The first preachers trained by Missionary Briggs who came from Luzon were revolutionaries who joined the struggle against Spanish colonialism.

Some of the early converts were members of the “Pulahan” group roaming in the Visayas mountains. The “Pulahans” were a group of people who resisted the long Spanish colonial rule through violent means. They used this method of resistance against the Americans too. The famous Pulahan was Papa Isio, who continued the struggle even when the Negros elite sided with the Americans. “His group, the babaylanes or pulahanes, burned haciendas owned by pro-American elite.” But later on, some of these revolutionaries were converted and became Baptist pastors. They welcomed the Americans, because the Christianity that the Americans brought was convincing. Moreover, the American missionaries enabled them to read the Bible in their own language.

From another perspective, the shift in political view – from being revolutionaries to becoming pastors under the American tutelage – was partly due to the various techniques of pacification used by the Americans to end the Filipino people’s resistance. Laws were enacted favoring American colonialism. The Sedition Law of 1901 made any advocacy for Philippine independence a crime punishable by long imprisonment or death. The Brigandage Act of 1902 that classified guerrilla fighters as brigands or ladrones made membership in an armed group punishable by death or long imprisonment. To further suppress the nationalistic feelings of Filipinos, the Flag Law of 1907

prohibited the display of all flags, banners, symbols and other paraphernalias. Missionaries Briggs and Munger were actively involved in the pacification campaign, encouraging Pulahan leaders, for instance, to cooperate and in the process they were converted to the Baptist faith.

Furthermore, the Americans established an educational system with English as the medium of instruction. It was aimed at making the Filipinos “little brown Americans.” With American education, in which American values and culture were taught, slowly but surely the Philippine people developed pro-American sentiments. (pages 34-36)

Theology and Perspective in the Ministry

The content of their preaching as well as their theology was centered on two main issues. First, to proclaim Jesus Christ as the Saviour of mankind in order for those people who received Jesus to go to heaven. Second, to proclaim that Baptist Christianity is the “true” brand of Christianity. People should forsake the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church since it is corrupted and distorted. Moreover, piety and spirituality should be practiced by not smoking and drinking or indulging in vices. (page 40)

Theological Education

On the whole, pastors learned their profession in the ministry through personal experience and through organized studies. Bible schools for men and women were started to cater to the need for trained pastors. When the Bible school for men was not sustained, Pastor’s Institutes were conducted to fill in the need. (page 46)

Joys and Struggles of Early Philippine Baptist Pastors

Even before the first official ordination of Philippine Baptist Pastors in 1906, a great number of Filipino and Filipina Baptists called by the American Missionaries as “Native Preachers” and “Bible Women” respectively were already active in the ministry. These “Native Preachers” and “Bible Women” should be aptly called as Filipino and Filipina Baptist Pastors.

It was automatic for the early Baptist converts to do mission work. Men and women involved themselves in the evangelization of their own people. They preached the ‘good news’; helped in the translation work; and distributed the translated gospels and religious tracts in many areas where the American missionaries had not set foot to. (page 46-47).

The Search for Self-Identity and the Struggle for Self-Reliance 1935-1983

Baptist Pastors struggled for the creation of the Western Visayas Convention (WVC), the forerunner of Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC), and the Convention Baptist Ministers’ Association (CBMA). The forerunner of CBMA was organized sometime in 1904 during the “First Baptist Associational Gathering.” They mounted pressure, together with the backing of local churches which they had organized and maintained, in order to push for the Filipinization of the leadership structure. Thus, the CPBC was organized. Rev. Jorge O. Masa was elected CPBC General Secretary in 1935. He was succeeded by Rev. Engracio Alora in 1938.

Philippine Baptists together with their pastors slowly pushed for the realization of their dream for self-reliance. Thus, many Filipinos occupied top positions in Baptist institutions. For instance, in 1940, Rev. Alfredo Catedral, a graduate of Colgate Rochester Divinity School succeeded Rev. R.F. Chambers as Dean of the College of Theology.

The CPBC was also granted the freedom to make its own policies, and properties of the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society (ABFMS) were slowly transferred to the Filipino leadership.

Economic Condition

Although the Philippine Baptist leaders pursued the Filipinization of the CPBC, they were far from self-reliant. They still continued to ask for foreign financial assistance to implement their programs. To some extent, the economic condition at that time played a significant role in the attitude of the Philippine Baptists. The Philippine economy was “completely tied up with and dependent on the United States.” Philippine economic policy allowed the continued export of agricultural products to the U.S. and unhampered entry of U.S. goods to the Philippines. During the 1936-1940 period, majority of foreign investments came from the U.S. and 72.6% of Philippine trade to foreign countries went to the U.S.

Rev. Iñigo Delariman, the Promotional Secretary of Negros Kasapulan in 1936 received a salary of P40 a month while the 40 churches that he visited all over Negros supplied him with travel expenses. Rev. Juan Empig of Ilog Baptist Church asserted that the answer to the economic condition of the Philippine Baptist churches was good stewardship. Pastor David Logarto, Circuit Pastor, Dueñas, Iloilo echoed the same tone, “He who shall not work shall not eat.”

Theological education

Pastors and church leaders were trained in church work through the Pastor’s Institute and *Eskwela Dominikal*. In Negros, Rev. Iñigo Delariman, trained in Rural Life at Los Baños in 1934, conducted an Institute on Religious Education and Rural Life Institute with Miss Proserfina Plasus. The curriculum of the Rural Life Institute included Animal Husbandry with Swine and Poultry Raising techniques, and Plant and Fertilizer Analysis. The College of Theology also launched the National Rural Life Institute. The goals of the Institute were to provide the ministers with experiences that would enable them to understand rural life, problems and aspirations of the rural people, and to equip the ministers with necessary tools and skills in agriculture and more importantly, in making theological reflection on the meaning of the gospel in a local situation.

Theology and Content of Preaching

The issue of “Social Gospel” and “Pure Gospel” in America in the 1920’s made an impact on the theology of Philippine Baptist pastors. The missionaries had two contradicting views of the gospel message which divided them later. This contradiction stemmed from the theological controversy that swept the United States during that time. Dr. Domingo Diel, Jr. argued that the “main issue was being the ‘pure gospel’ or the ‘social gospel’; which means either the preaching of the ‘pure gospel’ or the implementation of the consequence of the gospel in all areas of human life.”

The four decades of American missionary presence in the Philippines greatly influenced the lifestyle and theology of the Philippine Baptist pastors. For instance, the way they dressed was similar to the Americans who converted them. (pages 66-70).

Baptist Pastors During World War II: Their Faith, Ministry and Struggle

In 1946, Engracio Alora, the Acting Dean of the College of Theology, published in 1943 the *Prayer of the Panay Underground*. “Give us courage, Lord, to finish the great work that Destiny has called us to do; Courage to continue to fight for the right of this Nation to live her own life without trammel from without, without doubt from within; Courage, Lord, to show to the invader that the national honor that he has tarnished is avenged on this Island with valor and self-immolation; Courage that knows neither darkness nor day to strike for that Freedom which Thou teachest is the inheritance only of those of Thy children who are worthy of their God.

