

Local Agency and the Reception of Protestantism in the Philippines¹

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Introduction: Protestants in the Philippines

In the year 2010, Protestants made up about 5 to 7 percent of the Filipino population, depending on how one defines a Protestant.² While small in number, Protestants have not been an insignificant presence in Filipino national life. For example, Gen. Fidel Ramos, president of the Republic of the Philippines from 1992 to 1998, is a member of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, a Filipino Protestant denomination, as is Senator Jovito Salonga, a famed politician and erstwhile opponent of President Ferdinand Marcos.

The Protestant variety of Christianity was introduced into the Philippines during the American colonial regime, which slowly established its rule in the archipelago over the course of the Filipino-American War that lasted from 1899 to 1902. The first Protestant ministers to come to the islands, therefore, were military chaplains.³ The pairing of Protestantism and American rule was not coincidental. Leaders of several (though certainly not all) major Protestant bodies in the United States of America, such as the Methodists and Presbyterians, were fervent believers in the righteousness of their country's invasion of the Philippines.⁴ Thus in May of 1898, the Presbyterian General Assembly meeting in Winona, Indiana "enthusiastically endorsed" the following statement coming from the Committee on Foreign Missions:

The peace-speaking guns of Admiral Dewey have opened the gates which henceforth make accessible not less than 8,000,000 of people who have for three hundred years been fettered by bonds almost worse than those of heathenism, and oppressed by a tyrannical priesthood only equaled in cruelty by the nation whose government has been a blight and blistering curse upon every people over whom her flag has floated, a system of religion almost if not altogether worse than heathenism . . . We cannot ignore the fact that God has given into our hands, that is, into the hands of American Christians, the Philippine Islands, and thus opened a wide door and effectual to their populations, and has, by the very guns of our battleships, summoned us to go up and possess the land.⁵

¹ This article "was written almost a decade ago, and there are details that the author would change and correct if it was being written today."

² *Philippines in Figures, 2014* (Quezon City: National Statistics Office, 2014), 27. The Census lists a variety of non-Roman Catholic Christian bodies, and whether groups such as the Iglesia ni Cristo, the Aglipayan Church and Jehovah's Witnesses should be considered Protestant is open to discussion, at least.

³ T. Valentino Sitoy, Jr., *Several Springs, One Stream: The United Church of Christ in the Philippines*, Vol. 1 (Quezon City: The United Church of Christ in the Philippines, 1992), 43.

⁴ Stuart Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 17-19. But see Richard E. Welch, *Response to Imperialism: The United States and the Philippine-American War, 1899-1902* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979) for the variety of responses from American religious bodies to the American invasion of the Philippines.

⁵ Quoted in Arthur J. Brown, *Report of a Visitation of the Philippine Mission* (New York: The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1902), 9-10.

The statement above lays bare some of the assumptions of those mission-minded American Protestants who supported annexation of the Philippines. (Again, it is important to remember that there was a diversity of opinions in the American public regarding annexation of, and Christian mission to the Philippines). First of all, these Protestants tended to be anti-Roman Catholic, at times virulently so.⁶ Second, and in a parallel manner, they were highly critical of Spain and its empire. Third, they saw true Christianity come to full fruition in American Protestant civilization. For example, the president of Wesleyan University had proclaimed in 1876, “The August Ruler of all nations designed the United States of America as the grand repository and evangelist of civil liberty and of pure religious faith. And the two are one.”⁷ Fourth, they believed (correctly) that their country would allow them to establish their own missions and churches in the predominantly Roman Catholic country. The Spanish colonial regime that had ruled the Philippines almost continuously from 1565 to 1898 had forbidden any form of religious propagandizing in the country besides that undertaken on behalf of the Roman Catholic faith.⁸

Historiography of Protestantism in the Philippines

The close connection between American rule and Protestantism in the Philippines has had a profound effect on the writing of Filipino Protestant history. First of all, the interest of researchers has overwhelmingly tended to be in the work and effect of American missions and missionaries in the Philippines. The importance of such contributions is, of course, very important, but it tends to overshadow Filipino elements in the history of Protestantism in the Philippines. Filipino agency tends to be muted: Filipinos come to be viewed as simply reacting to initiatives undertaken by Americans. Ironically, this view is duplicated in studies that are highly critical of American agency, where the foreigners are (often justifiably) seen as an authoritarian, even oppressive force. The second effect of the close link between Protestantism and American rule is that historians have been eager to investigate Filipino Protestantism in light of the political history of the nation. The long dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos only added fuel to the fire of academic inquiry of religion that has deep interest in national politics. As Oscar Suarez put it, “Since the early years of Marcos’ rule, the question of the church’s involvement in political life has been repeatedly posed from various quarters of Philippine society. Indeed, much religious literature published over the past couple of decades [since the early 1970s] sought to address this growing concern.”⁹ In such studies, religion tends to be interpreted simply as a function of politics.

