

Dave Johnson, *Led by the Spirit: The History of the American Assemblies of God Missionaries in the Philippines*, foreword by L. John Bueno (Pasig City, Philippines: ICI Ministries, 2009), paperback, xvi + 676 pp., ISBN: 978-971-503-314-5, US\$ 24.95.

Finally, a volume that provides rich details of the Assemblies of God missionary work in the Philippines is in print! Dave Johnson's work is a modest attempt to present a comprehensive and yet very readable account of the missionaries who were sent by the Assemblies of God of the United States of America. He has also added much to the historiography of Pentecostalism in the Philippines, especially the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God. The title of his book, *Led by the Spirit: The History of the American Assemblies of God Missionaries in the Philippines*, is a nice descriptive title. Johnson depicts the American Assemblies of God missions in the many islands of the Philippines as Spirit led. This volume assumes that the presence of God guided and continues to guide the missionary endeavors in the Philippines. "God accomplishes His purposes through flawed people." (xv) Johnson is neither intending to offer a critical missions study nor undertaking to answer unresolved missionary issues in the mission field. He rather supplies a narrative account of the victories and tragedies, successes and failures, good accomplishments and sad experiences as well as beautiful reports and ugly stories of the American Pentecostal missionaries who worked with the Filipinos. And yet the Holy Spirit is acknowledged to be doing something in the midst of all these things. (see xiii-xiv) Although the center of attention in this work is the missionary enterprise of those appointed men and women from the United States, several Filipinos are also included in the rich data employed to explain the circumstances and events that shaped the history of the American Assemblies of God missions in the Philippines.

After introducing the Assemblies of God missions endeavor that came from the Azusa Street revival (1906-1909) in Los Angeles, Johnson points out that the missionary organization was established for global outreach. (1-2) The Assemblies of God is committed to foreign missions. Part 1 of *Led by the Spirit* is dated 1926-1945. These years were during the American occupation, followed by Japan's rule in the Philippines for about three years and finally the liberation of the country. The author recognized that although there were American missionaries that have come to the Philippines during the colonial period, it was the untiring effort of the Filipino-Americans who came

back to the Philippines that spread Pentecostalism to the archipelago. Furthermore, Johnson talks about the missionaries who were caught during the Japanese invasion of the Philippines and were put into concentration camp. It is also touching that the writer records how Filipinos risked their lives to bring food and drink to the incarcerated missionaries. (25-26) Providentially, General Douglas MacArthur landed in Leyte on October 20, 1944 and started liberating the Philippine Islands. (31ff.) All of the American Assemblies of God missionaries survived imprisonment during the Japanese occupation. They were able to sail from Leyte to San Francisco by March of 1945 and be reunited with their families. However, most of them were not able to go back to the mission field again. (35)

In Part 2, from 1946 until 1959, Johnson introduces this portion of his research by noting that Filipino-American Rudy Esperanza became District Superintendent of Philippine District Council of the Assemblies of God and later the first General Superintendent of the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God. (39-42) Johnson attributes the organizational growth of the Assemblies of God in the Philippines, along with the recovering and the shaping of the missionary work in the country, to an intermixing of Filipinos and Americans working together. This part ends with the coming of J. Philip Hogan on the scene due to the retirement of Noel Perkin as the executive director of the Foreign Missions Department of the Assemblies of God. (112) The author aptly puts Elva Vanderbout (who later became Mrs. Juan Soriano) who arrived to the Philippines on January 6, 1947 in a prominent place. She came to the mission field immediately after the war and labored for many years in the Cordillera mountains of Northern Philippines. (46-52) Johnson also identifies the role of the missionaries in the formation of crucial ministerial training institutions like Bethel Bible Institute (now College) in Manila (52-57) and Immanuel Bible Institute (now College) in Cebu (99-110). In both Bethel and Immanuel, Edwin and Oneida Brengle were involved. Likewise, the building of the Evangel Press (now replaced by ICI Ministries printing press) (69-70) and the well-known Manila Bethel Temple (now Cathedral of Praise) (73-81) were cited as important missionary projects. Missionaries also worked with Far East Broadcasting Company and many of them evangelized and planted churches in the different islands of the archipelago.