Let the blood, Lord, that was shed by the Freeman of this Island seep into the depths of the native soil to cleanse it of its past, to enrich it for its future; Let the cruelties of the enemy, his deceptions, and his deceits that have caused many loved ones to perish in death unspeakable and

tortures that curdle the blood, drive us on with ever resurging strength to defend our home and fireside.

Let new cruelties inspire more determined resistance; Let more tortures bring forth more martyrs; Let the ravishments and violations of our women endow more strength upon our womanhood; Let the wanton killing of unarmed men and helpless women and children produce more leaders and patriots.

And, Tomorrow, Lord, when the dawn breaks and peace comes again to this Land, may it be a strong and free and lasting peace, because it was dearly bought with our blood and treasure; May the strength and fortitude that we had built, in the Valley of the Shadow, during the bitter night of our sorrows and sufferings transform and weld us a Nation, because we have been forged in the Crucible of Fire and cleansed in a Baptism of Blood.

And so, dear Lord, when on that morrow Destiny commands us to resume our peaceful tasks, Let there arise a new and purified people led by a new leader guiding us forth in Thy ways onto the heights to which our worth and our heritage entitle us.”

A Baptist, Esther Pagsuberon, also composed a guerilla song: *The Fight is On*. Pastor Pagsuberon, a guerilla himself during the war, sang the song by heart: “The fight is on, arise, o, soldier’s brave and true. The call to arms is heard from far and near. MacArthur now is marching on to victory, the triumph of our forces is secured. The fight is on! Brave Filipinos will carry on to victory with carbines gleaming and thompsons roaring and will drive those Japanese away. The fight is on but be not weary, for then at last we shall be free. With God before us, his banner o’er us will sing the victory song at last.” (pages 77-78).

Summary and Reflections

“Four years of the holocaust of World War II did not diminish the faith of the Baptists in the Philippines. During the war, they gathered to worship in the hills and mountains, swamps and even under the surveillance of the enemy’s watchful eyes in the cities and towns. The women did their share in living dangerously their testimony of Christ’s love and concern.”

Rev. Agustin Masa, CPBC President from 1946 to 1947, bore witness to the struggle of the Philippine Baptists during the war. He exhorted the CPBC members on the occasion of their Golden Jubilee: “We stand today between two generations. The past, with all its troubles and conflicts, consuming today’s struggles, and the future with all its opportunities and great promise. At a time when the liberties of men are being threatened, the Philippine Baptists have in their hands the highest opportunity to demonstrate to their fellow men what it is to be free in Jesus Christ.”

Some Americans said that the Filipinos were afraid of the Japanese and ceased to hold worship services. However, eyewitness accounts and experiences of those who survived told of a different story. The Philippine Baptists survived the war. Not only did they contribute to the conduct of worship services but also to the liberation of the Philippines. They became self-reliant not only in their economic activities but in leadership capacity. The war “proved to be the testing fire of faith.” Pastors continued their unwavering commitment to take care of their flocks. In the words of Rev. Melicio Basiao, “O, how we struggled and O, how we were blest.”

When the American missionaries came back they proceeded to take up the cudgels of leadership once again.

Post War Period to the Declaration of Martial Law 1946 – 1972

In the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Philippine Baptist mission in 1950, one can glean from the commitment of Philippine Baptist pastors as they did their share in the ministry. They not only looked back from their journey of faith and from those who struggled before them, but also looked forward to the future with this in mind, “continue on pastoring.”

Rev. Dioscoro Villalva of Isabela Evangelical Church said, "May the younger generation of preachers heroically pick up the Gospel torch lighted by the sacrifices of our dead-yet-living pioneer evangelists, through an intensive Convention program to evangelize the Philippines in the next 50 years."

Pastor Jose Gico, Jr. of Malawog Baptist Church, Sta. Barbara, a "disciple" of Rev. Villalva said, "The Pentecost of the Gospel propagation is now realized in our midst in this Golden Jubilee. Let that time be revealed again, when Peter preached and five thousand souls were brought to the feet of Christ." This kind of spirit and dedication strengthened his resolve to continue his pastoral ministry. Today, even after his legal retirement, he still serves Hinigaran Evangelical Church, which he ministered since 1951.

Pastor Jacobo Celeste of Bingawan Baptist Church aptly said, "May we grow stronger in faith and work, as we struggle towards our 100th anniversary in 2000 AD." The pastor of Ito Baptist church, which was started by the Pulahans in 1904, also said, "We pray that this Golden Jubilee will be an inspiration for us all to unite in smashing the forces of *social evil* and bringing about the Kingdom of God in and out the hearts of men."

Mrs. Angelina Buensuceso, pastor of La Carlota Evangelical Church in 1950 appropriately challenged the next generation of pastors with these words, "There is no telling what a church can do which she tries to conceive of and achieve greater and better things for God. Onward with Christ. United we stand, divided we fall." Later in 1980, Angelina Buensuceso became the first Filipina Baptist pastor to be ordained.

These words and deeds of Baptist pastors 50 years ago serve as cornerstones of Philippine Baptist churches, and will serve as inspiration for the young generation as they continue serving the Lord. (pages 92-93).

Pastors Joining the Movement to Oust the Marcos Regime

Amidst the rising socio-political unrest, the Philippine Baptist pastors took a stand. Many of them joined rallies, formed organizations, made protest statements, or joined the underground movement to topple an unjust system. The martial law years saw a great deal of pastors "doing theology in the streets."

Pastor Ruth Corvera said that during martial law years pastors became "activists." She testified, "I would go to the community and organized them. I see my role as someone empowering people to reach their potentials before God. I did not baptize them but my teachings were centered on giving the people the 'quality of life' that they deserve. Salvation is about raising the worth and dignity of the people and liberating them from their fears."

Pastor Samuel Antonio, presently the Kasapulan Minister of Negros Oriental churches, clearly stated the reason why pastors joined the underground movement: "*Ang mga Baptists freedom fighter. Sadto nga tion kinahanglan gid nga mag respond bangud ang atrocities sang military nagabiktima sang miembro sang simbahan. Ang concern amo ang paghatag protection sa aton mga kasimbahanan sa kabukiran. Bilang shepherd, nakita ko nga ginataban ang akon mga obeha, indi ako makapalagyo sa sitwasyon kag sa akon nga role. Ini nagtulod nga magbatu ako sa mga lobo nga naga pang-it sa ila.*"

Pastor Antonio stressed, "*Ang spirituality dapat mag angut sa reality. Faith is something that have a motivating force and should produce evidence.*" Furthermore, "*Ang akon training sa NCCP about community organizing na usar ko sa akon nga pag bulig sa mga pumuluyo nga nangin biktima sang human rights abuses.*"

In Aklan, Pastor Cecilia Cruz together with Rev. Villanueva worked in the mountains educating the people and organizing them. "*Nakita ko nga sadto nga time ang role namon as pastors is to make people aware of our situation and encourage church members to be active politically.*" Pastor Cruz was also terrified to continue on working. "*May liquidation squad ang Marcos regime.*

Budlay mag giho. Sa ulihi gin dakop kami sang military kay suspected kami of subversion. Pero nag continue kami gihapon sa amon work kag nagahiwat pa kami sang mga Ecumenical Summer Youth Camps with Mr. Mike Pillora.”