While not denying the importance either of American missions or of larger political issues in the history of Filipino Protestantism, a fuller accounting of this movement seems to be in order, if for no other reason than what Paul Kollman calls the “World-Christian turn” in the study of the history of Christianity.¹⁰ This “turn” has been precipitated due to a historically rather sudden and

⁶ As we shall see later, the Episcopalians were an exception.

⁷ Quoted in Kenton J. Clymer, “Protestant Missionaries and American Colonialism in the Philippines, 1899-1916,” in *Reappraising Empire*, ed. Peter W. Stanley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 146.

⁸ Kenton J. Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines, 1898-1916* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 4. The break in Spanish rule was when the British occupied Manila for two years (1762-64) during the Seven Years War, but they made no effort to interfere with the Catholicism of the Filipinos.

⁹ Oscar Suarez, “The Self-Understanding of the Church and the Quest for Transformation: The Life and Work of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1992), 1.

¹⁰ Paul Kollman, “Understanding the World-Christian Turn in the History of Christianity and Theology,” *Theology Today* 7:2 (July 2014):164-77.

quite unpredicted shift in the demographic composition of Christianity: namely, that during the second half of the 20th century the religion has moved from having a majority of its adherents in the “west” (North America, Europe and Australasia) to the “global South” (Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania). In the academic discipline of the history of Christianity, the turn to World Christianity has meant that a great deal more attention is being paid to local agency, local religions and local societies, rather than primarily to foreign agency, imperial and colonial Christianity, and western empires. Again, the emphasis on World Christianity does not preclude the study of missions, empires, neo-colonialism or the politics of post-colonial states.¹¹ However, the primary question that needs to be investigated is how local adherents of Christianity have thought of and articulated their religion, both in theory and practice, in their particular milieus. Or to narrow the question, how have Filipino Protestants conceived of and lived out their own religious identities in their contexts, which have certainly been marked by American imperialism, but have included diverse powers and authorities beyond foreign rule? In these kinds of investigations, historians of World Christianity are being greatly aided by scholars working in the field of the Anthropology of Christianity.¹² This rather new sub-discipline foregrounds the ethnographic and analytical study of local variants of Christianity around the world, especially in non-western cultures and contexts.¹³

With the perspective on local people rather than foreign missionaries, at least three preliminary observations can be made about the introduction of Protestantism in the Philippines during the Filipino-American War and its aftermath. First, this period of political revolution and turmoil was also a period of *religious* innovation and creativity in the Philippines. The examples that immediately come to mind are the founding in 1902 of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, also known as the Aglipayan Church, and in 1914 of the Iglesia Ni Cristo. Both of these have grown to become not only national but international Christian denominations. Yet these were not isolated examples. In the Mountain Province (a geographic area that I have studied), numerous local religious movements sprang up before, during and after the Philippine Revolution, drawing on various Christian and indigenous tribal religious elements. Moreover, there was a revival of indigenous religions among the mountain people.¹⁴ If the Mountain Province is any indication, local religious revitalization and innovation were occurring in numerous areas of the Philippines.¹⁵ One can include here the strengthening and growth of Freemasonry – which perhaps can be termed a quasi-religious movement – during this era. Most significantly, the Roman Catholic Church,

¹¹ Arun W. Jones, “Scholarly Transgressions: (Re)writing the History of World Christianity,” *Theology Today* 71:2 (July 2014):221-32.

¹² For example, Fenella Cannell, ed., *The Anthropology of Christianity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Brian M. Howell, *Christianity in the Local Context: Southern Baptists in the Philippines* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2008); David Mosse, *The Saint in the Banyan Tree: Christianity and Caste Society in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

¹³ Simon Coleman, “Introduction: Anthropology of Christianity,” in *Oxford Bibliographies Online*. Article last modified October 29, 2013. doi:10.1093/OBO/9780199766567-0089.

