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David E. Gardinier

Ecumenism refers to the promotion of Christian unity and cooperation throughout the world. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Protestant and Orthodox churches in many countries experienced a revival of ecumenism, which had been interrupted by the conflict. This revival led in 1948 at the international level to the organization of the World Council of Churches, of which a few Philippine churches soon became members. At the national level Philippine Protestants renewed their efforts to achieve greater unity and cooperation among their churches.

This essay examines those efforts during the first two decades after the Second World War. After reviewing the course of ecumenism in the islands between 1900 and 1945, the essay focuses, in particular, on two major developments.

The first deals with the organization in May 1948 of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), which incorporated more Protestant churches than previously into a single church, and the circumstances which left the Methodist Church, up to then the largest Protestant church, as a separate body that retained strong links to North American and world Methodism.

The second development concerns the formation in November 1963 of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), which included not only more Protestant churches than had belonged to the Philippine Federation of Evangelical Churches (1938) but also two churches of Catholic tradition, the Philippine Independent Church (PIC) and the Philippine Episcopal Church (PEC). Whereas in 1948 all of the Protestant churches together had 400,000 members, the PIC numbered 1,500,000, and the PEC 30,000. (At this time the Roman Catholic Church registered 15,590,000 members and the Iglesia ni Kristo, an indigenous church of Arian tendencies, approximately 100,000 members.) (Elwood 1969, 366–86; Lynch 1956, 720, 741).¹

A final section of the essay takes note of a development that disfavored ecumenism. It concerns the consequences of the arrival in the islands after the war of a score of new Protestant missions; most of them opposed ecumenical relations with the members of the NCCP and began to proselytize both Protestants and Catholics (Lynch 1956, 718–28).

Ecumenism, 1900–1941

In order to understand the context for ecumenism among the Philippine Protestants from 1945 to 1963, it is necessary to turn to the historical backgrounds. Under the rule of Spain between 1565 and 1898 only the Roman Catholic Church was legally permitted. By 1898, 87 percent of the Filipinos were at least nominally Catholic. The main exceptions were the animists of the mountains of Luzon in the far north and the Muslims on Mindanao in the far south. As a result of the American acquisition of the Philippines through the Treaty of Paris of December 10, 1898, religious liberty was established and protected by the new American regime. During the next few years nine American Protestant mission societies began work in the Philippines (Gowing 1967, 124–33; Gardinier 1994, 191–203).

In the USA at this time approximately 20 percent of the people belonged to the Roman Catholic Church and 40 percent to Protestant churches; many among the remaining 40 percent were influenced by the Protestant values that had helped to shape American society for three centuries. Although 80 percent of the Protestants belonged to churches of four traditions (Reformed, Anglican, Baptist, and Lutheran), they were divided organizationally among several dozen churches. Prior to 1900 there were few efforts to unite even those churches that had a common theological and organizational heritage. Nevertheless, there was a good deal of practical cooperation among the Protestant churches at both the local and national levels.

For example, most of them supported such organizations as the American Bible Society, the YMCA and YWCA, and Christian Endeavor (an organization for young people); in addition, they used the same series of Sunday School lessons and sang many of the same hymns. Further cooperation arose in the mid-1800s as a result of missionary efforts among the American Indians, and then overseas in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Latourette 1961, 96–100, 243–45). In addition, “the lay character of the Protestant Christianity of the United States was particularly marked ” (Latourette 1961, 13). Thus the nine missions that

arrived in the Philippines around 1900 brought traditions both of denominationalism and cooperation.²

Among the cooperative practices that would serve as a model for the Philippines was comity, which had been adopted by Protestant missionaries in Japan in 1876 and Korea in 1889. Comity involved a territorial distribution along geographical lines in order to maximize the use of missionary personnel and funds while avoiding the difficulties that arose from competition. A policy of comity, which in the Philippines also took account of ethnic and linguistic factors, was adopted by several mission societies meeting in New York City on July 13, 1898, a month before Admiral George Dewey led the American attack on the Spanish in Manila.

Thus representatives of three mission societies—Methodists, Presbyterians, and United Brethren in Christ—met in Manila in April 1901 to organize the Evangelical Union (EU) in order to promote their common goals of comity, cooperation and unity. The Disciples of Christ and the Congregationalists, who arrived shortly thereafter, also joined the union, as did the Baptists. The Methodists received most of Luzon north of Manila, except for most of the Ilocano areas of the north-west, which were divided between the United Brethren and the Disciples of Christ. The Presbyterians received Luzon south of Manila and most of the central islands (Visayas). They shared two of those islands, Panay and Negros, with the Baptists. The Congregationalists received a territory on Mindanao as did the Christian and Missionary Alliance in the western portion. The CMA did not join the EU but signed the comity agreement. The Seventh-Day Adventists refused membership and insisted upon their right to evangelize wherever the Holy Spirit led them. The Episcopalians refused to join a union whose members sought converts among Catholics. The Catholics in this case included the Roman Catholics and the PIC, which was a nationalist-inspired breakaway from the RCC in 1902 under the leadership of the Rev. Gregorio Aglipay. The Episcopalians thus evangelized among the animist Igorots of Luzon, the Muslims on Mindanao, and the Chinese of Manila (Gardinier 1994, 193–94; Sitoy 1989, 2–13; Warren 1928, 177–224.)

