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## Early American Missionaries in Ilocos

*L. Shelton Woods*



The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was organized at Washington, Pennsylvania, in 1818. Of the first Protestant missionaries in the Philippines, the Disciples had the distinction of being "truly American" in origin. American Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians and the United Brethren missionaries arrived in Manila one year before the Disciples did. However, unlike the Disciples, their denominations originated outside the United States.

The early leaders of the Disciple churches emphasized the principles of Biblical authority, Christian unity and local church autonomy. These tenets formed their theology—a theology Disciple missionaries exported to the Philippines with minimal cross-cultural contextualization.

Between 1809–1874, individual Disciple churches attempted to carry out the "Great Commission." Their inability to financially support missionaries convinced them that a united missionary society would be the most effective means to evangelize the world. Despite the fear that a united society would compromise local church autonomy, the Disciple churches formed the Foreign Christian Missionary Society (FCMS) in 1875. It was under the auspices of the FCMS that Disciple missionaries sailed into Manila Bay in 1901.

The arrival of the Disciples and other Protestant groups in the Philippines was made possible in part by America's victory over Spain in 1898. During the previous three centuries Spain had prohibited Protestant missionary activity in the Philippines. Placing their

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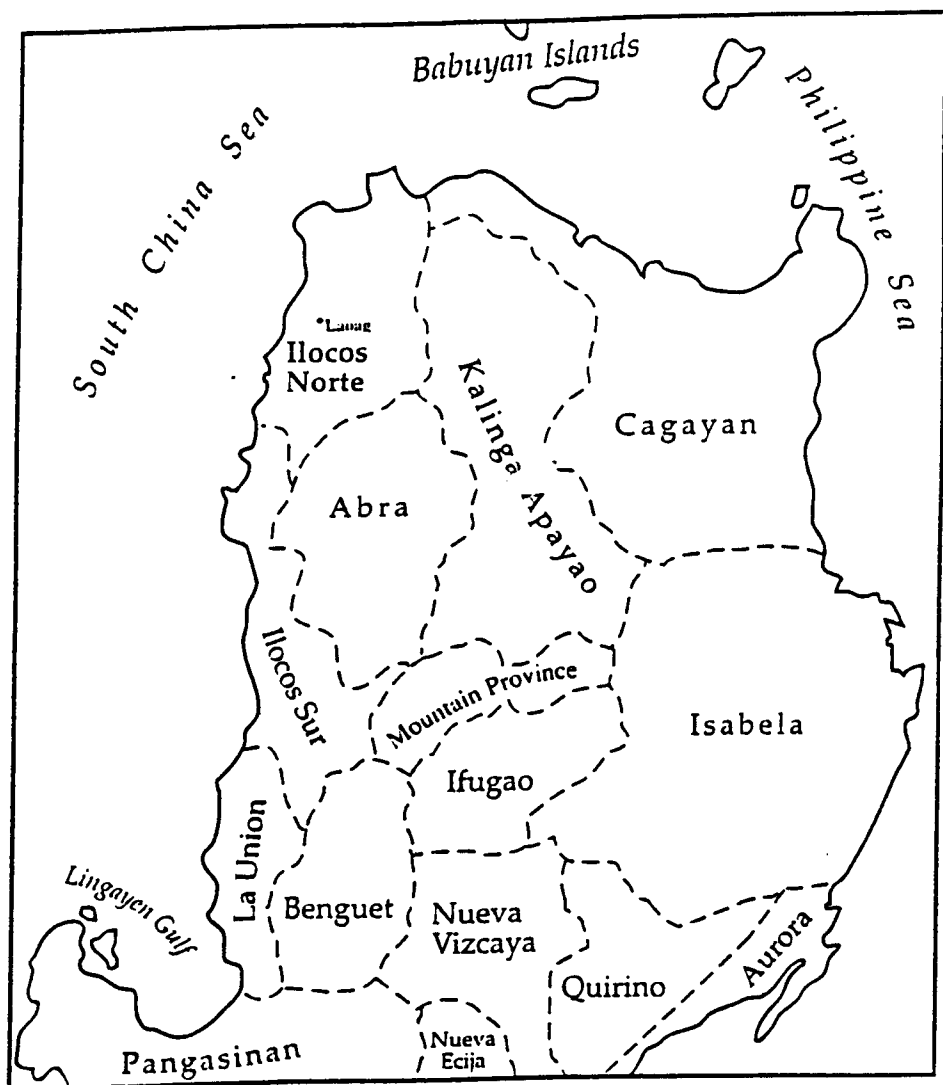
missionaries in the Philippines was the crowning achievement of the American Protestant leaders who had intensely lobbied for Philippine annexation. Once in the Philippines, the various Protestant missionaries took the unprecedented action of creating the Evangelical Union—an organization of Protestant groups. This union was created in 1901 to promote comity among the Protestants. One year after the Evangelical Union's formation, Disciple missionaries arrived in Manila and they too joined the ecumenical organization. While in Manila, the Disciples quickly became disheartened due to the sparse response to their message and acrimonious relations with the Evangelical Union. During January 1903, hoping to overcome these problems, they relocated their mission to the northern Luzon provinces of Ilocos Norte and Ilocos Sur—the Ilocano heartland (see map).