¹⁴ Arun W. Jones, *Christian Missions in the American Empire: Episcopalians in Northern Luzon, the Philippines, 1902 – 1946* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003), 244.

¹⁵ See for example Reynaldo Clemeña Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979).

which had been active in the Philippines for over three centuries, had to reinvent itself in the wake of the American occupation of the islands.¹⁶

To say that religious creativity was occurring during the political upheaval of the Filipino revolutionary era is to distinguish between religious and political movements. This is not to say that the two operated independently of each other. No doubt Protestantism (as well as Roman Catholicism, ironically) had the backing of the invading American regime. Moreover, other religious movements were also using political forces unleashed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries to promote their own particular religious causes and options. One clear example of this is to be found in the early history of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, which harnessed the energies of the Filipino Revolution to establish a new version of Christianity in the archipelago in the early 20th century.¹⁷

Yet, as stated above, religious movements were not simply expressions of political movements. Filipinos could and did disentangle various religious movements from the political and cultural forces that accompanied them.¹⁸ Thus while from the American perspective, articulated forcefully in the Presbyterians' Winona statement quoted above, Protestantism appears to be an intrinsic part of the total American military, political and cultural invasion of the Philippines, from the Filipino perspective it could be viewed as a religious movement that could be employed for Filipinos' own personal, religious and political purposes.¹⁹ For example in 1905, Filipino Methodists working in the American Methodist mission in Tondo formed their own *Pulong ng Katotohanan* (Truth Society) for missionary projects and evangelistic services, independent of missionary control. This group became the bedrock for the foundations of a Filipino Methodist church in 1909, also independent of missionary control.²⁰ Religion and politics were related, but not identical forces.

A second general observation to be made is that one really cannot speak of Protestantism as a single movement when it is viewed from the perspective of Filipino religious history. From the American perspective, Protestants appear united (and were in fact rather united) because they arrived with the American invasion, and because the various denominations in the Philippines took pains to forge a comity agreement which partitioned the islands among various denominational mission societies, so no group would be in conflict with another. In this way they assiduously endeavored to present a united front in the Philippines.²¹ They also conceived of themselves as

¹⁶ Antolin V. Uy, "The First Three Apostolic Delegates to the Philippines and the Entry of Rome," in Anne C. Kwanten, ed., *Chapters in Philippine Church History* (Colorado Springs: International Academic Publishers, 2002), 160-181; Peter G. Gowing, "The Disentanglement of Church and State Early in the American Regime in the Philippines," in Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *Studies in Philippine Church History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 203-222; Mariano Apilado, "Revolution, Colonialism, and Mission: A Study of the Role of Protestant Churches in the United States' Role of the Philippines, 1898-1928" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1976), 177-79.

¹⁷ There have been far too few scholarly studies on the IFI. The most thorough, although highly prejudiced, work is Pedro S. Achútegui and Miguel A. Bernard, *Religious Revolution in the Philippines: The Life and Church of Gregorio Aglipay, 1860 – 1960, Volumes 1 & 2* (Manila, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila, 1961, 1966). See also Lewis Bliss Whittemore, *Struggle for Freedom: History of the Philippine Independent Church* (Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury Press, 1961).

¹⁸ Numerous Filipino Catholics, such as the three famous martyr priests Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos and Jacinto Zamora, were able to distinguish between their Catholicism as religion and the Spanish regime that had established and supported it.

¹⁹ See Ruben F. Trinidad, "Nicolas Zamora and the IEMELIF Church," in Anne C. Kwanten, ed., *Chapters in Philippine Church History* (Colorado Springs: International Academic Publishers, 2002), 203-24.

²⁰ Apilado, "Revolution, Colonialism," 255-57.

²¹ Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries*, 32-61.

presenting a unique version of Christianity – one that was summed in the term Evangelicalism.²² From a Filipino perspective, however, Protestant denominations provided additional religious options that were part of a much larger, rather varied and increasingly pluralistic religious landscape.