In Negros, Pastor Norberto Tabligan engaged himself in what he called “the other side of ministry.” *“Naga seminars kami on Human Rights upod ni Pastor Rudy Bernal kag ni Pastor Rodio Demetillo. Gina surveillance kami sang military. Ang amon obra was part of the ACM work of the Convention.”*

Pastor Jacinto Castillo, the President of the Negros Kasapulanang Baptist Ministers’ Association, recalled, *“Sang init-init ang sitwasyon sa sur (Negros), madamu ang nagpabukid. Isa ka adlaw, gin ‘kidnapped’ ako sang NPA kag gintabonan ang akon mata. Gindala ako nila sa bukid kag gin pangabay nga magbunyag sang ila mga bata.”*

Socio-Economic Condition of Pastors

“Marcos’ preferential treatment for foreign investors further contributed to the deterioration of the Philippine economy, particularly with the use of government funds and foreign loans for the Marcos family and their cronies.” Baptist pastors were among those who suffered economically.

In 1973, there were 200 Convention Baptist pastors. The survey conducted by the College of Theology revealed that the average monthly salary of pastors and workers excluding the city church pastors was P45.00. They belong to the income bracket of the housemaids in chartered cities. Of the total number of pastors in our Convention, 96% does not have a house of their own. If ever they have a Social Security System coverage, about 95% of them will not be able to derive sufficient benefits from this upon retirement because of low monthly premium that they give to the SSS.

The survey concludes that Baptist pastors were looking at the future with a great sense of insecurity. Thus, few young people were committing themselves to the Christian ministry; many pastors were shifting to secular ministry; and there was a lack of creative and consecrated pastoral leadership in the churches.

From 1966 to 1973 there was a marked decline in enrolment in the College of Theology. Of the 89 who graduated from the College of Theology from 1960 to 1972, only 19 had submitted themselves for ordination; 11 were in Christian institutional ministry; and 59 are no longer actively participating in church work. Of the 46 ordained ministers that the CPBC had since 1946, 14 have shifted to secular ministry. Even though some of them were working as part time pastors in the churches, yet the trend toward secular employment was very clear. The sense of economic insecurity in the pastoral ministry had also led many to take for granted the discipline of the ministerial profession, thereby weakening their effectiveness as bearer’s of the “good news.”

The survey of the College of Theology forecasted a bleak future for the Baptist churches in the Philippines if the above conditions were not averted. An important answer to these problems is in raising the socio-economic level of life of the pastors. Thus, the Baptist Ministers’ Endowment Program was conceived to standardize pastor’s salary. The subsidy will be granted with the end view of strengthening the ministry of a church and ultimately to make the same church self-supporting.

In 1975, Dr. Domingo Diel, Jr. wrote: “As CPBC thinks beyond ’75, it must think of its pastors more seriously now than before; the ‘sacrifice mentality’ has still a place in a Christian life (not only in a pastor’s family) but that is a poor substitute for a low salary. The Endowment Program for Baptist pastors - salary standardization and retirement pension must not only be encouraged, but supported and implemented. The prospect of this program is indeed favorable; its effect among pastors will be invaluable and the result of it can certainly be beneficial for the CPBC.”

In 1975, Kasapulanang Minister Rev. Alfeo Tupas informed of the Negros Kasapulanang fund campaign called “God’s One Thousand Fund” to “help standardize the salaries of pastors in the Kasapulanang.”

The year 1977 ushered in the new challenge to raise the local support to more than 25% with an incentive plan for the Field Ministers. CPBC President Rev. Moley G. Familiaran reported, “A top level brainstorming session was organized to open more possibilities for the ever growing challenge of the CPBC.” It was pointed out during the brainstorming sessions that “pastors must become our priority concern – and projects must be started to help the struggling church support their pastor.” The result of this brainstorming was the Pastor’s Salary Standardization scheme with a motto: “A Challenging Self-Reliance Movement toward Growth and Maturity.” CPBC and CBMA were the implementing arm and the duration of the project was three years. It hoped to subsidize the salaries of 200 pastors receiving below P150.00 a month. The program would arrange for the pastor to receive a free board and lodging and the honorarium would be added to their income during the year, increasing it to 250.00 pesos in the second year.

During the same year, Rev. Edwin Lopez, CPBC General Secretary 1976-1979, launched the CLASP – Carabao Labor to Assist Salaries of Pastors. It was a development program for pastors receiving very low salaries. Rev. Lopez reported: “We have bought 2 carabaos and farm implements for our Mountain Pastors in Lambunao and Calinog. We will arrange to buy one carabao each for Antique, Capiz or Negros, whichever is advisable to our pilot.” The carabaos belonged to the CPBC on loan to churches to assist the salaries of Pastors. The income of the carabao was to be divided into two. One half would go to CPBC as payment for the carabao and the other half would go to the salary of the pastor. When the carabao is fully paid, it would belong to the church.

During the CBMA assembly in Dumangas Baptist Church on January 17-20, 1994 in which 571 ministers attended, the officers and members created two programs to financially assist the ministers particularly those receiving below 500.00 pesos salary, and working in the rural areas. The first, the Mutual Aid Fund (MAF) was launched after the officers discovered that, out of more than 500 pastors, 371 are receiving below P500. Most of these pastors worked in rural areas. The fund would help pastors in their medical needs. A seed money of 5,500 pesos was raised during the assembly. The second program was the Minister's Welfare Program to increase financial assistance to pastors through its livelihood project of swine-chain dispersal. The CBMA put aside a budget of 270,000.00 pesos for this purpose. Pastors working in rural areas were given the priority.

In 1994 the Pastor’s Endowment Fund had an interest of 16,178 pesos which were given to pastors with very low salaries. In 1995 the interest of the fund was 22,563.30 which was distributed to qualified applicants endorsed by the Provincial Ministers’ Association and recommended by the Executive Committee of the CBMA.

Theological Education

In 1975, theology students defined theological education as follows: Firstly, “We, the students of the College of Theology, Central Philippine University, believe that theological education should be geared toward making men whole. We believe that it should seek to develop the individual or group into an integrated whole, conscious of his/their individuality as a person or group in relation to other persons or groups, of his/their strengths and limitations, aware of his world and of the tasks he/they have to perform, dedicated to his/their mission, and able to participate actively and meaningfully in the celebration of life.”

Secondly, “We believe that theological education should help in preparing Christians serve God through service in the world. As such, theological education should start where the people are. It should take on account the people’s desires and aspirations, their struggles, and most of all, their needs. It should be able to understand the “hows, whys and wherefores” of the people that it may be able to apply the Christian message relevantly to the lives of the people, and the community wherein they live. We believe that theological education can do this when it opens itself up and enters into dialogue with the world – its cultures, ideologies and religions.”