The primary focus of the Disciples' mission activity in the Philippines was the Ilocanos. Ilocanos at the turn of the century were the second largest ethnic group in the Philippines. Their interaction with Americans, however, predated the Disciples' arrival in the Ilocos area. Major military engagements during the Philippine-American War (1899–1901) took place on Ilocano soil. An almost forgotten aspect of Philippine history, the Ilocanos resisted the American occupation, which left a lasting bitter impression of American colonial rule among the Ilocanos.

American teachers followed the soldiers into Ilocos. Part of America's mission to uplift "our little brown brothers" included offering educational opportunities to all Filipinos.<sup>1</sup> Of the approximately one thousand American teachers who traveled to the Philippines in 1900 for this purpose, forty-eight went to the Ilocos provinces.

The Disciples were the third American group in Ilocos. They arrived in Ilocos full of hope and conviction that the preaching of the "true gospel" would lead to the conversion of thousands. But when they arrived in Ilocos they were confronted with an entrenched Catholic legacy and an emerging Philippine Independent Church led by the excommunicated Catholic Bishop Gregorio Aglipay. Once again, the mass conversions that the Disciples had anticipated eluded them—but they persevered.

For the first three decades of this century Disciple missionaries carried on their ministry in the Ilocos area. Economic depression in the United States forced all the Disciple missionaries to leave the Philippines and they returned to the United States in the early 1930s. However, their first decade of ministry in the Ilocos area was the most



Map of Northern Luzon

difficult period for the Disciples. More than half of these missionaries left the mission field after less than five years. Disappointments far outweighed victories and Ilocano conversions were sparse. Unwittingly, their lack of success may have been due to their attitudes and methods. Clearly, they were a product of their age. Public and private records indicate that the early Disciples' view of Filipinos paralleled those espoused by American soldiers, teachers and politicians. Western civilization was integrated into their message and they could not shake the cultural baggage they carried with them to the Philippines.

### **Roots of the Disciple Church**

The Christian Church (Disciples) began on American soil though its founder was a Scottish immigrant from Ireland (McAllister 1975). Thomas Campbell's decision to immigrate to the United States was a difficult one. At the time, 1807, he was 45 years old and in ill-health. But his circumstances in Ireland dictated the need for a radical change. He had spent his adult life as a minister in the Seceder Presbyterian Church in northern Ireland towns where he tried to supplement his income by using his house as a local school. However, his combined salary from these occupations was insufficient to meet the needs of a family with seven children. Thus, leaving his eldest son, Alexander, to care for the family, Thomas Campbell boarded the *Brutus* on 8 April 1807 hoping that America would provide the answer for his desperate financial situation.

America was kinder to Campbell. Upon his arrival in Philadelphia (27 May 1807) he was well received by the North American Anti-Burgher Synod of Presbyterians. Campbell was assigned to the Chartiers Presbytery in Washington County, Pennsylvania. His extensive pastoral experience in Ireland, combined with his education at Glasgow, made him the most prestigious pastor among Presbyterian churches in the area. With such promising prospects, Campbell instructed his family to join him in America. Unfortunately, his optimism about the future quickly faded. Campbell fell out of favor with the local presbytery due to his inclusive practice of offering the sacrament of communion to non-Seceder Presbyterians. The Washington Presbytery censored Campbell, accusing him of subversive preaching, "Mr. Campbell had failed to inculcate strict adherence to the Church standard and usages, and had even expressed his disapproval of some things in said standard and the uses made of them" (Young 1985, 31-32).

Frustrated by the pettiness and division in Protestant denominations, Campbell was nonetheless determined to restore the unity of the Church (Paden 1992, 43). With the support of a few friends Campbell broke with the Seceders and set out to restore the "ancient order" of the New Testament Church. In 1809, he wrote the Declaration and Address, which became the foundational statement for Disciple churches. In this document Campbell explained that his primary objective in starting a new movement was to eliminate the numerous Protestant denominations. Campbell believed this could only be done through an uncompromising return to the pattern and practice of New Testament churches. Thus, his ultimate goal was the unity of the Christian Church. In this newly restored Christian Church ecclesiastical divisions would be eliminated as the sole standard for the Church would be the Bible. His creed was, "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent" (45).

The establishment of Campbell's Christian Church was based on this unity/restoration movement (Hughes 1988). The Reverend Barton Stone, a popular evangelist in Kentucky, strengthened the movement by joining Campbell in 1832 (Jorgenson 1989). This union gave the movement a membership of 22,000. Less than 30 years later the Disciples numbered 192,323 (Paden 1992, 54). While Thomas Campbell and Barton Stone provided the impetus for the Disciples to unite, it was Campbell's eldest son, Alexander, who provided the Disciples with direction and organization. Alexander was more radical in his theology than was his father. While the elder Campbell stressed unity, the younger emphasized the need for a complete restoration of the church.<sup>2</sup> Alexander insinuated that the Christian Church had been lost since the New Testament days and it was only now being restored. And, according to Alexander, what better geographical location for the Church's restoration than in the United States? He believed the opportunities the New World had to offer immigrants and its citizens enhanced the eschatological promise of postmillennialism. Therefore, from its inception, the "greatness" of America fit in well with the Disciples' eschatological postmillennial hope of ushering in God's Kingdom.