The next part includes the years 1960-1979. It registers the fast development of both the constituency of the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God and the American Assemblies of

God Missionary Fellowship. This is true in the numerical growth of church adherents and the quantity of missionaries in the field. Indeed Hogan's leadership brought growth to the missionary effort of the Assemblies of God world-wide. (115ff.) The increase necessitated the clarification of the positions, functions and roles of the missionaries as they work together with the locals. (see 115-132) Johnson is also perceptive in highlighting Filipino faculty members such as Eli Javier, Trinidad Seleky and Lorenzo Lazaro in the beginnings of Far East Advanced School of Theology in Manila (now Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio) with Harold Kohl as the founding president. (133-143) Developing a Pentecostal graduate school was ahead of its time in 1964. The International Correspondence Institute (now ICI-Global University) literature distribution and the radio ministry flourished. The Bible Institute for the Deaf and the Assemblies of God Bible Institute of Mindanao (now Mindanao Regional Bible College) were also born. The ministry to the Filipino-Chinese, Teen Challenge, evangelistic crusades and the Charismatic Movement brought more people to the Assemblies of God. (see 149-191, 209-266) However, this period dragged the Filipinos and missionaries alike into all sorts of constituency conflicts, organizational divisions and court cases. (193-208)

The succeeding Part 4 reports on the years 1980-2000. Johnson continues the candor of his narrative at this point commenting on the different ministries that the Assemblies of God missionaries were doing during the unstable political environment in the Philippines. Some of the highlights are the Agape Christian Fellowship by the Silvas, Asia Pacific Bible Schools Regional Office by the Anglins and Asia Pacific Media Ministries by the Sniders. (279-302) The momentous move to Baguio of Far East Advanced School of Theology in 1986 and the huge investment of the American foreign missions into the new campus that took a new name, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, make Johnson compelled to use many pages of his book for this institution. (303-340) He notes the input of David Lim, William Menzies and John Carter as former presidents in the Baguio campus. This is proper since FEAST/APTS became the only Assemblies of God graduate school in Asia Pacific, not just in the Philippines. It is also noteworthy that in the fourth part of *Led by the Spirit* the countrywide missionary programs came into fruition. For example, among many, the Christian Education Program, Philippine Healthcare Ministries, Child Care Centers, Barrio Church Building Program, International Correspondence Institute and other national ministries of the missionaries are described by the

author. (see 341-398) In addition, Johnson offers a survey of the work of the missionaries from Northern Luzon to Southern Mindanao. He uses five chapters to show how the missionaries have served all over the country. (see 399-515)

In the final part, the contributions of the missionaries to the Assemblies of God in the Philippines in the years 2001-2008 are once again outlined. Johnson commences this last section of his book in terms of “partnership” between the missionaries and the locals. (521-522) He portrays the working together of Americans and Asians in institutions such as Asia Pacific Theological Seminary – under a new president, Wayne Cagle, Asia Pacific Campus Challenge and Asia Pacific Media Ministries. He also depicts the Assemblies of God World Missions and the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God in parachurch works such as childcare and community services, children’s ministries, International Correspondence Institute, Convoy of Hope, discipleship programs and evangelistic ministries. (see 523-556) In addition the involvement of the missionaries in Faith Academy, Christian Academy of Baguio, King’s Garden Children’s Home and also in different islands in the country did not miss the attention of Johnson. (557-598) In the very last chapter of the book, as Johnson gives a recapitulation of the materials in his book, he reports that “a record-high number of ninety-seven missionaries was reached in 1989” serving in the Philippines. (603) Moreover, he maintains that “most of these missionaries served in the areas of ministry for which the Holy Spirit had gifted them.” (605) It is also noteworthy, given the nature of the unprecedented harvest time of the souls in the Philippines, that Johnson can claim: “The PGCAG continues to feel the need for U.S. missionaries to participate in what God is doing in the Philippines. While the missionary’s role is not the same today as it was in the past and will most certainly change again in the future, what has not changed is that missionaries of every generation are effective only as they are both empowered and led by the Spirit.” (610)

