South East Asia Graduate

School of Theology

"APPLYING GOD'S UNCHANGING WORD TO A CHANGING WORLD:" A HISTORY OF CONTEXTUAL ISSUES ADDRESSED BY EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTS IN THE PHILIPPINES, 1974-1994

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Theology

by

Francisco D. Gayoba

March 1997

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Doctor of Theology Dissertation

South East Asia Graduate

School of Theology

Title: "APPLYING GOD'S UNCHANGING WORD TO A CHANGING WORLD:" A HISTORY OF CONTEXTUAL ISSUES ADDRESSED BY EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTS IN THE PHILIPPINES, 1974-1994

Name of researcher: Francisco D. Gayoba

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Humberto Treiyer, Ph.D.

Date completed: March 1997

The study examines the interrelationship between the issues addressed by the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) during the years 1974-1994, the Philippine situation, and the interpretative framework used.

At the beginning of the 1974-1982 period, the greater concern for Evangelicals was evangelism and how to maintain orthodoxy rather than to seek contextual relevance. But then a shift took place: due to theological shifts in world evangelicalism, Philippine Evangelicals began to call for both indigenization and socioeconomic contextualization. The discussion however appeared to be more on keeping in line with international trends rather than as a response to the worsening sociopolitical problems in the country.

Beginning in 1978, a strengthened Council resulted from increased involvement in social concern projects. However, Evangelical contextualization generally remained in the level of discourse on social justice and poverty issues.

This changed when the crisis in the Philippines during the years 1983-1986 pushed Evangelicals to greater sociopolitical involvement. Many Evangelical groups and individuals participated in the opposition to the Marcos regime. It was at that time when the politicized sectors within Philippine Evangelicalism began to voice a challenge for relevance on the Evangelical stand on sociopolitical issues. The PCEC refrained from collective sociopolitical involvement. It was nevertheless actively engaged in producing guidelines, position papers and statements which indicated a struggle in trying to find a way to properly respond to the sociopolitical crisis within an Evangelical framework. The dilemma for the Council was how to exercise the prophetic mandate and maintain the stand of civil obedience amid the eroding legitimacy of the Marcos government. A decisive action was taken on the height of the February 1986 Revolution when the Evangelicals changed their stand to that of civil disobedience. As a result of the EDSA Revolution, in a few days time, the government of the country changed from that of authoritarianism to a democracy. The same situational factors pushed the PCEC's role from that of guiding individual participation to that of collective involvement.

From 1986 to 1994, the PCEC was corporately active in presenting an Evangelical perspective on national issues. Evangelicals were optimistic that they could provide a significant political contribution in rebuilding the nation aside from moral regeneration resulting from evangelism. However, toward the end of the 1980s, there were indications that the involvement with socioeconomic contextual issues among Evangelicals was moving back to more individualistic and traditional positions. Personal conversion was seen again as a prerequisite to structural societal changes. These developments can be traced to ideological changes within the international evangelical community, the world political situation, and also to the national situation as well.

Throughout the period studied, the emphasis was on sociopolitical involvement, to the neglect of context-indigenization. While showing relevance to a "changing world," the Philippine Evangelicals have mainly addressed socioeconomic issues and neglected to apply "God's unchanging Word" to religio-cultural issues. This could be attributed to the fact that the twenty-year period under consideration were also years of sociopolitical crisis for the country. However, there are more indications that in the Evangelical attempts to contextualize, their interpretative framework was a greater determinant than contextual factors. How the Evangelicals contextualized in the Philippines reflects more the general thinking within evangelicalism:

engagement with the modern world and communicating a truth considered to be not only timeless but also applicable in any and all contexts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES v

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS vi

ACKOWLEDGMENTS ix

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION 1

Area of Study 3
Purpose of the Study 6
Statement of the Problem 6
Related Research 8
Significance of the Research 11
Scope of the Study 12
Presuppositions 15
Definition of Terms 22
Methodology 24
Structure of the Study 28
Sources 30