The EU's cooperative efforts included the establishment of a single seminary in Manila in 1907 and a high school to prepare students for it in 1919; in 1910, the Sunday School Union, which published instructional and organizational materials for all EU members; a common hymnal in several indigenous languages as well as English; and several other publications. The missions also worked closely with the

British & Foreign Bible Society, the American Bible Society, and the YMCA/YWCA, all of which were associate members of the EU (Rodgers 1940, 166–69; Sobrepeña 1964, 34–36; Sitoy 1989, 42). From the beginning the missions of the EU adopted the goal of eventually establishing a single Protestant church called *La Iglesia Evangélica en las Islas Filipinas*. The mission churches used this common name with the denominational name in parentheses (Rodgers 1940, 163–64; Sobrepeña 1964, 32–34; Sitoy 1989, 11).

The possibilities for a single Protestant church were soon diminished by a separatist Filipino nationalism among some older Tagalogs of the Manila region. These converts to Protestantism included some who had fought unsuccessfully first against Spain to obtain independence and then against the American occupation of their country. The resistance to American occupation had led to the deaths of 200,000 Filipinos in a population of 6,700,000 and had engendered their resentment. These Filipinos wanted their churches to be under Filipino direction and to be separate from the North American churches of the missionaries. Nationalist breakaways took place among the Methodists in 1909 and the Presbyterians in 1913.³ To deal with the problem, the Presbyterian missionaries obtained the separation of their mission from the Synod of California. They became members of an independent Presbyterian church, which was self-governing but still received staff and funds from the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions (Gardinier 1994, 195–96; Deats 1964, 36–49; 1967, 98–100).

Eighty-five to ninety percent of the Filipino Presbyterians and Methodists remained in the churches organized by the American missionaries. From the very start the missionaries had begun to form Filipinos as ministers, evangelists, and other church workers, and to give them increasingly important responsibilities. The mission churches also provided religious instruction for both adults and children. The missionaries were aided indirectly through the creation by the American regime of free public primary schools teaching only in English. Most of the students of these schools who became Protestants were willing to take a more gradualist approach to Filipino direction of the churches. They recognized the need for missionary guidance as well as assistance in personnel and finances (Gardinier 1994, 196–97; Deats 1964, 43; Higdon 1939, 22–23).

The missionaries at the same time moved as rapidly as they judged possible to Filipinize the direction of the mission churches. Their action paralleled that of the American regime to transfer power to the Filipi-

nos in stages. Through the Jones Act of 1916 the American Congress granted the Filipinos greater self-rule, including control of both houses of the national legislature and all Cabinet posts except education. In 1920 the EU widened its membership from exclusively missionaries to a predominantly Filipino body that included lay representatives. While missionaries retained most administrative responsibilities for several more years, policy decisions now rested with the Filipinos.

In 1921 the EU elected its first Filipino president, Dr. Jorge Bocobo, a prominent Methodist layman. He was a professor of law at the University of the Philippines, and later would become its president. That institution had been founded in 1908 by the American regime to provide higher education in English to the graduates of the public schools. Dr. Bocobo had received his legal education in the United States, to which the American regime sent hundreds of Filipinos for advanced study. The graduates included some who later became prominent Protestant laymen and clergymen (Deats 1967, 96; Sitoy 1989, 62–63).

Despite the EU's achievements in inter-church cooperation, efforts to advance towards organic union failed. After 1915, interest among Methodists, who were more numerous than all of the other churches of the EU combined, began to wane. By the mid-1920s the Methodists, as Filipinos became more dominant in the leadership, showed stronger attachment to ties with American and world Methodism than to the churches to the EU (Deats 1967, 129–31; Sitoy 1989, 59; Sobrepeña 1964, 42). The Baptists and the Disciples of Christ were concerned about preserving their form of government, which places primary decision-making in the local congregation. By contrast, the Congregationalists indicated a willingness to modify this same form of government if necessary to achieve union. So did the United Brethren, who like the Methodists had jurisdictional bishops and a more centralized structure, and the Presbyterians, who had a synodal form of government, show readiness to compromise for the sake of organic union. Strong support for union continued among many Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and United Brethren missionaries and Filipino leaders in these three churches (Sitoy 57–66; Sobrepeña 1964, 42–45). In 1921 the EU authorized those mission churches that were prepared to move forward with organic union to do so without waiting for the others (Rogers 1940, 173; Sobrepeña 1964, 45).