### **The Foreign Christian Missionary Society**

During their first half century Disciple churches were nominally interested in foreign missions. In 1849 they created the American Christian Missionary Society (ACMS) under the direction of Alexander

Campbell. Only three missionaries were sent out by the ACMS during its first 25 years.<sup>3</sup> Two of these missionaries were forced to return to the United States due to lack of financial support from the ACMS and the third perished on the foreign field two months after his arrival. Paradoxically, disunity was the main obstacle the Disciples had to overcome before they could create a strong mission society. Disciple churches were particularly wary of joining anything that threatened their complete independence.

However, by the early 1870s Disciples could not ignore the facts. Missionary endeavors were growing at a feverish pitch during the second half of the nineteenth century and their ill-fated ACMS could not support one missionary. Consequently, at the Disciples National Association Convention of 1874 a resolution was passed that the Disciples organize a mission society. One year later, 21 October 1875, the Disciples formed the Foreign Christian Missionary Society. It was stipulated in the FCMS constitution that there would be three categories of FCMS members: life directors (contributors of \$500 or more), life members (contributors of \$100) and annual members (annual contribution of \$10). Disciple Churches were also encouraged to make annual contributions. The officers of the FCMS would include a president, three vice-presidents, a recording secretary, a corresponding secretary and a treasurer.

The FCMS continued to grow until 1919 at which point it merged with two other mission societies to form the United Christian Missionary Society (Smith 1987). In its forty-five years of existence the FCMS was a picture of stability and growth. It had but three presidents and grew from supporting two missionaries to 190. Disciple contributing churches increased from 30 to 3,173 and the annual financial support increased from \$1,706.35 to \$625,522.73.

Europe was the initial foreign field in which FCMS missionaries served. But by the end of the nineteenth century the FCMS had placed missionaries in India, Turkey, Japan, China, and the Congo. The Philippines would be the next country the FCMS would send missionaries to and in 1901 two Disciple families arrived in Manila under the charge of the FCMS.

### **FCMS in the Philippines**

Two unrelated developments put pressure on the FCMS to send missionaries to the Philippines. First, the patriotic duty of serving

America in its first colony was ever present among American soldiers, teachers and missionaries. The earliest American missionaries in the Philippines claimed that it was their spiritual and patriotic duty to serve in America's colony. Distinction between spiritual and patriotic motives were not made by these missionaries. In 1902, Episcopal Bishop of the Philippines Charles Henry Brent wrote that he came to the Philippines in order "to serve the nation and the kingdom of righteousness" (Taft Papers 1902). The FCMS felt the same way. Archibald McLean, the third and final president of the FCMS, indicated that patriotism was a prime factor in sending Disciple missionaries to the Philippines, "A wonderful interest in these islands was developed. Churches and individual Christians were anxious to see them occupied. Several societies hurried on men and women to open missions. That was considered a patriotic no less than a Christian duty. The Disciples shared this feeling" (McLean 1912, 112).

Captain H. P. Williams provided the FCMS with its second impetus to send missionaries to the Philippines. Hermon Porter Williams (1872-1958) was born and raised in Iowa. He received his A.B. degree from the State University of Iowa in 1895 and his B.D. from Drake University one year later. Between 1896 and 1898 he pastored at Ames, Iowa. On 12 October 1898, he married Beulah MacFarland, a 1897 graduate of the State University of Iowa. Williams had volunteered earlier in 1898 to serve as Captain and Chaplain of the Fifty-first Iowa Infantry and in November of that year the Fifty-first was sent to the Philippines. The men of the Iowa Fifty-first faced heavy combat, particularly in Cavite, San Roque and San Fernando.

Upon their return to the United States on 22 October 1899, Hermon and Beulah Williams travelled to Chicago where they attended the winter session at the University of Chicago. In early 1901, Mr. Williams accepted a pastorate at Jefferson, Iowa. Throughout 1900 and early 1901 Williams repeatedly urged the FCMS to send missionaries to the Philippines. His persistent prodding bore fruit. In 1901 the FCMS commissioned two families as full-time missionaries in the Philippines. The Williamses and William and Elinor Hanna were these first two families.

These two families were scheduled to depart for the Philippines in the summer of 1901; however, the Williamses departure was delayed due to the impending birth of their child. Consequently, on 3 August 1901, the Hannas arrived in Manila as the first Disciple family in the Philippines. Four months later they were joined by the Williamses.