The biographies of the pioneer Filipino Protestant leaders Paulino and Nicolas Zamora, father and son respectively, are instructive in this regard. Paulino's uncle, Jacinto Zamora, was one of three famous Filipino Catholic priests executed by the Spanish regime in 1872 on charges of subversion. The Zamora family became embittered against the elements in the Catholic Church that had abetted the executions, and Paulino soon joined the Masons where he became a leader. He also privately started reading the Bible, procured from a sea captain, and subsequently became a Protestant. In 1896, at the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution, Paulino was arrested at the instigation of Catholic friars and jailed in Manila's Bilibid Prison, and then sent into exile to the Cueta Penal Colony in the Mediterranean. However, after the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1898 he was able to return to the Philippines. Once back at home, he became an avid preacher of the Protestant evangelical message.²³

Paulino's son, Nicolas, was born in 1875. Influenced by his father, he also read the Bible on his own, and converted to Protestantism as a young adult. Nicolas joined the Filipino revolutionary forces in 1896 and fought until the cessation of hostilities in 1898. Father and son then joined together to preach the evangelical message in Manila in 1899, before any regularly appointed American missionaries had arrived. The two were baptized by Presbyterians in October of 1899. Paulino became a faithful worker in the Presbyterian Church. Nicolas joined the Methodists in 1900, was ordained deacon that year and elder in 1903, and became one of their most effective preachers.²⁴ Disillusioned over time by the paternalism and condescension of a number of American Methodist missionaries, Nicolas in 1909 initiated the formation of the IEMELIF, Iglesia Evangelica Metodista en las Islas Filipinas (Evangelical Methodist Church in the Philippine Islands), the first but certainly not the last independent Filipino Protestant church.²⁵ As the lives of the Zamoras indicate, for Filipinos the Protestant denominations simply added to the increasing possibilities for religious innovation and creativity in the land.

A third observation that emerges from looking at Protestantism in the Philippines from the Filipino perspective is that there is no singular explanation as to why various Filipinos, in various parts of the country, experimented with Protestantism, which some of them embraced permanently (in whatever form). The reason for Bontocs in the Mountain Province joining the Episcopal Church in 1910 probably was very different from the reason for Visayans in Iloilo becoming Baptist in 1910, let alone in 1930. Local social conditions, political conditions, ecclesiastical conditions and religious cultures had profound effects on the establishment and development of

²² For helpful definitions of evangelicalism, see D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London and Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-19; Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 17-21; and Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 81-82.

²³ Frank Charles Laubach, *The People of the Philippines* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1925), 164; Trinidad, "Nicolas Zamora," 206.

²⁴ Methodists have a two-step ordination, similar to Anglicans and Roman Catholics: first is ordination as deacon, and then as elder (the latter being equivalent to priest in the Anglican and Catholic churches).

²⁵ Apilado, "Revolution, Colonialism," 255-57; J. Tremayne Copplestone, *History of Methodist Missions, Volume IV* (New York: The Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church, 1973), 185-87.

various Protestant churches (as did no doubt the strength, work, attitude and beliefs of the American missionary force of any church). Filipino Protestants then, cannot be seen as a monolithic group; they experimented with, joined and rejected various Protestant churches for any number of local and idiosyncratic reasons.

For the rest of this article I would like to explore some of the dynamics of Filipino appropriation of Protestant Christianity by briefly looking at two examples, one individual and one corporate, of adoption of Protestant Christianity. These examples both come from the early history of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines (ECP) in the Mountain Province.

The Episcopalian Mission in the Philippines

The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America sent its first missionary bishop, Charles Henry Brent, to the Philippines in 1902. He decided to initiate missionary work among several different groups of people in various parts of the archipelago, although unlike most other American Protestant missionaries he did not see a need to convert Roman Catholics to any Protestant tradition. One of the areas where the Episcopalians began work was in the Mountain Province, whose peoples by and large had not been Christianized by the Spanish, and who therefore followed indigenous cultures and religions. Mission work was begun in Bontoc and Sagada, Mountain Province, in 1903 and 1904 respectively. The two missions developed very differently. Sagada, where the pioneering male missionary was an engineer, developed as a mountain outpost of 20th century technological progress. It was an “engineer’s dream.”²⁶ Bontoc, on the other hand, became a center for translation work for the mission, producing Bibles, catechisms and other religious material in local languages.