Thirdly, “Theological education should promote a living involvement in the life situation of the people. Having understood the hows, whys and wherefores of the people, it should seek to put into practice such understanding in terms of involvement in actual life situations of the community, participate in its struggles and become a motive force in the shaping of history.”

Dr. Domingo Diel, Jr. asserted that theological education must consider “the need of the church” and “the need of the world.” The issue here is ‘relevant’ theological education in relation to the church and the world today and tomorrow. The cry of the decade coming from the so-called Third World Theologies is for “theological relevance.” Diel warned that theological planning for the future should be aware of the danger of “theological irrelevance.”

Ministry of Pastors

In 1977, a CPBC Work Plan was created. Rev. Edwin Lopez envisioned a program called TICDA (Total Integrated Church Development Assistance). The program had three component strategies: (1) TOMF – (Training Operation Mass-Evangelism Follow-up), (2) SWEAT – (Steward Week Ender Assist Technique), and (3) New Frontier Ministries.

The program enabled CPBC to organize one congregation every 2 to 3 days within one year. Also, the program was an attempt to lift up the economic condition of pastors and church members. Rev. Moley Familiaran summed up the main focus of the program: “...the thrust of this work plan is to work with people in discovering sleeping assets in the form of interest and readiness to actively participate in the total church work...to call and summon the potentials of its very own members which have yet remained untouched and unused...this work plan rests upon the basic suggestion that what the Convention should attempt is to help the people of the churches realize that we are, in discipleship, called to become fishers of men. When we realize this, we multiply the number of evangelists, preachers and pastors...This is actualizing the ‘priesthood of the believers’.”

Rev. Apolonio Francia, CPBC Field Secretary in 1977, organized a “Management and Planning Seminar,” which aim at gaining insight into the management and operation of the church. The topics of the seminar included Management of a local church, Planning Process, Duties of Church Officers, Christian Education, Evangelism and Stewardship.

A “Special Minister” by the name of Rev. Jaime Lasquite was sent to churches of Santa Fe, Guinberayan, Concepcion, Lanas and Lindero in Romblon to assist in specific areas of service. Reports coming from the churches were very encouraging.

Rev. Alfeo Tupas, CPBC Field Secretary, also reported that the “Mga Alagad Kami” (MAK) trainings were conducted in Negros. He visited 87 churches in his area and presented the Convention Work Plan during Management and Planning Seminars.

In 1977, Rev. Sammie Formilleza, Administrator of the Center for Education and Research (CER), reported that in 1976 the Center had conducted 18 workshops in Western Visayas with a total of 350 participants. The objective of the Center for Education and Research was “to find out what people think about their own problems, to use dialogue as a principal means of clarifying their ideas, to work with them in putting those ideas into actions in their own way, in their own community to achieve what they think and believe is a better way of life.” The following sectors were the priorities of concern of the Center: Urban Poor (squatters), Wage Earners (laborers), Fishermen, Peasants, and Rural Church Leaders. These sectors comprised 80% of the whole West Visayas population. The Center also opened three special projects for communities and churches, namely: Nutrition Education Program, Agricultural Workers’ Cooperative and Health Education Program. The success of the Center’s work with people from the marginal sectors of the society was made possible because of the willingness of the people in communities to do something about their oppressive and dehumanizing situations.

The year 1977 saw the strengthening of work in Mindanao. In 1976 the leaders and ministers of the Mindanao CPBC churches gathered in Mandih Baptist Church, Sindangan, Zamboanga del

Norte and decided to expand outside of the Zamboanga Peninsula with Ipil as the center of operation. Subsequently, the program radiated from Ipil to three surrounding cities of Dipolog, Pagadian, and Zamboanga. In 1978, the Mindanao Baptist mission produced 12 congregations with 16 extensions.

A pastor in Mindanao, Mark Cloma said, "For 32 years, I have been praying for a Baptist of our kind to come here, and I am happy that now this is being answered." In 1978, Cloma implemented the Phase I and Phase II of the CPBC Mindanao Project, training church members in evangelism and "operation house-to-house visit." (pages 104-113).

The CBMA 1983 - 2002

The Search for Pastoral Identity

The national crisis during this period made an impact on the lives of Philippine Baptist pastors. The crisis situation pushed them to look deeper into their identity and role as ministers of God in the context of the Philippine society. This resulted to the re-examination of their perspective and thrust in pastoral ministry.

Most pastors became politicized and saw their role as a significant part in effecting changes in a society with deep political turmoil and economic crisis. The situation led the CBMA to re-evaluate its ministry and identity

In 1982, the CBMA assembled at Bakyas Evangelical Church and discussed the theme *The Minister vis-à-vis Innovation*. There were three emphases in that assembly: The Identity of the Philippine Baptist pastor; Their socio-economic problems, and Their mission. They discussed issues related to "The Pastor in Personal Dynamics;" "The Pastor in Crises Situation;" "The Theology of Money;" "New Trends in Stewardship;" and "The Pastor in the Ever-widening Mission Patterns."

As a result of this Assembly, on September 26, 1982, a group of nine CBMA members and officers from the different provinces in Western Visayas voluntarily met and discussed the life situation of the Association as a whole. After sharing experiences and realities existing in the provincial and national level, they found out that (1) There was no coordination among the circuit, provincial and national ministerial Associations; (2) There was no common understanding of programs, structures, orientations, and thrusts; and, (3) Corporate life was not strong. From these observations, an enlarged consultation involving the CBMA Executive Committee and presidents of all provincial and district Associations was set and a meeting was held on December 16-18, 1982. After three days and nights of sharing and deliberation, a five-year program was formulated for approval before the assembly in its annual institute in January 1983.

The CBMA proposed the *Ministers Growth and Development Plan*. This was the premise of the proposal: "The challenges of the different and varied ministries where the church of Jesus Christ is called upon to participate is vast and growing and getting complicated. The ministers struggle daily to respond creatively to problems faced by man – sin in its varied forms – alienation forms – alienation from God, poverty, human depravity, ignorance, superstition, greed, injustice, authoritarianism, immorality, colonialism, and tortures and violation of human rights. These are issues which the present ministers of Jesus Christ are daily confronted with and therefore cannot close their eyes to if they will continue to serve as light of the world and salt of the earth."

The *Ministers Growth and Development Plan* was conceived because "the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be interpreted by the minister in the context of the need of the people so that evangelism and church mission will not be stale but be receptive and responsive to people's real needs."

The CBMA saw that Western thinking largely influenced the Philippine Baptist pastors, thus, they had not fully developed a theology they could call their own. There was a reflection that reactionary theology should be checked while establishing a theological framework rooted in biblical principles and Philippine culture. The CBMA thought that Philippine Baptist pastors should have a

theology that could continually confront rapid changes in society and its fundamental truths could be applied any time in the Philippine situation.

The five-year *Ministers Growth and Development Plan* was divided in five phases, namely: (1) Structural changes and improvements; (2) Re-orientation program; (3) Re-organization into interest groups; (4) Continuing re-orientation; and (5) Further theological education and special training and scholarships.