Previously, in October 1914, two American congregations in Manila, one Presbyterian and the other Methodist, had merged to form the Union Church, of which some Disciples of Christ also became mem-

bers. While the Union Church arose to a certain extent from financial necessity and not just ecumenism, it nevertheless showed that an effective merger between denominations of different heritages could take place (Rodgers 1940, 130–31; Laubach 1925, 218).

The success of the Union Church, along with the impatience of a small group of Filipino ministers and professional people, many of them educated in part in the USA, and the encouragement of several influential missionaries, led in February 1924 to the organization of the United Church of Manila.⁴ Its core was an existing United Brethren student congregation to which numbers of Congregationalists and Baptists joined (Sobrepeña 1964, 48; Sitoy 1989, 67–68; Deats 1967, 102–5). “The aim of the creators of the United Church was to demonstrate the possibility and practicality of Filipino church union in the islands, and if possible, to pave the way for the union of all the evangelical churches of the Philippines” (Roberts 1936, 111). The United Church soon had 1,000 members (Deats 1967, 105).

In 1926 the Reverend Enrique Sobrepeña, a United Brethren minister who had recently returned from theological studies in the USA became its pastor. Sobrepeña was a strong advocate of both ecumenism and Filipino leadership. The United Church under his dynamic leadership became the main source for the creation of the United Evangelical Church (UEC) in March 1929. The UEC merged the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and United Brethren of the entire Philippines into a single church. The merging denominations borrowed their statement of faith and form of government from the recently formed United Church of Canada, which in 1925 had brought together the Methodists, Congregationalists, and a majority of Presbyterians with a form of government that included central direction, representative democracy, and congregational autonomy (Rodgers 1940, 174; Sitoy, 1989, 68–69; Sobrepeña 1964, 47–51; Roberts 1936, 140–41).⁵

Although the Disciples of Christ missionaries unanimously voted to join the UEC, their mission board reminded them that they were prohibited from receiving into church membership those who had not been baptized by immersion, which prevented their participation in the UEC. Earlier, in April 1926, the Reverend Leslie Wolfe, who vehemently opposed joining the UEC on doctrinal grounds, including the manner of baptism, separated from the Disciples mission. He subsequently would organize the rival Churches of Christ, which by 1941 reported 12,000 members (Maxey 1973, 42–51, 204–12; Garrison and

DeGroot 1948, 513). Organizational and doctrinal issues also prevented the Baptists from joining the UEC.

In 1933 the UEC had 33,490 members, of whom two-thirds had been Presbyterians. The Methodists, who experienced another nationalist breakaway by 12,000 members in 1933, had 76,300 members in 1935. (The secessionists organized the Philippine Methodist Church [PMC] headed by the Reverend Cipriano Navarro) (Deats 1967, 105, 125).

In February 1932, six independent churches in the Manila area, whose nationalism had led them to break away mainly from the Presbyterian church but which did not wish to join the UEC, with Sobrepeña's encouragement formed their own church, *La Iglesia Evangélica Unida de Cristo* (commonly known as UNIDA), and elected a bishop to lead them (Stevenson 1955, 31; Sobrepeña 1964, 52-53; Sitoy 1989, 75-77). The reluctance of the members of UNIDA to join the UEC resulted primarily from the continued missionary presence in the new church (Stevenson 1955, 31, 56).

In the meantime, the creation of the United Church of Manila and the UEC contributed to some further ecumenical developments. In November 1926 Sobrepeña and others in the United Church were instrumental in replacing regional Christian Endeavor Unions with a national Protestant Youth Movement. It served to bring together younger people from all parts of the country (Sitoy 1989, 42; Roberts 1936, 135-40; Sobrepeña 1989, 36.) Its goals included establishment of a "self-supporting, self-propagating, Filipino-led, evangelical church characterized by brotherly cooperation between its various bodies" (quoted by Roberts 1936, 138-39).

Also in 1926 the EU had appointed a commission to examine once again the elusive goal of church union while at the same time to find ways to give proper recognition to the growing role and stature of the Filipino churches. The commission's inquiry led to the replacement of the EU in 1929 by the National Christian Council and then in 1938 by the Philippine Federation of Evangelical Churches (PFEC). Both bodies involved Filipino leadership and the second made a strong commitment to seeking church union (Sitoy 1989, 73-74, 77, 81-84; Sobrepeña 1964, 39-41).

Developments during the Second World War

In early 1942 the Japanese occupied the Philippines. In December 1941 the government had forced the Protestant churches to join a

single Church of Christ in Japan entirely independent of foreign missions. The Japanese legally dissolved churches such as the Episcopal and Seventh-Day Adventist which refused inclusion (Sitoy 1989, 92–93). In the Philippines the Japanese interned most of the 250 American missionaries and their families. Thereafter they undertook measures to control the churches as a part of promoting their own imperialist goals. By uniting the churches into one body, the Japanese hoped to simplify the imperial army's dealings with them.