During their first eighteen months in the Philippines the Disciple missionaries worked in Manila. Various problems caused them to leave Manila and they moved their mission to the Ilocano province of Ilocos Norte in January 1903. They chose Laoag, the capital of Ilocos Norte, as their base of operations. During the next seven years the Williamses and Hannas were joined by fellow Disciple missionaries Drs. Cyrus and Leta Pickett (1903), Mr. Bruce and Mrs. Ethel Kershner (1905), Mr. Leslie and Mrs. Carrie Wolfe (1907), Mr. John Lord (1907), Ms. Inez Logan (1908), Ms. Sylvia Siegfried, and Dr. William and Mrs. Daisy Lemmon (1909).

With the additional personnel support, the Disciples eventually established three bases of operation: Laoag, Manila, and Vigan, the capital of Ilocos Sur. Each of these centers had its own particular strength. The skills of the Disciple personnel at each site determined each center's emphasis. When the Picketts arrived in 1903 they joined the Williamses and Hannas in Laoag. The Picketts set up a medical clinic and Laoag became the center for the Disciples' medical work. After the arrival of the Picketts the Williamses moved to the neighboring province of Ilocos Sur. They chose its capital, Vigan, as their home. Mr. Williams was particularly skilled in translation work. By 1903 he was fluent in Tagalog, Spanish and Ilocano. He wrote and published the first English/Ilocano dictionary of grammar in 1908. Due to his linguistic prowess Vigan became the Disciples' center for translating and publishing. With the Picketts and Hannas in Laoag and the Williamses in Vigan, the next FCMS missionary family in the Philippines, the Kershners (1905), were assigned to Manila. Mr. Kershner had been a professor of Greek language and literature at Bethany College (1903-1905) and a professor of Latin language and literature at Kee Mar College (1905) prior to his work in the Philippines. He therefore became a teacher at the Union Theological Seminary, a training school established by the Evangelical Union. Manila was designated as the theological training center for the FCMS mission in the Philippines.

Since two of the three FCMS sites were among the Ilocanos and the missionaries with the most seniority served in the Ilocano area, the emphasis of the Disciples' ministry was among the Ilocanos. More Disciple churches, converts, missionaries, and funds went to the Ilocanos than any other Filipino ethnic group. Thus, the focus of this study is on the Disciples' work among the Ilocanos.

## The Ilocanos

Ilocanos are the most geographically widespread Filipino ethnic group. They are scattered not only throughout the Philippines but also the world. It was the Ilocanos that the Hawaii plantation recruiters turned to in the 1920s to help in the Hawaiian fields (Lasker 1931, 262–63). Ilocanos have the reputation among other Filipinos of being economical (Riguera 1970, 2:7–16). They work hard and are willing to relocate because the limited arable geography in Ilocos is not as conducive to agriculture production as other parts of the archipelago (Smith 1981). Kinship ties are particularly strong among Ilocanos and world wide webs of family networks allow Ilocanos to find financial and emotional support wherever they relocate (Cadiz 1982, 2:8–24).

Augustinian friars began the process of Christianizing the Ilocanos in the latter decades of the sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Ilocanos converted en masse to Catholicism yet they held on to animistic rituals and practices and integrated their indigenous beliefs with Catholic doctrine. This synchronism of animism and Catholic dogma, which is the religion of most Ilocanos, is termed folk-Christianity (Jocano 1981). Disciple missionaries hoped to change the Ilocano's "primitive" religion. But the Disciples were not the first American group to try and change Ilocanos; in fact, they were the third.

The first two American groups that had contact with the Ilocano were American soldiers and teachers. Ilocano resistance to America's occupation of the Philippines led to armed conflict between American and Ilocano soldiers. Bloody confrontations between Ilocanos and Americans led to bitter fighting with each side responsible for atrocities (Ochosa 1989 and Scott 1986). Samuel Young, the American general assigned to quash the Ilocano "rebellion," implemented draconian laws to limit the possibilities of Ilocano rebellion at the grass-roots level (Young Papers 1899).

Excerpts from the personal letters of American soldiers stationed in Ilocos demonstrate that most of them had little respect for the Ilocanos.<sup>5</sup> But if American soldiers were demeaning in their treatment and comments of Ilocanos they were only following the footsteps of their leaders. General Young's many statements about Ilocanos indicate that he viewed them as less than equal to himself and his race:

The policy of the Government and public opinion in the United States concerning the government of these Islands is founded on the belief

that these people are somewhat similar to civilized people and that they have a moral sense. This is a mistake. If the majority of them ever had a moral sense, it has been carefully eliminated. The Spaniards and other European nations who have had dealings with this kind of people have learned this and treat rebellious subjects the way they appreciate and do not accord them the same treatment as is given civilized races but control them by methods which are effective. (National Archives, RG 395)

Young concluded, "These people are very secretive and as they have no idea of truth, or honor as we understand the word, it is difficult to find out the truth about anything" (RG 395).

Confrontation between the Ilocano Catholic clergy and Americans also occurred prior to the arrival of the Disciples in Ilocos. During the Philippine-American War, American soldiers ascribed the Ilocano resistance to the Catholic clergy. At the time most of the Catholic clergy in Ilocos were unsanctioned Ilocano priests. These Ilocano priests had replaced the recently departed Spanish clergy. The few remaining Spanish priests allied with the Americans in hopes that the Americans would protect their positions and possessions.