The first phase, “Structural changes and improvements,” proposed that a committee of Ministers for Development would be organized with the specific task of planning, coordinating, and linking with different agencies to help in the development of the ministers. It was also proposed that there should be a democratic centralization of all ministers’ organizations. This means unification of the program and organization of ministers. For instance, the district ministers association would coordinate with the provincial ministers association and with the CBMA. Furthermore, it was proposed that the ministers should be represented as an organization in decision-making bodies and committees within the CPBC, like having a representative in the Board of Trustees, the Committee on Ministers’ Endowment, and the Committee on Ministers’ Retirement.

The second phase, “Re-orientation program,” was proposed because the developments of the 1980’s in the different areas of life – social, economic, religious and political – were largely affecting the ministers. Since the traditional concept of the ministry could no longer meet the challenges and demands of the present task, especially the outmoded concepts of the ministry brought from abroad, “new methods, concepts, and techniques to enrich the minister’s experiences were needed...and those outmoded be changed or discarded.”

The elitist education of the ministers and the theology they gained from foreign books and instructions must be continuously put to test with the real situation to be relevant. Furthermore, in order for the re-orientation to be effective, the minister must undergo a deep process of education which included human values, development, re-study of prevailing economic and political system affecting people’s lives, elements of Filipino theology, and the development of people’s theology, born of the people’s hopes, dreams and aspirations. The CBMA proposed an educational program to help widen the social consciousness of the ministers, challenging parochial views, broadening outlooks, and deepening of commitment in the service of the poor. It was also proposed that all graduates and students of CPBC related theological institutions must undergo this orientation before their graduation or before their membership to the CBMA.

The content of the curriculum proposed were: (1) Theological concepts of development (2) Evangelism (3) Mission of the church in the Philippine situation (4) Elements of Filipino theology (5) History of the Philippines from the viewpoint of the people (6) Structural analysis of society (7) Baptist history (8) Wider ecumenical dialogue (9) Hermeneutics (10) Basic Bible doctrines (11) Biblical theology and such other subjects that would widen the perspective of the ministers.

The third phase, “Re-organization (Re-Direction),” was proposed because communities are called for the ministry relevant and responsive to the present needs and problems. The yearly curriculum of the CBMA Institute would be restructured according to the interest and field of specialization of the minister.

“Re-direction of the ministers’ views and concepts” included ministry in the local church setting and different institutions, organizations and community projects. A pastor could bring his/her pastoral identity even in schools, hospitals, business firms, factories, farming, community organizing, labor union, young people’s group, ecumenical ministries, communications, and other fields where the pastor is assimilated.

Furthermore, the curriculum of the CBMA for the next five years included pastoral ministry with emphasis on shepherding, pulpit and church management, counseling, church administration,

business management, theological education, research and documentation, communication, youth, children, trade unionism and other specialized ministry deemed needed.

The fourth phase, "Further theological education and special training," was proposed since the CBMA members needed further theological education but had little opportunity to avail of continuing education.

The emphasis of further theological education should be carried through Theological Education by Extension (TEE) wherein indigenous theology reflecting Philippine realities should be developed. TEE should prepare pastors to specialize training according to interest, and need of the local churches.

The CBMA believed that the *Ministers Growth and Development Plan* would take a long process. The January 1983 CBMA Assembly that tackled the theme *Resuscitating the Minister*, however, laid the five-year program on the table. The CBMA President said, "unfortunately, for various reasons, the Association felt that a restudy of the program be made to suit the needs of the members in general."

But then, the aim of the CBMA was to encourage pastors, who were committed to the task and calling of the Lord, to render a relevant, effective and inspired ministry to the Convention churches, institutions and society.

Identity and Mission

Pastor Rudy Acosta said that pastors have an identity crisis: "In Africa there is black theology. People go back to their experiences to reflect theologically. *Sa aton kalabanan wala pa kalambot sina...May crisis of identity kita.* We don't know what we are. We like hamburger. *Joke sang isa ka tawo*, 'Chinese have chopsticks, what about Filipinos?' What do we have? *Kamot. Magpanghilamon kamot, magkaon kamot. Wala kita nagdevelop tools. Nadala ini tubtub sa aton* theological endeavors."

On August 29, 1983, Dr. Johnny V. Gumban lectured on *Contextual Filipino Theology: Toward a Filipino Theology* and *The Emerging Filipino Theology*. His theology in a Philippine context included the affairs of the family, the church, the society, and God in history. A Filipino Theology should be inclusive, as the act of God in history is also inclusive. In 1984, Gumban wrote, "The church today is in the midst of crisis. As members of the Christian Church we should not respond to this crisis on the basis of our individual sentiment alone. It is only when we respond to this crisis on the basis of our Christian faith that we can call that response a part of our missionary task."

Contextual theology greatly influenced the minds of Philippine pastors. Pastors were concerned about practical questions in daily life, the real situation of the people and how God could speak to that context. "Culture and Christian spirituality are intertwined. One appears foreign and unfamiliar without the other...A spirituality detached from culture develops a (spiritual) life without meaning. A culture detached from spirituality develops a (cultural) life without firm foundation." Rev. Angelina Buensuceso, Directress of CBBC in 1982, revised the curriculum of Convention Baptist Bible College to include subjects like Sociology. "We believe that a pastor should know the culture and situation where he/she is to work."

The Christian faith must get involve in the crisis situation of the society because the church does not exist in a vacuum but is related to the society. Writing about the "Church in the Midst of Crisis," Dr. Domingo Diel, Jr., CPBC General Secretary in 1984 had this to say: "The inter-relatedness of socio-economic and socio-political issues with morality and the Christian faith should be by now a matter of concern for all of us. If our Christian faith has nothing to say to such issues here and now, one questions whether it is at all a Christian faith. The faith that has its source from the Truth, Himself, even the Lord Jesus Christ cannot just leave people and society to manipulators of reality and to the indoctrinated propagandists. The crisis-situation today demands from our Christian faith answers that come from a consensus of the Community of faith."

Rev. Alfeo B. Tupas, Negros Kasapulan Minister and CPBC Field Secretary affirmed that the church was really in the midst of crisis. “Let us only remind ourselves that the people of God both in the Old and the New Testaments were most aggressive and fruitful in their ministry when they were in crisis situations. We are now having our share of these. Like our predecessors we can take these not as hindrances but as challenges for a more triumphant and productive work on our part for our Lord.”

Rev. Amsil P. Alubog challenged pastors and churches, “May we be able to conscientize our emotions, thoughts and will, so that we can gain a clearer stand and a stronger force as we participate in the development of our society which is in a ‘crisis’. But above all, let us be aware, that behind these difficult moments, the Almighty God still reigns and has a message to reveal. Let us be sensitive to this!”

In 1985, Ronny Luces, a student of the College of Theology made a theological reflection on theology and action. He said that a seminarian must look deep into the context of the Philippines because a seminarian does not operate in an empty space. “He operates in the society that is historically situated and conditioned by the structure or system encompassing it. He has a community with its population, lifestyle and culture.”