Ignoring the existence of the PFEC, the Japanese occupiers summoned a convention on 10 October 1942, to organize the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the Philippines (FECP). The president was Sobrepeña, the executive-secretary was the Reverend Matias Cuadro, a former army chaplain and pastor of the IEMELIF (the nationalist breakaway from the Methodist Church in 1909). Another prominent leader who actively participated in union efforts was a Methodist, the Reverend Francisco Galvez. In the 1920s through the Methodist newspaper he had actively campaigned against Methodist union with the churches that had formed the UEC.

The churches that joined the Japanese-sponsored body were the UEC, Disciples of Christ, UNIDA, part of IEMELIF, and several small Filipino groups (Sobrepeña 1964, 57–59; Sitoy 1989, 98–101). Sitoy notes, "Although it is doubtful whether the church officials who gave their assent had been properly authorized by their respective churches to do so" (Sitoy 1989, 99). The churches that did not join, such as the Methodists and Baptists, used delaying tactics to prevent their inclusion rather than outright refusal.

Despite their misgivings due to the Japanese pressures, Sobrepeña and the other leaders saw the chance to advance beyond federation to a greater extent of church union. Some of them regarded the influence of certain missionaries as an obstacle that was now removed (Sitoy 1989, 101–2). Under Japanese sponsorship and encouragement, the FEPC proceeded in April 1943 to organize the Evangelical Church in the Philippines (ECP). It included the UEC, Disciples of Christ, UNIDA, the PMC, many congregations of the IEMELIF, and two dozen smaller independent Filipino churches. Rev. Enrique Sobrepeña became the presiding bishop. Other bishops were elected for seven jurisdictional areas. Among them was the Rev. Leonardo Dia, moderator of the UEC, as bishop for the Visayas. Dia, because of the wartime conditions that cut off communications with Manila, knew nothing of the proceedings (Sobrepeña 1964, 58–60; Sitoy 1989, 103–4, 107).

The organizational meetings were marked by the absence of the Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, CMA, Adventists, and the rest of IEMELIF. These bodies were able to resist Japanese pressures to join because the tide of the war had turned against Japan by this time. Nevertheless, Maxey notes that “those Christians who could not for conscience’s sake cooperate with the United Church [ECP] had to go underground until the liberation” (1973, iii). After the creation of the ECP, its Executive Committee dissolved the PFEC (Sobrepeña 1964, 59; Sitoy 1989,104–7). By the time American forces liberated Manila in February 1945, the future of the ECP was very much a question mark, despite Sobrepeña’s hopes of holding it together.

The actions of the Protestant leaders who organized the wartime ECP would have negative effects on post-war ecumenical efforts. Concerning this matter Richard Deats, who taught at the Union Theological Seminary during the 1960s recalls: “I vividly remember Filipinos still bitter over what they felt was collaboration and opportunism with the Japanese, thus muddying the ecumenical efforts for cooperation and union” (Letter to author, 5 March 2001).

Developments after the Second World War

At war’s end UEC moderator Dia disavowed the ECP, on the grounds that neither he nor the UEC had ever formed part of it. About half of the conferences in the Tagalog and Bicol areas on Luzon, and all of those in the Visayas and Mindanao supported Dia’s position. A de facto schism was thus in existence. The rest of the constituency of the UEC that had been absorbed into the ECP supported Sobrepeña’s position that it should be retained. The supporters thereby hoped to maintain the union that the UEC had established with the Disciples of Christ, the PMC, and the smaller independent Filipino bodies during wartime. The schism was worsened by Sobrepeña’s declaration to the government that the UEC’s conferences in the Visayas and Mindanao had been absorbed into the new ECP. The leaders of those conferences learned of his action, which was without their knowledge or consent, only months after the fact (Sitoy 1989, 106–14; Sobrepeña 1964, 62–64).

Through peacemaking efforts, in particular, of Bishop Proculo Rodriguez of Mindanao, a reconciliation of the leaders of the two bodies occurred. It was decided in December 1945 that the two churches would remain separate for the time being; the question of reunion would be studied by a committee, and then representatives of other

churches that might want to join with them would be included in further discussions (Sitoy 1989, 111, 114).

The reunion of the two bodies was delayed by the devastation of the Second World War and the reconstruction. Japanese resistance to American reoccupation of the islands in 1944–45 involved extensive loss of life, including the brutal murder of church personnel, as well as much destruction and damage of buildings (Stevenson 1955, 33–35; Sobrepeña 1964, 60–62).

On the initiative of laymen at least as much as of clergy the pre-war PFEC was revived in January 1946 with three new members: the ECP, IEMELIF, and UNIDA. The PMC, whose membership had been opposed by the Methodist Church in 1938, was warmly welcomed. The bishop of the PMC was elected executive secretary of the revived federation (Sitoy 1989, 115; Sobrepeña 1964, 100).