Conflict between American soldiers and the Ilocano Catholic clergy was largely based on the anti-Catholic bias prevalent among American Protestants at the time. Early twentieth century Protestants in the United States pejoratively referred to Catholics and Catholicism as "papists" and "popery." The majority of the American soldiers in Ilocos were Protestants and thus the hatred of the Ilocano Catholic clergy was a mixture of racist and religious prejudice. One example of how the soldiers felt toward the Ilocano priests is found in a letter penned by Private Milton G. Nixon (1900):

The priests have no love for us because they are bitterly against the U.S. government. We cordially hate them in return and in case of an attack here would not hesitate to waste a Krag bullet on them, for a more selfish, cruel, and rapacious class never lived. They refused for a while to salute the U.S. flag (as all over here have to do) but the butt of a gun applied to them showed them that the United States and not the pope of Rome is supreme in these islands...I would rather send a bullet through one of these black-robed cut-throat robbers than through Aguinaldo.

General Arthur McArthur understood that part of the Ilocano resistance was religiously inspired. Ilocanos did not want the Spanish

priests to retain their previous position. Accordingly he assured the Ilocanos that a Spanish friar would not be reinstated to a parish unless the congregation called for his reinstatement.<sup>6</sup>

Emilio Aguinaldo, the leader of the Philippine resistance, was captured on 23 March 1901. This led to the diminution of Ilocano resistance. American soldiers withdrew from Ilocos but within months were replaced by American teachers. The United States panacea for the Philippines was a complete stamping out of Filipino "ignorance" through the education of its youth. Act 74 of the Philippine Commission authorized the sending of up to 1,000 American teachers to the Philippines. Their salaries would range from \$75 to \$125 monthly for a two-year contract. Teachers who stayed a third year would receive a free return passage to the United States in addition to their monthly salary (Lardizabal 1956).

There were over 8,000 applications for the teaching positions. Philanthropy was not the principal reason these teachers crossed the Pacific. Many of them noted it was a desire for travel, a possible reunion with a husband or fiancé, botanical and anthropological studies and gold mining which brought them to the Philippines (Lardizabal 1956, 32). A few of these first teachers did travel to the Philippines in order to "Christianize" the Filipinos. George N. Shafer, one of the early American teachers reported, "I also had a missionary spirit and thought in some way I might further the gospel among the Filipinos. I had no idea that the Roman Catholic Church was so strong among the Filipinos until I arrived in the Islands" (29).

The general goal of the American teachers was to Americanize the Filipino youth. Fred W. Atkinson, the first director of the Philippine Education Bureau, set the tone for the American teachers under his authority by stating, "The home Government demands rightly that as soon as possible the people of these Islands shall become Americanized. We must begin with the child" (Atkinson 1902, 85:363). Implicit in the desire to Americanize Filipinos was the American attitude that Filipinos needed to be changed. Derogatory comments about Filipinos are found throughout these educators' records. A typical example of such comments are found in a 1905 article written by Willard French. He based this article on interviews conducted with American teachers throughout the Philippines:

In the first place, there is no such thing as a Filipino Nation. Such a heterogeneous conglomeration does not exist in any other country on the earth....The only qualities which the people of the Philippines pos-

sess in common are ignorance and bigotry. They are distinctly childish; whimsically, often unreasonably, sometimes obstinately childish, as a perfectly natural result of three centuries of most superficial Christianity and subjugation, grafted upon aboriginal Orientalism. (French 1905, 548)

In 1901 forty eight American teachers were assigned to the Ilocos area (eighteen in Ilocos Norte and thirty in Ilocos Sur). Two of these teachers, Mr. D. G. Gunnell and Mr. R. H. Damon, became valuable helpers to the Disciple missionaries. It is significant that these teachers were reprimanded by Mr. O'Reiley, the provincial superintendent, for bringing religion into the classroom.<sup>7</sup> Damon and Gunnell quit using the classroom for religious instruction but continued to use their personal time for the propagation of their beliefs. The Disciple missionaries were grateful for this unexpected assistance and chided the superintendent for not allowing religion to be taught in the classroom. They viewed this prohibition as an "un-American" act on the part of the American education authorities in the Philippines.<sup>8</sup>

By the time the Disciples made their way to Ilocos and established mission centers at Laoag and Vigan, Ilocanos had grown accustomed to the presence of Americans. Also, a pattern of smug American superiority over Ilocanos was set by the first two American organizations in Ilocos. Would the Disciples break this pattern? Would they be agents of the Christian message or agents of an ethnocentric nation? Records indicate that the Disciples followed the pattern of the American soldiers and teachers with the caveat that they remained among the Ilocanos longer than did the soldiers and teachers.

