

A PORTRAIT OF A PHILIPPINE BAPTIST PASTOR 1898 – 2002

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Problem

After more than one hundred years of Baptist history in the Philippines there is still a lack of a comprehensive written history on Philippine Baptist pastors focusing on their pastoral identity, their contributions in shaping Baptist churches, and their involvement in the society.

Written histories mostly put the Philippine Baptist pastors in the background. Their contributions in organizing churches were not highlighted but rather marginalized. For example, Raymond Beaver, whose point of view is largely influenced by American historiography, viewed the Philippine Baptist history as a continuation of the American Baptist mission.¹ His view is similar to Torbet's presentation of mission work in the Philippines as an "Outpost in the Pacific."² These accounts painted a one sided picture that highlighted the contributions of the American missionaries; and scarcely mentioned the contributions of the Philippine converts. Renato Constantino has this to say about American Historiography:

"Since the mass of humanity is still in a state of poverty and ignorance... What was hitherto been regarded as history is predominantly a conscious record of the rich and powerful but by no means the just and correct... In the recorded pages of history they have remained in the background, as if they had played only a negligible role... The people have been taken for granted and their role has been minimized or even denied."³

Those who espoused American historiography are often called writers from the "Democratic-Imperialist School." Writers of this school are "dominated by the idea of the superiority of American culture. This school reduced the Filipino to a silent backdrop and passive recipient of the blessings of American civilization."⁴

On the other hand, there are attempts to view history from the Philippine perspective. For instance, there is a *Kaupod* perspective⁵ which stresses that the year 1898 was the starting point of the Philippine Baptist history. This is in contrast to that of Beaver's view, in which 1900 was the beginning of Philippine Baptist history. This special paper hopes to contribute to the writing of a history of the Philippine Baptist pastors from a point of view that emphasizes the Philippine Baptist pastors.

2. Objectives

General Objective:

This study aims at reconstructing a history of the Philippine Baptist pastors from the year 1898 to 2002. This reconstruction will find out who they are and highlight their significant contributions to the church and society.

Specific Objectives:

Specifically, this study will:

(1) Describe and analyze their pastoral identity such as:

- a. Their theology and understanding of the ministry;
- b. Political and ideological perspective;
- c. Socio-economic status;
- d. Their reasons why they committed themselves to become a pastor;
- e. And their significant strength and weaknesses that led to their present predicament.

(2) Describe and analyze their contribution in the area of:

- a. Planting Churches

b. Christian Education

c. Ministry for Social Justice.

3. Methodology

This study attempts to portrait an image of Philippine Baptist Pastors (1898-2002) from a *kaupod* perspective using published and unpublished documents as well as oral testimonies obtained from interviews and questionnaires.⁶

Sources of data are enormous but a source of great value is the *Manugbantala - The Herald*, in which surviving copies stretched back to the 1920's. Another source of great importance are the souvenir programs of Annual Assemblies of *Kasapulanans* (Provincial Associations) and of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches. These are intact and readily accessible from the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC) as well as the Convention Baptist Ministers Association (CBMA) National Offices. Past records of pastors including the status of their monthly salaries as well as their Christian beliefs, which were put in creed form, are available in the office of the CBMA and the Secretariat of the Ordination Council of the CPBC. Local Baptist churches' histories are of immense significance together with the church records at hand. School records of theological institutions such as that of the Convention Baptist Bible College, College of Theology (CPU), and North Negros Baptist Bible College are valuable references, more specifically, on the list of graduates, the names of teachers and the content of their curriculum through the years.

In the selection of data, the author is steered by the objectives of this study to find out the theologies, ideologies, socio-economic conditions of Baptist pastors as well as their reasons for becoming pastors during the span of more than one hundred years of

Philippine Baptist history. The available fragments of their written history will be reviewed appreciatively and critically. This review calls for the unearthing of other fragments in order to fill in the gaps; plug the holes; put the missing pictures; and piece the puzzles. Significant events and milestones that happened in the Philippine Baptist churches need to be analyzed so as to get the contributions of the Philippine Baptist pastors and their impact to the life and ministry of the churches.

The study uses the approach developed by Nestor Bunda in writing the centennial history of the Philippine Baptist Churches (1898-1998). Bunda termed this approach as *Kaupod* perspective.

“Kaupod is an encompassing word with multiple and inclusive meanings. It could mean a comrade, a colleague, a member, an associate, a partner, a companion, a friend. The root word *upod* could mean to go with, to accompany or a companion. A person who is a real *kaupod* would commit him/herself to his/her *kaaupdanan* (associates, friends) to the extent of giving his/her life. The prefix *ka* in *kaupod* means affiliation or sense of belonging. This means that in the term *kaupod* the individual person is considered as part of the collective. A Philippine culture has stressed the importance of collective life since pre-colonial times which is expressed in the continued existence of extended family and *Barangay*. In this way, the language of the people, i.e., Hiligaynon, has plenty of words with collective meanings, for instance, *kasaysayan* (‘our’ history); *kabarangayan* (‘our’ communities); *kahilwayan* (‘our’ freedom), *kaginhawaan* (‘our’ contentment); *kaabyanan* (‘our’ friends), *kaupdanan* (‘our’ colleagues). The collective history of the Philippine Baptist churches has been made by its constituents: men, women, children, missionaries, their God, their friends, their communities, and the author who have been together (*nag-upodanay*) in one way or the other in making that history. In a way, the author’s ‘biography’ and the ‘bibliography’ of Baptist history converge in writing that history.”⁷

In the same manner, Teodoro Agoncillo’s methodology will be considered in this paper. He put forward a view referred as the *Pantayong Pananaw*.⁸ It is a pure

nationalistic school in which the main idea was to study Philippine history from the Filipino point of view. The history of the inarticulate - peasants, workers, cultural communities, women, children – was included. This view was “revolutionary as it was a logical reaction to foreign-dominated and ilustrado-centered theme of Philippine history.”⁹

The stress in using a Philippine perspective in interpreting history is based on the following three reasons put forward by Funtecha and Jalandoni: First, “Foreign interpretation is biased and prejudicial.” Because of this, “the judgment of Philippine history takes into account the colonial master’s interest; Filipino cultures and historical developments are judged on the basis of their foreigners’ own cultural development and history; although objectivity cannot really be achieved in the writing of history, in all considerations, a Filipino’s view of his history is better than that of his colonial masters.” Second, “The Filipinos have greater familiarity with and understanding of their own culture and history.” This is so since “Filipinos know their history, culture and identity better than foreign historians do; Filipinos are more familiar with the historical roots of their problems.” Third, “The Filipino point of view can help promote nationalism and patriotism.”¹⁰

In addition, Renato Constantino wrote:

“But beyond writing Philippine history from the point of view of the Filipino, the task is to advance to the writing of a truly Filipino history, the history of the Filipino people. This means that the principal focus must be on the anonymous masses of individuals and on the social forces generated by their collective lives and struggles. For history, though it is commonly defined as the story of man the individual, but man the collective, that is, associated man. Without society there can be no history and there are no societies without men... An individual has no history apart from

society, and society is the historical product of people in struggle...Human society is the cause and the result of people in motion and in constant struggle to realize the human potential..."¹¹

4. Scope and Limitation

This study covers the years 1898 to 2002. It deals with the history of CPBC pastors with emphasis on their contributions in church and society, theology, faith, political perspective, socio-economic status and reasons why they committed themselves to become pastors. Data related to this study include published and unpublished documents and oral testimonies from Philippine Baptist pastors.