The process of translation, as Andrew Walls has argued, takes the Christian gospel and transforms it by expressing it in new linguistic and therefore cultural terms. Through translation the gospel is reincarnated, as it were, so that it can be understood and received in its new cultural, social and geographical context; Christianity becomes localized.²⁷ So translated Christianity does not replace local culture, but rather is shaped and formed by it. Lamin Sanneh argues, in addition, that Christian translation can strengthen and invigorate local cultures that otherwise would be enervated and destroyed by outside forces.²⁸

Filipino Appropriations of Protestantism: The Case of Dr. Hilary Clapp

In the town of Bontoc, the work of translating Christian material into the Bontoc language, and of producing a grammar and vocabulary of Bontoc, was initiated by the missionary first stationed there.²⁹ However, the missionary, the Rev. Walter Clapp, had crucial help from local people: specifically, two boys, Pitt-a-pit and Narciso, who already in the first year of the mission (1903) had become curious about the foreigner, and had made themselves quite at home in his residence. Clapp first described Pitt-a-pit, an orphan living with his grandmother, as a lad who “seems to be

²⁶ William Henry Scott, “‘An Engineer’s Dream’—John Staunton and the Mission of St. Mary the Virgin, Sagada,” in Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *Studies in Philippine Church History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 337-49.

²⁷ For translation, see Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 3-54.

²⁸ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).

²⁹ The proper noun “Bontoc” refers to the people, place and language.

built on springs and can never keep quiet: his mind, too, is as active as his body.”³⁰ The two young Bontocs were instrumental in teaching the American missionaries the Bontoc language. In fact, in his reports to his Episcopalian constituency in the United States, Clapp describes the missionaries in Bontoc as “students,” and the two Bontoc boys as the “teachers.”

Two years after Clapp had first begun learning the local language, Pitt-a-pit was baptized in the small, rudimentary Episcopal chapel in the town of Bontoc. The conversion, however, was not an instantaneous affair: rather it took place over the two years, and entailed a gradual embrace of a religion that, on the one hand was significantly different from the traditional religion of the Bontoc, yet on the other hand had been expressed in the local Bontoc language, with all its particular idioms and thought patterns and vocabulary, by none other than Pitt-a-pit himself with a small group of fellow translators.

The Rev. Clapp illustrated the slow conversion of Pitt-a-pit through spatial imagery. When the Episcopal mission first commenced worship services in Bontoc, some mountain (Igorot) men and boys stood outside the chapel observing the Christian liturgy with lowland Filipino Christians (Ilocanos) already living in Bontoc as the congregation. The mountain people would stand outside the door, peering in, or would sit in the window. “By-and-by one boy, the (then) little Pitt-a-pit, ventured to get down from his perch and squat inside, very near the door. Some months later he was kneeling at the font, and daring, in boyish, half-conscious way, to step over the line into the new world.”³¹ Christian conversion was not an instantaneous change of heart and mind; rather, it was a slow, experimental process.

Given the missionary source and dearth of information on Pitt-a-pit’s conversion, it is difficult to say very much about his reasons and experience of conversion. However, it is obvious that Christianity provided, among other things, an avenue for new experiences and possibilities for the young boy. The faith introduced him to new ideas, to a new culture, to new views and visions of reality, without removing him from his natal and familial ideas, culture, views and visions. As translator, teacher and Christian, Pitt-a-pit could simultaneously live in different worlds: the world of his family and ancestors, and the world of the missionaries and their American heritage.

When Pitt-a-pit was baptized he took on a “Christian” name, Hilary Clapp. In 1906 he went with a group of other boys to Baguio, the new summer capital of the American colonial regime, to begin studies at a school that had been opened by the Episcopalians for children from the Mountain Province. Here the students continued to learn how to live in and deal with the American culture that had thrust itself upon the Philippines. Pitt-a-pit excelled in his studies, and was therefore sent to Ontario, Canada for further schooling. He returned to the Philippines for college and then the study of medicine in Manila. During his summer vacations he would come back home to Bontoc and spend time with his own people, “mingling in their talk and games, helping them in their harvesting.”³² After completing his training as a physician, Dr. Hilary Clapp was appointed one of two physicians at the government hospital in Bontoc. He settled down and got married, and spent the rest of his life as a physician, health officer and then politician in Bontoc and the Mountain Province. In the 1930s he was appointed one of two representatives for the Mountain Province in the new Philippine Legislature, where he spoke up for his people when crises arose due to the economic development (such as the introduction of new roads and transportation, and of mining) in the Mountain Province.

³⁰ Quoted in Jones, *Christian Missions*, 116.

³¹ Quoted in Jones, *Christian Missions*, 117.

³² Jones, *Christian Missions*, 127.