### **The Disciples' Mission Work**

At the outset of their mission work in Ilocos the Disciples were cautiously optimistic. They were in an area in which no other Protestant denomination had established a "permanent work."<sup>9</sup> More importantly, they were far from Manila. The first year in the capital city had been difficult for the Disciple missionaries. Their labors in Manila had been met with "complete apathy" on the part of the Filipino people. The lack of conversions galled Hanna. On his one-year anniversary in Manila he wrote, "The first difficulty encountered has been that of keeping at it—a personal difficulty. Coming, as I did, from a field where about every invitation of the gospel brought a

response, and where there were hearers numbered by the hundred at every service, this new and unresponsive field vexed my soul" (Hanna 1902, 15:372).

The inability of the FCMS missionaries to communicate with the Filipinos, in part, accounted for the minimal results in Manila. These missionaries had learned Spanish but found that only the Filipino elite and educated spoke this language and the elite were less likely to leave the Catholic Church.<sup>10</sup> Unable to preach in Tagalog, the Hannas and Williamses decided to organize an English-speaking congregation in Manila. But at the time, very few Filipinos spoke English and the American teachers and bureaucrats had other priorities on Sundays.<sup>11</sup> Out of frustration Hanna complained that the godless example set by the highest ranking Americans in the Philippines accounted for the general indifference to the gospel, "There is not a member of the Civil Commission, outside of native members, that goes to church on Sundays. He who proclaimed a day of Thanksgiving, and exhorted Americans to seek their accustomed place of worship, never went near. All this influences the young clerks, away from mother, sister, home, friends, to exchange religion for irreligion, or, at least, indifference" (Hanna 1902, 373).

Manila was also the home of the Evangelical Union. This ecumenical organization, which the Disciples joined in 1901, proved to be an albatross around their neck. Paradoxically, the Disciples, whose very founding was based on the call for Christian unity, were the most divisive group among the Evangelical Union members.<sup>12</sup> A closer examination of the Disciples' theology demonstrates why they were so divisive: they believed that their theology was exclusively true and they would not "compromise" the truth for the sake of social acceptance. Thus, any denomination that did not practice post-salvation baptism by immersion was not following the pattern of the Bible. To the Disciples, the Bible was the only authority.<sup>13</sup> The early stormy relations the Disciples had with the Evangelical Union set the pattern for future volatile arguments between Disciples and other denominations. Disciple historians dispute the acrimonious relations their missionaries had with other Protestants missionaries in the Philippines, but the records do not corroborate their assertions of "complete comity" between the Disciples and the Evangelical Union.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, relations between Disciple and Methodist missionaries deteriorated to the point that the Methodists accused the Disciples of trying to reconvert their converts. The Disciples did not deny this and replied:

It is also our "plan" that our preachers shall conform, in just as much as is in their power to the example of the early disciples of Christ and go "everywhere preaching the word." [sic] We have told them that the Psalmist David, inspired and guided by the spiriy [sic] of Jehovah, gave utterance to the fact that 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness [sic] thereof; the world and they that dwell therein'. [sic] And this being true no religious body either Roman Catholic or Protestant holds a mortgage on any particular section thereof which they can close down at will and up the sign "*No more hunting on these grounds.*" (Pickett Papers 1907)

So, Laoag, Ilocos Norte was supposed to be a fresh break from Manila for the Disciple missionaries. They were away from the Evangelical Union and the godless American bureaucrats. But in coming to Ilocos during 1903 the Disciples stepped into a religious hornet's nest. The Philippine Independent Church led by Bishop Aglipay had split from the Catholic Church in 1902 with tens of thousands of Ilocanos joining this new Church (Sobrepena 1965). These two competing churches caused Catholic and Aglipayan priests to be more vigilant over their congregations. Thus, the Disciples entered a region that had just experienced radical religious changes. It was unlikely that Ilocanos would be prepared to change their newly established or recently confirmed religion for something different. Disciple missionaries found this to be the case. Conversions and baptisms during the first three years totalled less than 500.

Disciples tried to explain their lack of results to their American supporters. They needed scape-goats and found them in the Filipino people. In correspondence Disciples asserted that it was difficult to convert Ilocanos because as a race their faculties of reason were skewed. Generalizations were made about the inability of Filipinos to comprehend concepts such as money management. Disciple missionaries claimed these character deficits made it virtually impossible for mass conversion to take place among the Ilocanos. "There are two reasons for the work becoming more difficult," wrote an early Disciple missionary from Laoag,

One is the natural carelessness and indifference of the people. It takes a little less effort of the brain to go to the river fishing than it does to study the Bible. Since they have been brought up to tell something rather than the truth, it is a little easier to do that than to make the effort to keep them from it if they go by Bible teaching. We are often

so impatient for results that we forget that, had we been reared with such ancestry, and such teaching from time immemorial, we probably would feel and think as they do. (Siegfried 1910, 23:349-50)

The theological inconsistencies in this report apparently escaped the editor and perhaps the readers as the Disciples believed that all humanity had a common ancestry.