2. 1974-1982: CALLS FOR A RELEVANT PHILIPPINE EVANGELICALISM 32

The Beginning of the Story 32
The Church and Context in Philippine Evangelicalism 33
Evangelical Self-understanding and Its Role 33
Philippine Evangelical Contextualization around 1974 36
Contextualization in Evangelicalism Around 1974 45
Lausanne: Toward a Relevant Evangelicalism 53
Involvement in Sociopolitical Contextual Issues 53
Relevance to Cultural Contexts 58
Lausanne's Impact on Philippine Evangelicals 63

PCEC and Contextualization after Lausanne 64
Engagement with Sociopolitical Issues . . 65
1974-1978: Calls for Sociopolitical Involvement 65
1978-1982: Toward Collective Social Concern Involvement 76
Engagement with the Religio-Cultural Context 86
Conclusions 97

3. 1983-1986: SOCIOPOLITICAL CRISIS CHALLENGE EVANGELICAL RELEVANCE 101

1980-1982: Transition Years 102
Changing Evangelical Theological Trends 102
1982 Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility 102
Political Activism of the Evangelical Right 111
Strengthened Council 113
Pursuing Relevance Amid Sociopolitical Turmoil 115
Evangelical Reaction to Unrest Following the Aquino Assassination 118
Initial Reactions within Evangelicalism 118
PCEC Guidelines for an Evangelical Response 123
The Limits of Political Action 133
Politics in the Church 133
Exercise of the Prophetic Mandate . . 134
Corporate Political Participation . . 138
Civil Obedience 141
Tensions in the Evangelical Conceptual Framework 148
Theological Tension Points 149
Understandings of the Human Condition and Salvation 149
Understandings of the Gospel and the Mission of the Church . . 153
The PCEC Positions Amid the Tensions 157
Antecedents of Tensions within Philippine Evangelicalism 164
Observations and Conclusions 167

4. 1986-1994: AN EMERGING CORPORATE EVANGELICAL POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT 170

Active Political Participation 172
Evangelical Strategy for Political Action 174
Specific Issues Addressed 178
Church and State Relations 178

Threat of Communism 180
Protest, Violence, Civil Disobedience 184
Evangelical Participation in Legislations 186
US Military Bases 186
The Family Code 189
Gambling 189
Clarifying and Rethinking Evangelical Social Action 191
Shifts in Sociopolitical Involvement . . 191
Evangelism and Social Responsibility 192
Optimism for a Christian Social Order 195
Acceptance of the Socioeconomic Focus of Liberation Theology 196
Personal Conversion a Prerequisite to Structural Change 200
Maintaining Evangelical Identity More Important than Involvement 202
Modifications on Approaches Toward Structural Evil 204
Focusing Evangelical Political Action 208
Summary of Changing Trends 210
Factors Behind the Changes 211
Changes in the National Situation . . 213
Changes within Evangelicalism 215
Changes in Global Economics and Culture 221
Changing Focus of the PCEC 224
Towards Biblical Political Action 227
Continuing Input to Legislative Agenda . 227
Defining "Biblical Politics" 228
Toward Legislative Initiative and Public Advocacy 234
Participating in the National Moral Recovery Program 236
Summary Observations and Conclusions . . . 241

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 246

Summary of Issues Addressed, Its Context and the Conceptual Paradigm 246
Structural Features 248
1974-1982 250
1983-1986 254
1986-1994 259
Broad Trends of Issues Addressed 263
Summary of Issues Addressed 264
Connections of Issues Addressed to Context 265
Connections Between Issues Addressed and Conceptual Framework 266
Summary Observations 267

Evangelical Contextualization and the Life of the Church 270
Factors Underlying the Contours of Evangelical Contextualization 273
Sociopolitical Involvement Integral to Mission of the PCEC 273
Factors in Evangelical Theology 274
Influence of the Church Growth Movement 276
Evangelical Contextualization, the Biblical Worldview, and the World 278

BIBLIOGRAPHY 284

Primary Sources 284
Secondary Sources 295