The society is plagued with problems and manifestations of evil in the socio-economic and political sphere not to mention moral degradation; the seminarian must do something. The belief of Ronny Luces deserves a longer quotation. “The seminarian being part and parcel of this society cannot alienate himself and just stay in his ivory tower. He must act and do something because of the mandate of Christ for him as a salt and light of the earth. He cannot afford to just stay idle and remain passive over what is going on. In the church where he is based and in the society where he is operating are opportunities where he can manifest the divine calling of God for him. Foremost of this is the opportunity to educate his people regarding the realities that are transpiring. Coupled with this, is his prophetic role to denounce the evils that cause injustices, to expose and oppose all forces of oppression and support the people’s struggle for change. He must also organize with other seminarians and religious bodies to build a strong ecumenical network and join forces with other sectors of the society. This way he is actually taking the role of a salt. In his action in society, he must ‘plunge in’ to the actual situation. This process is called integration and Christ have done it when he incarnated in his people ‘being one of them.’ Through these he can have first hand experience about what it is like to be struggling for a just cause of righteousness, truth and freedom not merely theologizing it but putting it into practice.”

The CBMA of Today

In 1983, the CBMA included in its objectives the following (1) To strengthen the CBMA leadership or line of coordination among national, provincial and district associations; (2) To have a unified grasp of CBMA directions and programs; and (3) To come up with a long-range plan and curriculum for CBMA institutes. The CBMA Officers’ dream of having a long-range program adopted by the assembly was partly realized after almost twenty years during the CBMA 2002 Assembly held at La Carlota Evangelical Church.

Rev. Jerson Narciso, the present CBMA President, told about the CBMA’s emphases in his State of the CBMA Address. First, there is a need to overhaul present leadership structure in order to make sense out of “our chaotic situation.” Second, the present CBMA leadership is initiating important steps to strengthen and improve self-reliance program thereby addressing, for instance, the financial needs of low-income pastors. Third, there is a need to come up with a more systematic and efficient theological education program in order to upgrade and enhance pastor’s theological and pastoral training.

The CBMA in assembly presented a ten-year plan and approved it during the business meeting. The plan includes the *Kabuhi sang Pastor (Buhay ng Pastor)* Endowment Program. The rationale of

the Endowment Program states: “Philippine Baptist pastors played a significant role in the life of Philippine Baptist Churches. However, their efficiency is greatly hampered by the lack of resources to meet the demands of their ministry as many of them still receive a monthly salary of less than 1,000 pesos...A solid resource foundation could form the basis for a continuous, effective, and efficient pastoral service for the churches. Consequently, the churches will be strengthened as they do their share in realizing the mission of Christ heading towards an abundant and meaningful life.”

Pastor Chita Naciongayo believes that “Low salary affects the personality of the pastor. The pastor develops a personality that is withdrawn affecting his/her decision-making ability. The ministry is held back because of this.” This Endowment Program has more than 100,000.00 pesos in the bank and more pastors and church members are committing themselves to support it.

Included in the approved plan was the Master of Ministry Curriculum which should be accredited by our seminaries. The proposed curriculum includes the following subjects: (1) Social Analysis (2) Philippine Church History (3) Philosophy (4) Church History (5) Church Administration and Management (6) Networking and Solidarity (7) Community Organizing (8) Project Proposal and Feasibility Studies (9) Contextual Theologies (10) Basic Accounting and Stewardship (11) Computer and Globalization (12) Ecumenics, Missions, and Religions (13) Systematic Theologies (14) National Situationer (15) Ecology and the Church (16) Pastoral Ethics (17) Cross Cultural and Foreign Missions (18) Conflict Resolution and Management.

The implementation of the ten-year plan of the CBMA will be implemented through a coordinated CBMA leadership structure, but still maintaining the local autonomy of the Provincial Ministerial Associations.

Reflections

The “social gospel,” which means the gospel encompassing the whole aspect of life that influenced the theology of pastors in the 1920’s and 1930’s found its offspring in the theology of pastors in the 1980’s. That fine thread continues up to the present generation of Philippine Baptist pastors.

In 1935, even if the leadership structure of the Philippine Baptist mission was Filipinized, whenever the American missionaries talked about money matters, Filipino Baptist leaders kept silent because they felt that the Philippine Baptist mission could not survive without foreign funding.

Presently, the CBMA action on uplifting the socio-economic status of Baptist pastors is a step towards independence in thinking and action, rather than being recipients of the programs set by foreigners who are sending funds. Rev. Malvar Castillon, the president of CBMA when it celebrated its Golden Anniversary in 1985, said, “We have the desire to become financially stable. We are just beginning and struggling for total independence when it comes to money matters and maturity in leadership.”

Furthermore, Baptist pastors could deepen their theology through the continuing theological education program. Instead of depending on foreign theologies which are often spiritualize and alien to the Philippine situation they could learn from these theologies and develop a theology of their own conceived out of the struggle of the Philippine people and God’s revelations through culture and situation in the Philippines.

An undertaking of this contextualized relevant theology rooted in the biblical truths, in Philippine history and culture should be undertaken. For instance, a contextual theology should incorporate Hiligaynon cultures. It should be remembered that the early Philippine Baptist pastors used their own language, that is Hiligaynon, in spreading the word of God. Thus, the Gospel was speaking directly in a manner understandable to the people. The present theological reflections of pastors should be geared towards rediscovering the culture, language and experiences that God has endowed to the Philippine Baptist pastors.

In the course of more than 100 years, Baptist pastors have grown. During the early period, they were mainly “learning by doing.” During the later period, there were at least three seminaries to enable them to deepen their faith, commitment, wisdom, awareness and skills which they could utilize in their varied and complicated ministries. Many of them were also trained abroad especially in the United States and Europe.

Traditionally, the mission of the Baptist pastor was mainly in the church and church related institutions. Only those who had extensive church work could be ordained in the ministry. In the course of history, the mission of the Baptist pastor moved out of the “four walls” of the church. The concern of many pastors in the 1950s also included ministry in the society, especially in politics and economics. The story of World War II guerrilla pastor named Lucso and of other pastors like Rev. Elias Lapatha, Rev. Catalino Buensuceso, Rev. Bello Cato, Pastor Remedios Vingno, Pastor Ruth Corvera, and recent pastors like Samuel Antonio, Rev. Norberto Tabligan and Ronny Luces are examples.

Pastors’ contributions to the Baptist faith in the Philippines include organizing and establishing of churches; educating pastors and church members in particular and the society in general; leading churches and church related organizations; and serving the churches as well as communities where they are in, particularly in the work for social justice.