Dr. Pickett, who was also stationed in Laoag, complained about the "absolute untrustworthiness of native helpers" in assisting at the medical clinic. His solution for the Ilocano's lack of character was to bring in more Americans.<sup>15</sup> Disciple missionaries claimed that Filipinos themselves preferred American missionaries over Filipino pastors because of "the prestige of his (American) race" (Williams 1910, 16-17). If Americans could not be sent to reinforce the missionaries, the Disciples believed the second solution was to try and make Ilocanos become more American. Miss Siegfried encouraged her colleagues by noting, "We should try to correct this natural vice of indolence which we find in the native by laboring more earnestly ourselves to set him the example and to show him by positive advice rather than from a negative standpoint that such conduct will never win for him a place in heaven any more than it will win him riches upon earth" (Siegfried 1910, 350).

But it was not only the natural "indolence" that the missionaries wanted Ilocanos to change. Hoary Ilocano beliefs and "superstitions" were likewise attacked by the missionaries. Ilocanos have a long tradition of practicing rituals based on animistic beliefs. Ceremonial death and burial practices are particularly important to Ilocanos and great precision is exercised in carrying out various burial rituals (Mercado and Flores 1970, 2:46-60). For the first Americans among the Ilocanos there was little respect for things deemed sacred by Ilocanos. Thus, American soldiers treated the corpses of their Ilocano enemies with contempt. William Henry Scott comments on this American behavior, "If nothing else, *yanqui* disrespect for the clergy and desecration of the human cadaver made them appear raw barbarians in Filipino eyes" (Scott 1986, 39). Early Disciple missionaries were similarly unsympathetic to Ilocano beliefs. Hanna wrote that the Ilocanos worshipped demons and coated their superstition in religion (Hanna 1907, 20:235-36). He was not alone in his condemnation of Ilocano animistic beliefs. "As one studies the Ilocano people," wrote Dr. Pickett in 1907,



and becomes more acquainted with their customs and habits, their doubts and fears, their beliefs and instincts, they are more and more convinced that Roman Catholicism has meant very little to them in the way of conversion. It rather shows simply a willingness on their part to add to the superstitions and unwritten tenets already possessed, the forms and dogmas of the church. They gave up little or nothing but the church gave them the opportunity for public displays, for the personification of many of their spirits, and furnished them with definite forms and ceremonies for their marriages, births and deaths. Nowhere does this process of accretion appear so vividly as in their practices at the time of death. (Pickett 1902, 20:147-48)

Unlike the Catholic priests, the Disciples would have nothing to do with indigenous practices and, in fact, sought to change even non-religious burial practices. Particularly insightful is a letter Hanna wrote to Kershner in 1905 after Hanna had visited the northeastern borders of Ilocos Norte. While touring this area, he encountered the Tinguians, an ethnic group spread throughout Ilocos Norte, Kalinga and Benguet provinces. Hanna notes, "Week before last, Dr. Pickett and I and a native brother visited a couple of Tinguiani barrios about 25 miles away...They are a semi wild tribe whom the Friars did not reach. They bury their dead under the house and make a sort of house in the grave and place the dead in a sitting posture. I explained to them our family lot system and they approved of it. The doctrine of the resurrection they liked" (Kershner Papers 1905). Hanna makes no reference to any metaphysical reasons for why the Tinguians bury their dead in this manner. But because it differed from the American family lot system apparently it needed to be changed.

In addition to the faulty Ilocano character and their "pagan" beliefs, Disciples ascribed Protestant lack of success to the Roman Catholic Church. There was a consensus among early Protestant missionaries in the Philippines that Filipino Catholics needed to be converted. In Ilocos the Disciples likened the Ilocano conversions from Catholicism to Protestantism to that of the Hebrews being freed from the bondage of Egypt.<sup>16</sup> Strained relations were the norm between Catholic priests and Disciple missionaries. Disciple services would often be interrupted by rock-throwing Catholic zealots. A weapon that the Disciples used against the Catholics was the printing press in Vigan. Williams began publishing the regular periodical *Dalan ti Capia* (Way of Peace) on 20 September 1905.<sup>17</sup> Every issue featured several attacks denouncing the theology, practice or roots of the

Catholic Church. Particular priests would be singled out as an example of hypocrisy or immorality. In the second issue Williams, arguing from the Bible, ridicules the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. The typical argument and language used in these criticisms are seen in Williams' article:

Ti Iglesia ti Papa ibaga wenno isurona nga adda uppat a paguinan daguiti kararua a isu ti Infierno, Purgatorio, Limbo, ken Gloria. Daguiti Apostol isuroda a dudua laeng, Gloria ken Infierno. (2a Pedro 2:1-9; San Mateo 25:31-46 ken 7:13,14)

The Pope's Church says or has written that there are four places of the soul—that is Hell, Purgatory, Limbo and Glory. The Apostles wrote that there are just two places, Glory and Hell (II Peter 2: 1-9; St. Matthew 25:31-36 and 7:13,14). (Williams 1905, 2. Translated by Shelton Woods)

It must have been disturbing for Ilocanos to hear that for three centuries their families were part of a church whose roots were a mixture of "Judaism and paganism" (3). Such accusations would not sit well among Ilocanos whose kinship is extremely valued. It is little wonder that Disciples had trouble converting Ilocanos when their message indicated that Ilocano ancestors had not made it to "Gloria."