In May 1949 the name of the PFEC would be changed to the Philippine Federation of Christian Churches to make possible the entrance of the PIC and the PEC. Nonetheless the persistence of the ultimate goal of organic union of the members into one Protestant church posed a stumbling block for them (Sobrepeña 1964, 100; Sitoy 1989, 117–19). “Because of divergence in theological understanding, religious attitudes, liturgical life and historical experience, such a union was too remote a possibility between the two churches of Catholic traditions and the Evangelicals” (Sitoy 1989, 119).

In the meantime in November 1947 the PFEC convened a conference on church union, which was attended by representatives of the ECP, EUC, Methodists, Baptists, PMC, and UNIDA. While the Baptists and UNIDA agreed in principle with the idea of union, they did not find it possible to take action at the time. In the case of the Baptists, their Convention had voted for union but had not yet obtained the necessary affirmative votes of their individual congregations. The Methodists began the process of submitting the Plan of Union to their Annual Conferences, which then referred it to the local congregations for discussion, and ultimately to the Central Conference. They had not reached a decision when the participants who were prepared to proceed without further delay met again in May 1948 in Manila and formed the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) (Sobrepeña 1964, 69–79; Valencia 1978, 97–107; Sitoy 1989, 116–17).

The work by Sobrepeña, who was the most important figure in the creation of the UCCP, is totally silent on the reasons for such a move. It appears that the haste shown in forming the UCCP resulted from the

desire to end the de facto schism between the ECP and the UEC without further delay, and also to retain the participation of those who had joined the ECP in wartime. Nonetheless this action had the effect of closing the door to entrance of the Methodists and Baptists for the foreseeable future (Sitoy 1989, 117). Another reason for the haste may have been the urgent need of the UEC churches that stayed with the ECP for material assistance from the U.S.A. A planning conference of the various American mission boards supporting the UEC that was held in the Philippines in 1946 had decided to continue aid only to the UEC and not to the wartime ECP (Sobrepeña 1964, 67).

The churches joining the UCCP were the ECP, EUC, PMC, and the Ilocano Conference of the Disciples of Christ. Sobrepeña (69–79) in his detailed account fails to mention either that only the Ilocano Conference joined or that the Tagalog Conference would join only much later, in January 1962. During the inter-war years the Protestant churches of the Ilocano provinces had held periodic meetings, from which ties developed (Sobrepeña 1964, 70–72). The cultural kinship with Sobrepeña may also have influenced the decision of the Ilocano Conference. Sitoy notes that the Tagalog Conference was not ready to vote on church union and thus was left out (Sitoy 1989, 134, note 25). A few congregations within IEMELIF and UNIDA split off to join too, but not the main portions of those bodies.

The UCCP announced its "readiness to continue to negotiate for an ever expanding church union with those now in negotiation as well as others" (Sitoy 1989, 117). The Methodist Church responded that the organization of the UCCP was in its view preemptive because they were still discussing the Plan of Union when the others went ahead with the union. The Methodists noted that since the union was effected with a complete hierarchical jurisdictional structure for the entire Philippines, there was no way in which Methodists could enter it except under a completely new and larger scheme of union (Valencia 1978, 95–96).

Sitoy sees a lack of understanding and rivalries resulting from various events of the previous years as the main reason why the Methodists did not join the UCCP in 1948. In particular, there was bad blood between the Methodists and the UCCP over the schism of 1933 that had led to the PMC. Minorities in the breakaway congregations who wished to remain with the Methodist Church brought lawsuits to seek retention of Methodist Church buildings, further embittering the situation (Sitoy 1989, 116–21). If Sitoy's view is accurate, one may ask why the Methodists undertook the process of consultation at all.

At its founding, the new UCCP elected four jurisdictional bishops whose territories encompassed the entire country: Northern Luzon (Sobrepeña); Southern Luzon (Navarro); Visayas (Dia); and Mindanao (Rodriguez). The new church union claimed a membership of 123,000, whereas the Methodists numbered 88,000 (Deats 1964, 103).

The new UCCP structure brought into question the comity agreement of 1901, which was already being undermined by other factors. After the UCCP's formation, the Methodist leadership charged them with violation and disregard of the agreement because the UCCP had divided the whole country into four jurisdictions. The UCCP replied that it was simply serving its constituency, which of course included the PMC and other breakaways from the Methodist Church. The UCCP complained that the Methodists were entering Mindanao and taking recently arrived Methodist immigrants from UCCP congregations where they had at first joined (Sitoy 1989, 121).

This last matter concerns the resettlement of tens of thousands of Ilocano and Tagalog farmers from Luzon to vacant lands on Mindanao by the Philippine government after the Second World War. Government action in the late 1940s was spurred by the Huk rebellion in Luzon. Thousands of landless Visayan farmers also arrived in Mindanao during the late 1940s. Methodist and Baptist settlers wished to organize their own congregations rather than to join the UCCP or CMA according to comity. Lay leaders in some cases were organizing the immigrants into congregations without the approval of their denominations' authorities (Beaver 1962, 291, 307-9; Tuggy 1971, 129; Deats 1964, 114-17).