The author must be thanked for producing *Led by the Spirit*. At times he spiritualizes events and conflicts to highlight the notion that the Holy Spirit is guiding in the history of the Assemblies of God in the Philippines. Perhaps he is right, or there could be a better explanation. He is extremely cautious in avoiding anything that would be offensive to anybody. So, an “approval committee” was created and about 200 present and previous missionaries read their portion of the narrative and “made corrections.” (xii) But appreciation is due to him, especially in his presentation of the early history of Pentecostalism in the Philippine

archipelago. He is impressively careful in reconstructing the very early history of Pentecostal work in the Philippines. Johnson declares that “it must be noted that the permanent work of the Assemblies of God in the Philippines actually began with Filipinos, not missionaries.” (9) He names Cris Garsulao, Pedro Collado, Eugenio Suede, Benito Acena, Rosendo Alcantara, Rudy Esperanza and Esteban Lagmay as those Filipino-Americans who first returned to the Philippines in the late 1920s and the entire of the 1930s to spread the Pentecostal message and experience. (10-12) Esperanza and Lagmay who consolidated the Assemblies of God work in the Philippines asked the Americans for missionary help. (13) And thus, the Leland Johnson family came to Manila on December 24, 1939. Consequently, the Assemblies of God in the country was formally organized in March of 1940 with Leland Johnson as superintendent and Rudy Esperanza as secretary, Pedro Castro as treasurer with Hermongenes Hebrencia, Jose Maypa and Rosendo Alcantara as presbyters. (13-14, 16-17) The author also gives the credit to whom the credit is due. He acknowledges that the very first Assemblies of God congregation in the Philippine Islands was established by Cris Garsulao, a Filipino-American who graduated from Glad Tidings Bible Institute in San Francisco, California. Garsulao pioneered an Assemblies of God ministry in his hometown at Sibalom, Antique, Panay Island in 1928. He also started a Bible school in 1929. (10) The way Johnson depicts the beginnings of the Assemblies of God work in the Philippines is very objective. He presents the roles of the Filipino-Americans and American missionaries fairly accurate to the best of his knowledge.

Johnson’s sources are from American missionaries themselves and their printed materials as well as from local Filipinos and their available publications. He utilizes a lot of email communications, formal interviews and personal conversations from both Americans and Filipinos. Furthermore, he has gone through a lot of missionary records and interpersonal communications. He has gathered significant amount of materials to document his narrative. (see 627-676) Even though at times the writer avoids deeper issues in his reports of the conflicts, the attempt to report the events and personalities is carefully executed. The scope of his work starts from the very first American Assemblies of God missionaries to the Philippines. They are Benjamin and Cordelia Caudle who arrived in Manila on September 1926 to pioneer a Pentecostal ministry and served as field missionaries. (7-9) Throughout the book Johnson exhibits his mastery of names, events and issues that shaped the Assemblies of God in the Philippines.

Notably, the author ends up with the Assemblies of God missions work in the island of Mindanao until 2008. The creative ministry of the Blatchleys through Family Circus in Davao City as well as the Cooleys who served at the Bible schools in Cagayan de Oro and General Santos with the Stines who took the opportunity to reach out to the mayor of Surigao City and opened a children's ministry which concludes the book *Led by the Spirit*. (591-598) And it took five major parts with thirty-five chapters and an introduction, using six hundred ten pages to tell all of the American Assemblies of God missionary stories that the author knows. Johnson's retelling of these missionary stories is as good as his available sources. This volume is indeed an enormous and tedious research task for Johnson to finish but is now completely accomplished. It is a book that is worth reading again and again for reflection and reference. *Led by the Spirit* is a significant contribution for Pentecostal studies in the Philippines.

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