Yet Baptist pastors are confronted with difficult to solve problems: (1) How to update pastoral skills (e.g. Pastoral Resource Development) to meet the demands of the growing churches and expanding ministry. (2) How to increase income (e.g. Self-Reliance) to meet even the basic needs of pastors especially those working in the rural areas. If the salary of the pastor is standardized, “even just to the level of public school teachers, the seminary would get a share of promising young people and eventually these young people will find their way to the churches. While the winning of souls for Christ should be a top priority, the caring for them cannot be set aside.” (3) How to strengthen unity and coordination among pastors to ensure the much needed pastoral and other support (e.g. Coordinated and United Ministerial Leadership and Services). The resolution of these difficulties will surely increase the effectiveness and efficiency of Baptist pastors as they serve churches, church related institutions, and communities the name of the Lord of pastors, Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

This special paper has reconstructed a history of the Philippine Baptist pastors from 1898 to 2002. The study attempted to find out who the Philippine Baptist pastors were and highlighted their significant contributions to the church and society. Their contributions were reviewed from a *Kaupod* perspective using published and unpublished documents as well as oral testimonies obtained from interviews and questionnaires. The *Manugbantala sang Kamatooran* from 1925 to 1929, and 1935 provided significant data that were used to describe the ministry of the early Baptist pastors. The souvenir programs of Annual Assemblies of *Kasapulanans* and of the CPBC offered significant information regarding the perspectives of pastors on certain issues in the society and the church. The written reports included in the souvenir programs enhanced the interpretation of important events in history. For example, it provided the number of churches and pastors working during different periods of time. Oral testimonies provided immense data that were not found in written documents. For instance, the oral testimonies of pastors portrayed the ministry of the Baptists during World War II, more specifically, in Negros churches.

The data at hand significantly portrayed Baptist pastors from 1898 to 2002. The author, however, felt that he was hampered by his own limitations since this is his first attempt at writing a paper on history. Because of this, some gaps may not have been filled in and some puzzles may not have been pieced together sufficiently.

Based on the perspective and data used by the author, the significant contributions of the Philippine Baptist pastors in church and society, and the picture of Philippine Baptist pastors from 1898 to 2002 can be seen through the following: 1) Reasons why they became pastors; 2) Their theology and understanding of the ministry; 3) Political and ideological perspective; 4) Socio-economic status; and 5) Their significant strengths and weaknesses that led to their present predicament.

1) Reasons why they became pastors

During the early years, Baptist converts decided to become pastors because they wanted to experience a more meaningful life. There was a mounting opposition against Spanish colonialism and Roman Catholicism. Their opposition led them to find ways to study Christianity more seriously. The coming of American missionaries became an opportunity so that they could read the Bible in their own language. By reading the Bible they became more conscious of their Christian duty and felt that God called them to become pastors. Those who decided to become pastors were not only influenced by the gospel but also by the American culture introduced by American missionaries. The American missionaries taught their converts that Protestant Christianity is the “true” kind of Christianity, while Roman Catholicism is the corrupted version. Many pastors of the next generations have more or less the same testimony. Many decided to enter the full time ministry because they felt called by God and were interested in reading the Bible. Their calling and their circumstances became challenges in their Christian ministry and eventually led them to evaluate themselves. In the process, they found out that their contributions as pastors could do much in effecting changes both in the church and in the society.

2) Their theology and understanding of the ministry

In the early years, Philippine Baptist pastors used the three pronged pattern developed by the American missionaries – preaching, teaching and healing, guided by the six Baptist principles. Over and above these principles was the “heavenly mission” to lead people to salvation in Jesus Christ.

After a decade or two, their theology was influenced largely by the “social gospel,” which means the implementation of the gospel in all areas of human life. This led them to expand their ministry to the society especially to the poor people. For instance, the *Escuela Dominikal* of 1935 emphasized that the responsibilities of a Christian included helping the poor and proclaiming justice in the society. Moreover, Christians should strive to create a good environment in order to convince people within that environment to become good Christians.

The “God’s plan for the ages,” a premillennial understanding of the gospel influenced many pastors. This was largely spread in evangelistic meetings and debates. But during the martial law years, the ministry of pastors integrated a program for social justice and transformation. To some extent, pastors believed that salvation is not only liberation from spiritual sin but also liberation from evil structures in realizing people’s potentials before God and humankind. Their ministry extended outside the “Four Corners” of the church. Some of them called it “The other side of ministry.” They engaged in family ministries, ministry for the urban poor and victims of human rights abuses, and “theologizing” along the streets. These experiences eventually led them to develop a contextual theology. They attempted to come up with a Filipino theology that considers the struggles and experiences of the Philippine people. This contextual theology aims at establishing a theological framework rooted in biblical principles, Philippine culture, and context.

The Philippine Baptist pastors described their role as a shepherd, a teacher, a preacher, a manager and a leader. The shepherd has a ministry of presence in caring for the sick, seeking those who strayed, watching out for his/her members’ souls, visiting his/her members continually. The pastor as a teacher faithfully teaches his/her members the Baptist faith and its context. The Pastor aims to make his/her members light and salt of the world. Moreover, the pastor is a preacher. He/she

preaches boldly the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. The pastor is a manager making plans and organizing his/her people. He/she manages his/her own family as well. Furthermore, the pastor is a leader. He/she leads his/her members to abundant life, and follows the footsteps of Jesus Christ, the great shepherd.

3) Political and ideological perspective

To a certain extent, Philippine Baptist pastors have nationalist tendencies. This political perspective is like a fine thread linking many pastors from 1898 to the present. During the Spanish colonial rule people joined the fight for freedom and independence from a colonial system that exploited them. Many Baptist pastors were former revolutionaries who joined the people in their struggle to achieve independence. But when the American missionaries came, these revolutionaries welcomed the Americans. They felt that the kind of Christianity brought by the American missionaries was convincing and could effect better changes that they sought. Moreover, it was because of the American missionaries that they were able to read the Bible in their own language. Later on, many Baptist pastors participated in the quest to change the leadership structure of the Baptist Mission in the Philippines. They felt that Baptist churches could do better if the leadership would be “Filipinized.” Thus, they struggled for self-hood that eventually led to the Filipinization of CPBC.

During World War II, many Baptist pastors got involved in the guerilla movement to fight their enemies. Joining the guerilla movement was seen as part of the expression of their Christian faith. They gave information to the guerillas on the movements of the enemies. They also treated the wounded and provided shelter to the victims of war.

The martial law years saw a great deal of pastors becoming politicized and doing theology in the streets. Many pastors joined rallies, formed organizations, wrote protest statements, or joined the underground movement that aimed at toppling a corrupt system. Their role as a shepherd was expressed in fighting the “wolves” attacking and abusing their sheep. Many of the present generation of Baptist pastors, aware of the national issues that affect the situation of their church members, also engaged themselves in the ministry for social transformation.

4) Socio-economic status

Majority of the early Baptist pastors were poor peasants living in Western Visayas largely because of the exploitation perpetuated by Spanish colonialism. The people had not yet recovered from more than three hundred years of Spanish colonialism when the Philippine-American War broke out. It further aggravated their poor economic condition. Most of the early Baptist pastors were farmers and skilled workers from the rural areas. Some of them worked as carriage makers and *cocheros*. Those who were in the educated class were hacienda owners and professionals working in government institutions. When the Baptist mission begun its Filipinization in 1935, the economic situation of Baptist pastors did not improve and the practice of requesting for foreign funding continued.