Some of the immigrants noted that the conservative Protestant missionaries representing two dozen new societies who were arriving in the islands did not respect the comity agreement. An important part of the new missionaries represented bodies that were forced to leave China after the Communist takeover. Among them were various Pentecostal groups and Southern Baptists (Beaver 1962, 294; Sitoy 1989, 132-33, note 14; Elwood 1969, 374-80).

In May 1949 Bishop Jose Valencia of the Methodist Church formally inquired of the UCCP whether it considered comity valid and binding. In July 1949 he complained to the PFCC about UCCP violations (Valencia 1978, 100-103; Sitoy 1989, 123). After efforts to resolve the differences failed, the Methodist Church on 3 March 1950, declared the comity agreement no longer operative and binding. In 1951 the three Annual Conferences of the Methodist Church voted to extend Meth-

odist work outside the boundaries set by comity. Bishop Valencia was assigned the task of organizing Methodist congregations in Mindanao. In April 1952 the General Conference of the Methodist Church meeting in San Francisco extended the jurisdiction of the three Annual Conferences over the entire country (Beaver 1962, 313–15; Valencia 1978, 107).

A historian of comity, Beaver, notes that despite the demise of comity, the discussions on possible solutions of the problems “certainly contributed to the maturing of the national leadership [of the UCCP and Methodist Church] and helped to change the federation [PFCC] into a council of churches in which the Episcopal Church, PIC, et al can join.” The leaders in his view also developed a “much more thorough sense of underlying unity and dedication to cooperation” (Beaver 1962, 317).

The visit of Dr. Charles Ranson, a leader of the International Missionary Council, to Manila in December 1949 produced a proposal to replace the PFCC with a conciliar form of inter-church cooperation that could include the PIC and the PEC. The new body would be a conciliar fellowship rather than a federation (Sitoy, 1989, 124, 127). It would take fourteen years for this change to come about in the form of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) in November 1963. The new ecumenical body would result from several inter-related developments. The first of these concerned ones within the PIC and its relationship with the Episcopal Church of the USA (of which the PEC was a part).

The election of Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr. (b. 1900), as Supreme Bishop of the PIC in September 1946 led to the rejection of Unitarian beliefs introduced by S.B. Gregorio Aglipay in 1929 and a return to traditional trinitarian theology. Thereafter, in 1947, de los Reyes sought consecration of the PIC’s bishops by the Episcopal Church of the USA in order to obtain the apostolic succession that was a key element of Catholic tradition. Following the PIC’s adoption of the Articles of Faith, Constitution, and Canons approved by the Episcopal Church and the making of a Declaration of Faith, the American House of Bishops in November 1947 granted the request.

The consecration of de los Reyes and two other PIC bishops took place in Quezon City in April 1948. Thereafter, the three bishops consecrated the rest of their churches’ bishops, and the status of its priests and deacons was brought into conformity with Anglican norms. In addition, the PIC students for the priesthood thereafter pursued a five-

year program following high school at St. Andrew's Episcopal Seminary in Quezon City. A result was a much better educated clergy that contributed to a revitalization of parish life (Deats 1967, 83-84; Sitoy 1989,127).

In May 1960 the PIC proposed a concordat for inter-communion with the Episcopal Church of the USA. That church approved this proposal at its convention in Detroit on 22 September 1961 (Deats 1967, 85; Sitoy 1989, 128). Sister Dorita Clifford, B.V.M., observes, "The real significance of this concordat was that it recognized the restoration of wholeness of doctrine by the PIC, it brought into union two strongly Catholic elements within the Philippine Christian community, and it marked the coming into maturity of a group of Christians known over the years as Aglipayans, as the IFI (*Iglesia Filipina Independiente*), and finally as the PIC" (Clifford 1969, 224). The new arrangements left outside the PIC various splinter groups, including one numerous one that still adhered to Unitarian doctrines. The trinitarians led by S.B.de los Reyes were able to win a key court case against the Unitarian elements for control of the PIC (Whittemore 1961, 168-71). In 1960 the PIC had 1.5-2 million members, 36 bishops, and 580 other clergy. The PEC had 46,000 members, 152 parishes, and 62 clergy (Whittemore 1961, 171, 204).

A second development related to entrance of the PIC into the NCCP concerns the links between de los Reyes and Sobrepeña. From 1929 Sobrepeña, as a result of his ecumenism and his nationalism, and as moderator of the UEC, had worked for better understanding and closer fellowship with de los Reyes and others in the PIC. In 1946, after de los Reyes became the PIC's Supreme Bishop, Sobrepeña was made an "honorary bishop" of the PIC (Sobrepeña 1964, 101). Sobrepeña noted that as a result "some persons misunderstood these activities, and he was branded, in some quarters, as unfaithful to the Evangelical faith" (102).