In 1935, during the transition of the Philippines to a Commonwealth government, he let American officials know that he wanted to be the new Provincial Governor of the Mountain Province. Yet the job was given to a lowlander from La Union. When the Japanese overran the Mountain Province along with the rest of the Philippines in 1941-42, they rapidly took steps to set up a new civilian government of Filipinos to run the country under their watchful eye. They asked Dr. Clapp to become the governor of Mountain Province, and after some thought he accepted their offer, in part because he would be the first Igorot (an indigenous term meaning dweller of the mountains) to take that position. From all the reports that survive, it seems that Clapp wanted to have a hand in safeguarding the life of the mountain people, and wanted to demonstrate “that a government run by the mountain peoples themselves was every bit as efficient as any of the administrations run by lowland governors had ever been.”³³ Clapp’s other great concern was the guerillas, many of them Igorot, who were fighting against the Japanese and hiding in the mountains. “He wanted to find a middle path which would prevent the betrayal of those who were hiding, but would at the same time ensure that the helpless civilian population was not made to suffer from the activities of these soldiers in hiding.”³⁴ The Japanese had quickly made it known that if guerillas were found active in any area, the village people in that area would suffer heavy casualties and violent depredations. Although Clapp had been in constant contact with guerilla groups and American missionaries in hiding, whose whereabouts he never divulged to their enemies, he was undoubtedly also working for the invading and increasingly brutal and ruthless Japanese regime. Clapp was therefore put on a guerilla blacklist, and in April of 1945, towards the very end of the war, he was executed by a guerilla force as a traitor. Posthumously, the American Episcopal bishop (who himself had been a prisoner of war) publicly exonerated Clapp, claiming that he had tried his best to protect his people who were caught between the crushing belligerence of the Japanese and the increasing demands of the guerillas.³⁵

The life and death of Dr. Clapp illustrate some of the ways that being a Protestant in the Mountain Province in the first half of the 20th century could affect one’s life. One broad way to conceive of Dr. Clapp’s religious, ethnic and national identity is to view him as a cultural broker – a translator par excellence – between the mountain people to whom he belonged, and the American and then Japanese colonial forces that occupied the mountains in his lifetime, and to which he also gave his allegiance. Dr. Clapp obviously used his Episcopal identity to explore new opportunities and vistas for himself, and to make himself at home in quite different new contexts.³⁶ He went from a boy who was totally unacquainted with American culture and civilization to a recognized physician and political leader within the American colonial system, and then to a provincial governor for the Japanese military regime. Yet at the same time his Protestant faith did not force him to forsake his Igorot heritage; he remained rooted and grounded among his own people (whether they were Christian or not). Like other Igorot Episcopalians, his religious identity allowed him to move back and forth between his people and different groups of foreigners – Americans, Japanese, even lowland Filipinos – who were to varying degrees ruling and controlling the Mountain Province in his day. He lived as a cultural broker, he died as a cultural broker, and being Protestant was a crucial piece of this role he willingly appropriated for himself.

³³ Jones, *Christian Missions*, 129.

³⁴ Jones, *Christian Missions*, 129.

³⁵ Jones, *Christian Missions*, 131.

³⁶ The story of his conversion and baptism as a youth in Bontoc already is a story of exploration.

Filipino Appropriations of Protestantism: The Case of Communities in the Mountain Province

The second example of Filipino appropriation of Protestant Christianity in the Mountain Province comes from roughly the second quarter of the 20th century, when communities in the province were actively soliciting the Episcopal mission to begin work among them. Such solicitation was a drastic change from the first decade of the century, when the Igorot were generally unresponsive to the work of the mission, finding it to be an amusing curiosity. Thus in 1925 the American deaconess Charlotte Massey moved to the municipality of Balbalasang (sub-province of Kalinga) in Mountain Province in response to repeated requests for a mission from local Episcopalians who were living there. When she arrived in the town, she was handed a petition from the “residents and authorized representatives” of four barrios in the municipality of Balbalan asking for an “Anglican Mission” that would provide religious education for their children who were studying in the public school. The petitioners handed over a students’ dormitory that they had recently constructed to the deaconess for her temporary housing, while a mission home was under construction.³⁷