During World War II, the Japanese exploited the Philippines for Japan’s war needs. In spite of the bleak economic situation, Baptist pastors continued with their church ministry. They held conferences, worship services and Bible studies. Economically, they were self-reliant because there was no foreign assistance that came from the American missionaries. But after the war, they continued their practice of requesting for foreign assistance.

During martial law, Baptist pastors felt the need to be economically self-reliant. The economic crisis that hit the country during this period did not deter them to find ways and means to support themselves financially. They saw that the attitude of “always asking for money” from the foreigners hampered their decision-making ability as well as their thinking. This led them to conceive plans for

the standardization of pastors' salary. They launched programs to help pastors become economically stable.

Presently, the CBMA initiated an endowment program to assist pastors in their financial difficulties. The CBMA believes that in making the pastors economically self-reliant, they can enhance their pastoral ministry.

5) Significant strengths and weaknesses leading to their present predicament

In the early years, their significant strength can be found in their commitment to the pastoral ministry. They believed that they were doing the will of God. Although their theological education at the start was only "learning by doing," their faith led them to be involved in translating the Bible into Hiligaynon; in organizing people; in distributing the gospel and other religious tracts; in preaching; in studying the Bible; and in going to far-flung areas where no American missionaries have gone. What hampered the development of the early Baptist pastors was their attitude of dependency upon the American missionaries. This kind of attitude developed as the American missionaries supported them financially, morally and intellectually. Moreover, the American missionaries trained them partly to become "assistants" or "helpers." Thus, to some extent, their mentality became dependent on the ideas and perspectives of the Americans. For instance, they believed that the American way of life goes hand in hand with Baptist Christianity; and their perspective in ministry was limited to a "heavenly mission" - to make people accept Christ so that they will go to heaven. Economically, some of them started in the ministry without getting any help from the American missionaries. They supported themselves through their farms and from the income of their members. In the course of time, the ministry of the Philippine Baptists relied more and more on foreign support. Moreover many missionaries saw that the Philippine Baptist mission was an extension of the American Baptist mission. The mentality of certain American missionaries that they were here as "missionaries for life" reinforced the thought that they had no plan to relinquish the Philippine Baptist mission to Philippine Baptist leaders. Eventually, the theological thinking as well as the economic status of the early Philippine Baptist pastors became dependent upon the "dependency system" established by the American missionaries.

The status, however, did not deter the pioneering pastors to continue with their ministry, and in the process their nationalist tendencies were awakened. Many pastors believed that the Christian mission will flourish as they struggle to find their own identity, and the status of being dependent could weaken their commitment. Thus, they struggled for self-hood and for the Filipinization of the Baptist mission in the Philippines. With the backing of the local churches, they organized the Western Visayas Convention that eventually led to the creation of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches. Although the Filipinization process begun, the Philippine Baptists were far from being self-reliant. Most of their funds still came from abroad.

Theologically, their "heavenly mission" expanded to include the ministry for social justice – helping the poor and providing an environment wherein people can become good Christians. This was a significant step in the search for their own identity – economically and theologically.

The leadership of the Philippine Baptist pastors was tested during World War II. Without the assistance of the American missionaries they continued fulfilling their roles as pastors. Financially, Baptist pastors became self-reliant. The churches did not cease to continue but rather they found strength amidst the turmoil of war and carried on worship services in areas where they evacuated. They have proven that they could stand on their own - in leadership and financial matters. To some extent, however, many pastors have not learned from these important experiences on self-reliance. When the war ended, the American missionaries proceeded to take up the cudgels of leadership.

During the martial law years, many pastors involved themselves in the "other side" of the Christian ministry. Their task extended outside of the church. Many of them became "activists" and participated in community organizing, in teaching the people about health, in family planning and in

fighting against human rights abuses. Some joined the underground movement and other groups aimed at toppling the Marcos dictatorship. The nationalist tendencies of pastors seen during the early years and during World War II found its offspring during martial law. For instance, in 1983, the CBMA theme, *Resuscitating the Minister*, aimed at re-examining the theological position of pastors which was largely influenced by Western thought; and re-evaluating their identity as Baptist pastors ministering in the Philippine context. To some extent, the ministers were “resuscitated” and they found themselves once again asking questions like, “How to make the gospel relevant to the Philippine people?” “How can we respond to a situation that tramples human dignity?” and “Who are we as Baptist pastors in a local setting?” Moreover, they engaged themselves in developing a contextual theology, particularly, Filipino theology rooted in the Bible and the Philippine culture.

After two decades, the pastors in their CBMA annual assembly discussed the theme *Revisiting Faith Resources*. In revisiting their faith resources, they remembered their treasures that have been buried. In doing so, they found out that their strength lies in themselves, in tapping their own God-given resources and in doing something to make them more available to their fellow ministers and the churches.

Moreover, they found out that two of their significant weaknesses were their tendencies to rely on foreign funding for their planned programs and to depend on foreign theologies which were to a certain extent alien to the Philippine context. In revisiting their resources they thought there is still a larger space on which they could stand on their own. Many realized too that they should not remain in the receiving end but rather they should also struggle to shift from the position of a receiver to the position of a giver.

They decided to push through a three faceted program so as to deeply understand their identity as Philippine Baptist pastors. They launched the *Kabuhi sang Pastor* Endowment Program aiming at improving the economic provision of pastors, to strengthen their pastoral ministry. If they are self-reliant they could also think independently. The second facet was the continuing theological education for pastors. The CBMA would like to offer courses during seminars that would be credited leading to a Master of Ministry degree. Among others, this facet aim at developing a Filipino theology – an attempt already started by many pastors two decades ago. This contextual theology would be based on the experiences and struggles of the Philippine people as they reflect on their Christian faith and the revelation of God in their own context. The third facet hoped to strengthen the system of leadership of the CBMA so that its envisioned program could be implemented effectively. All in all, these three facets were seen necessary to help Baptist pastors in their continuing search for identity and self-reliance.

The strength and weakness of Philippine Baptist pastors revolved around the issue of independence and dependence. The dependence from foreign support and theology made them docile pastors whose theology tends towards reaction and reinforced colonial mentality. There were times, however, when Philippine Baptist pastors were left to themselves and became independent, i.e., during World War II.

On the whole, this study showed that Philippine Baptist pastors have significantly contributed to the formation and growth of local Baptist churches in the Philippines; to the education of church members to become good Christians and to the realization of social justice for all.

Moreover, this study asserts that Philippine Baptist pastors have more space to stand on their own. This is a significant strength that could be translated into action, encouraging them to continue the search for ways and means toward self-reliance and self-determination, theologically and materially, for the sake of their active and qualitative participation in the realization of the mission of Jesus Christ.

^[1] Excerpts from Francis Neil G. Jalandon, *A Portrait of a Philippine Baptist Pastor 1898 – 2002*. A Special Paper presented to the Faculty of the School of Graduate Studies, Central Philippine University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Divinity in Pastoral Ministry, 2002. This article was published in the book *Managing Faith Resources*, N. Bunda, R. Faulan, F.N. Jalandon, J. Narciso, 2003.

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