According to Sobrepeña, "What brought the PIC into actual reunion with the other churches (the Reformed, Anglican, and Orthodox) was its membership in the East Asian Christian Conference (EACC). As chairman of this regional association of churches in East Asia and as honorary bishop of the PIC, Bishop Sobrepeña invited the PIC to become a bona fide member of the EACC. The invitation was accepted and the PIC joined other churches at the inaugural assembly of the EACC held at Kuala Lumpur in 1959" (103-4). The PIC delegation was

headed by Rev. David Villanueva, then president of the Supreme Council of Bishops. In 1960 at the suggestion of Sobrepeña, the PIC applied for membership in the World Council of Churches, and, with the full endorsement of the council's Anglican churches, was accepted. "Thus, the PIC came into actual ecumenical relations within the Philippines through participation in ecumenical affairs at the regional and world levels" (104).

Sobrepeña also played a key role in reviving the proposal to transform the PFCC. As chairman of the EACC and general-secretary of the UCCP, Sobrepeña convened an informal consultation on 4 April 1961, of 25 leaders from fourteen churches, including the PIC and PEC, immediately after an EACC meeting in Manila. The group saw church union as problematic but noted immediate possibilities for cooperation in evangelism, publication of literature, Christian education, social welfare concerns, and many other matters (Sitoy 1989, 124; Sobrepeña 1964, 106).

The participants at the meeting organized themselves into a special committee under the co-chairmanship of Bishop Lyman Ogilby of the PEC, S.B. de los Reyes, Jr., of the PIC, and Dr. Jose Yap of the Convention of Baptist Churches, who was secretary of the PFCC at that time. Faustino P. Quicho of the UCCP was elected secretary, and Sobrepeña, consultant. Following a further meeting in June 1961 the PFCC in September summoned a consultation that led to the appointment of a seven-member committee, with one member each from the UCCP, PIC, PEC, Baptists, Methodists, IEMELIF, and Missouri Synod Lutherans. The Lutherans had entered the country after the Second World War. The convention of the PFCC endorsed creation of a NCCP and called for a constitutional convention to organize it. The convention met in May 1962 and had a charter ready by August (Sitoy 1989, 125–26; Sobrepeña 1964, 106–8). The Tagalog Conference of the Disciples of Christ representing 39 congregations was also present, but later that month joined the UCCP (Sitoy 1989, 126).

At a conference from 7–9 November 1963, at the Episcopal cathedral in Quezon City, the Charter of the NCCP was approved by the PIC, PEC, UCCP, Methodists, Baptists, IEMELIF, and UNIDA. The membership of the last two named was also an important gain for the ecumenical movement. The Missouri Lutherans joined the NCCP in the late 1960s. De los Reyes was elected chairman of the NCCP; Ogilby, Sobrepeña, and Dr. Fidel Galang, a prominent Methodist leader, vice-

chairmen; Dr. Yap administrative secretary; and Rev. George Castro of the IEMELIF treasurer. The PFCC was formally dissolved in February 1964 and its assets transferred to the NCCP (Sobrepeña 1964, 108–110; Sitoy 1989, 128–29).

The NCCP had a looser structure than did the PFCC. Its charter makes no explicit mention of hope for eventual church union, which had been a salient feature of all of its predecessors since the Evangelical Union. Among the objectives of the NCCP are: promotion of ecumenical interests among the churches; creation of opportunity for discussion and study of Biblical truths; presentation of a unified stand on religious, moral, social, and civic issues; protection of fundamental rights; preservation of the principle of separation of church and state. The NCCP became a member of the WCC's Division of World Mission and Evangelism, and the EACC, which was later renamed the Christian Conference of Asia.

Within two years the NCCP began to show indications of its vitality and usefulness as an instrument of inter-church cooperation and fellowship. But the organic union among Protestant bodies, much less between them and two Catholic bodies, was no longer discussed (Sitoy 1989, 129–30).

Among the original Protestant missions only the Seventh-Day Adventists and the CMA were not represented. Adventists, however, were an associate member of the board of the National Council of Churches' Division of Overseas Ministries in the USA. In 1965 the CMA became one of the charter members in a rival national council of churches called the Philippine Council of Fundamental Evangelical Churches. The CMA and other prime movers in the formation of this council belonged to the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, which is the missionary arm of the National Association of Evangelicals (USA) (Elwood 1969, 374–80).

Prior to the Second World War, additional Protestant agencies had begun missionary work in the Philippines. Most of the newer arrivals, such as the Assemblies of God, operated on a very limited scale, in part because of the financial impact of the Depression of the 1930s (Sitoy 1989, 133, note 14). Between 1945 and 1949 ten more American Protestant groups arrived and by 1963 at least ten more. Whereas in 1941 there were 250 American Protestant missionaries, 75 percent of whom represented ecumenical bodies, by 1968 there were 1,143 missionaries of whom only 23 percent represented churches abroad which cooperated in the wider ecumenical movement.