The changed attitude of the Igorot to the Episcopal mission can be attributed, at least in part, to the changed condition of the Mountain Province itself.³⁸ From the beginning of American rule in 1902 until 1916, under the guidance of the Secretary of the Interior Dean C. Worcester, the Mountain Province had been deliberately isolated by the American colonial regime from the lowlands of Luzon and developed as an autonomous province under the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes. Its government was placed in the hands of American officials, who allowed for the preservation of local custom and culture within certain limits.³⁹ At the same time the Province itself became more and more internally integrated, as the government developed roads and trails, and established schools and hospitals throughout the mountains. Generally speaking, then, the Mountain Province until 1916 was developed as an autonomous province in the Philippines, with the American colonial regime increasingly accentuating cultural differences between mountain people and lowlanders, and the mountain people becoming progressively more reliant on and respectful of American authority and rule. Not unsurprisingly, Filipino nationalist leaders resented the ‘divide and conquer’ tactics of the American government. But so did the American Episcopal mission, whose work of Christianizing the “non-Christian tribes” ran afoul of the Worcester’s desire to preserve the Igorot as much as possible in some romantic pristine condition.

In 1916 the American colonial government decided to change its approach to the development of the Mountain Province, reversing the trend “to maintain the tribes like ethnological specimens in a vast preserve,” in the words of Governor-General Harrison. Lowland Filipinos were appointed to replace Americans in the provincial government. The government’s legal structures and statutes for the rest of the nation were now applied to the Mountain Province, which had heretofore been allowed to run largely on customary law. Economic activity between the lowlands and the Mountain Province was promoted through the building of roads connecting the two areas. The roads also brought lowland business people and other migrants into the mountain communities, who did not respect local customs or local understandings of land use and rights. With economic development came a cash economy, which created its own problems among a people who had lived primarily by agriculture, barter and exchange. In 1933-36 a gold rush

³⁷ Jones, *American Missions*, 199-200.

³⁸ The following is taken from Jones, *American Missions*, 204-19.

³⁹ Gambling and head-hunting, for example, were banned.

brought a sudden influx of mining prospectors and mines. Thus in the second, third and fourth decades of the century, the Mountain Province was invaded by the forces of what we may term modernity. It is in this context that the local people in the mountain communities started to turn to the Episcopal Church – as well as the Roman Catholic Church – as a way to deal with a new world.⁴⁰ That education was at the forefront of their concerns is not coincidental.

The religion of the Episcopal Church provided a way for the Igorot to inhabit and navigate two worlds simultaneously: the world of tradition, and the world of modernity. This is not to say that the lines and boundaries between the two cultural systems were sharp and clear, or were rigid and inflexible, or did not overlap in many cases. It is to say, however, that new economic, political and social forces entered the Mountain Province with increasing power after 1916, and many features of these forces clashed, sometimes violently, with local and traditional economics, politics and social structures. Episcopalian missions, which had preceded the forces of modernity in the Mountain Province by more than a dozen years, had developed the capacity to incorporate important dimensions of local tradition into the newly forming Christian communities in the mountains. For example, Episcopal Igorot were free to maintain kinship ties with family and clan members who had not converted to Christianity. Moreover, local customs could be incorporated – baptized, as it were – into the life of new Igorot Episcopal communities. Such incorporation made it possible for Episcopalian in the mountains to think of themselves as both Christian and Igorot at the same time.⁴¹ It was the ability of Episcopalian tradition to allow such a dual identity that explains some of the strong attraction of the faith to many mountain people – though by no means to all of them.

Conclusion

The preceding examples of conversion to Protestantism demonstrate that the reasons for such conversion were many and varied, as were the understandings of Filipino Protestant identity in a world of different possible religious identities. From the perspective of Filipinos who were at the receiving end of American Christian missions, the latter were not simply an extension of American empire, even though the two were connected. Rather, Filipinos employed their own criteria for appraising Protestant missions. The vast majority of Filipinos in the Philippine Islands, much to the chagrin of many enthusiastic American missionaries, chose not to enter Protestant churches. Yet whether they accepted, rejected, ignored, fought against or cooperated with Protestant Christianity, Filipino views of the various brands of Protestantism did not neatly coincide with the views of Americans who were responsible for bringing the faith to the islands. Much more study is needed in order to understand the great variety of ways that Filipinos have assessed and judged the various Protestant traditions since their introduction beginning in the first years of the 20th century. Such assessment will help bring to light the nature of Filipino Protestantism and Christianity in general, not only through history, but in the current day.

⁴⁰ For a history of the Roman Catholic Church in the mountains of Northern Luzon, see Daniel Verhelst and Nestor Pycke, *C.I.C.M. Missionaries Past and Present, 1862 – 1987* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995).

⁴¹ For example, see Jones, *Christian Missions*, 231-2.