Thus at the same time that most of the older Protestant missions and churches were knotting ties with the PIC and PEC, a new growth within Protestantism was taking place in forms not sympathetic to ecumenical ties with them (Elwood 1969, 375).⁶

Conclusion

The course of ecumenism between 1945 and 1963 was influenced by developments between 1900 and 1945 as well as by contemporary events. Ecumenism was practiced by the six Protestant denominations of the Evangelical Union and its successors in forms of comity and inter-church cooperation. At the same time their goal of organic union was achieved by only three mission churches (Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and United Brethren) in 1929 through the formation of the United Evangelical Church. Denominational considerations kept the Methodists, who were more numerous at the time than all of the other five denominations combined, the Baptists, and the Disciples of Christ as separate bodies. Whereas the Filipino nationalists who seceded from the Methodists in 1909 and 1933, and from the Presbyterians in 1913, organized denominational churches, the American-educated nationalists of the 1920s who formed the United Church of Manila and the UEC valued organic unity more than denominational particularities or international ties. The wartime Japanese pressures to unite all Protestant churches resulted in an enlarged UEC which included the Disciples of Christ and portions of the secessionist churches. The wartime circumstances also contributed to a schism in the UEC.

In the late 1940s the ecumenical movement would thus first be shaped, above all, by the priority given by Bishop Sobrepeña to healing the schism in the UEC to which his actions had contributed and to retaining within a single church the members of the wartime ECP. Sobrepeña and his associates were successful in uniting the UEC within a new UCCP in 1948, but they were able to retain only the PMC and the Disciples of Christ (the Ilocano Conference immediately and the Tagalog Conference in 1962). Only a small number of the UNIDA and the IEMELIF congregations that had formed part of the ECP joined the UCCP. While it was quite possible that the Methodists would not have joined the UCCP even after lengthy consideration of the Plan of Union, the decision of Sobrepeña and his associates to move ahead without awaiting their decision abruptly ended discussions for the foreseeable future. The nation-wide structure created by the UCCP further dis-

tanced it from the Methodists, who were already strongly attached to their links with North American and world Methodism.

The circumstances that led to the organization of the NCCP resulted indirectly from the new ecumenical links between the PIC and the Episcopal Church of the USA (including the PEC) as well as those between the PIC's leadership and UCCP Bishop Sobrepeña. Ironically, these advances in ecumenism took place concurrently with the arrival of new Protestant missionaries, most of whom were hostile to ecumenical ties with the older churches and who proselytized their members.

Notes

1. Whereas in the USA the Protestant Episcopal Church formed part of Protestantism, in the Philippines under the leadership of Bishop Charles Brent, the PEC emphasized its Anglo-Catholic traditions. It sought to form a bridge between Protestants and Catholics. The Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines showed interest in ecumenism only after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). The Iglesia ni Kristo, founded by Felix Manalo, a former Adventist evangelist, in 1914, showed nationalist, exclusivist, and anti-ecumenical tendencies.

2. The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, founded in 1908, in the course of time drew into its membership a majority of the Protestants of the USA and Canada. There were also state federations of churches, separate from the Federal Council, some of which predated it (Latourette 1961, 99-100).

3. Under the leadership of the Rev. Nicolas Zamora the Methodist secessionists founded *La Iglesia Evangélica Metodista en las Islas Filipinas* (IEMELIF). Led by the Rev. Gil Domingo the Presbyterian ones organized *La Iglesia Evangélica de los Cristianos Filipinos*.

4. Among the organizers of the United Church were Senator Camilo Osias, a noted educator; Leoncio Dacanay; Isaac Barza; Mrs. Josefa Martinez, a pioneer in social work, who later became the mother-in-law of President Fidel Ramos; Dr. Mauro Baradi; Dr. Gumersindo Garcia; Atty. Mateo Oceña; and the Rev. Juan Abellera, a United Brethren minister (Sitoy 1989, 67).

5. Latourette (1962, 143-44) notes that the Methodists of Canada, during a union of 1884, "had abandoned the episcopate, adopted a general superintendency, and given a large place to the laity. In that form Methodism had much kinship with Presbyterianism." A substantial minority of Presbyterian congregations rejected the union of 1925 and maintained the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

6. One should mention the extraordinary growth of the Iglesia ni Kristo. It increased from 80,000 in the 1938 census to 278,000 in the 1960 census. Its effective organization and appeal to the disadvantaged, including new arrivals in the growing urban centers, may account, along with other factors, for its gains (Sanders 1969, 350-65). In addition, by 1969 there were an estimated 350,000 non-Catholic Filipinos who belonged to "the many syncretistic groups of greater or lesser Christian orientation" and had no ecumenical ties (Elwood 1969, 368-69).

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