But the most surprising scapegoats the Disciples used for explaining their lack of success were their own converts and Ilocano pastors. Their prejudice against Filipino Protestant pastors and teachers was particularly acute during the first decade of their ministry. An example of their attitude toward their Filipino support staff is seen in Dr. Pickett's report to American supporters dated 1906:

Perhaps you will say "Let the native evangelists work these fields." In reply I would say we would be too glad to do so if we had competent evangelists. But as yet we have no competent, absolutely trustworthy preachers among the Ilocanos. They are like children. We have to watch them as we would so many babies. They are learning, but it will take time—much time. (Pickett 1906, 19:183)

Three years later the Disciples continued to blame Filipino pastors for the lack of results in their ministry: "You may have noticed that the report does not show as large gains this year as last. There are several reasons for this, no doubt. But I think it is due to the fact that during the year two of the men (Filipino pastors) whom

we had located in the most important fields committed gross sins, for which they were dismissed from the work. This necessarily affected the work" (Pickett 1910, 23:585).<sup>18</sup>

The unequal treatment or attitudes of the Disciples toward their Filipino co-workers was also exhibited in the realm of financial salaries. In 1905 the annual support for each Disciple missionary averaged \$1,300 (*Mission Intelligencer* 1906, 19:448-49). During the same year the Disciple missionaries agreed to pay Adriano Guerrero (a full-time mission worker) eighteen pesos per month and Buenaventura Garcia (also a full-time mission worker) fifteen pesos per month.<sup>19</sup> Some years later the Disciples had to contend with Filipino ministers and doctors who had the opportunity to train in the United States but served in the Philippine Disciple missions. Some of these Filipinos had exceeded the education of American Disciple missionaries. Despite the superior training of Filipinos, however, the Disciple missionaries could not bring themselves to properly compensate these U.S.-trained Filipino workers. The fear of treating these Filipinos equally, at least in the economic sphere, is expressed in Hanna's letter to the president of his mission society, "I view with grave alarm the putting of Drs. Palencia and Samonte on the missionary basis. It will likely react unfavorably on the other Filipinos who are employed also by the mission. They will overlook their limitation in education and remember that they are Filipinos as are the two men cited" (Hanna Papers 1923). The implied fear is that other Filipinos will begin to wonder why they should not be "on the missionary basis" in terms of finances.

Disciple missionaries were not alone in their unequal treatment of Filipino pastors. American Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians also played a role in this story. Many Filipino pastors rebelled against this treatment and Protestant denominations suffered splits as congregations would follow disgruntled Filipino pastors to form their own churches (Sobrepena 1965). Common complaints that Filipino pastors had against American missionaries, included the financial discrepancies mentioned above, the yearly vacations American missionaries took in the cool mountain town of Baguio, and the one-year sabbatical missionaries enjoyed every four or five years. It was overt racism, however, which was most disturbing to Filipino pastors. Nicholas Zamora, a Filipino pastor who left the Protestant missionaries noted in an interview what motivated his break from the American missionaries, "By word and action they have for years belittled our capabilities even to the extent of repeatedly asserting to

our faces that Filipinos are not fitted to conduct their own churches" (Clymer 1986, 125). Zamora does not use the term "imperialism" to describe the American missionary activity but it is clear that the missionary attitudes paralleled Kipling's White Man's Burden and some Filipino pastors would not accept this attitude.

It is evident that some Filipino pastors and a "liberal" minority in America identified the early Disciple missionaries in the Philippines as cultural imperialists.<sup>20</sup> But the Disciples never saw their work and attitude in these terms. Their notion of American superiority fit with that of the American soldiers, teachers and the general public. Beyond this attitude of cultural superiority, however, Disciples must have overestimated themselves due to the deference paid to them by Filipinos. This esteem given to foreigners, and particularly to foreign religious authority, was ingrained in Ilocano society. For the three centuries prior to the arrival of the Disciple missionaries, religious leaders controlled almost every aspect of the Ilocano social life. The Spanish friars' economic and religious power made them the dominant figures in their respected towns (Phelan 1959). Filipinos were constantly reminded that respect and deference was due to priests. So, as the Disciples took their place in Ilocano society, most Ilocanos took the view that the same respect and deference paid to Spanish priests for centuries was also due to these new missionaries. A couple of specific examples help illustrate this point.

The financial position Spanish friars held in Ilocano towns was such that they were often the person with the greatest lending power. Desperate Ilocano farmers who faced crop failure or doctor's bills could often only find help at the friar's doorstep. As American Disciple missionaries arrived they discovered that they too were now seen as the last resort in case of economic ruin. Note the following plea for assistance found in a letter to a Disciple missionary:

About the great trouble that was happen in my poor life, even I am ashamed to you, I try to petition for help, because while I am in Cavite preaching the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, a great burning was happen at the street where my house was, so, my house, furniture and our clothes was burn by fire. Dear brother, I hope that you will help me by your kindness. (Kershner Papers 1910)

In some of the letters Filipinos wrote to the Disciple missionaries the notion that missionary assistance would lead to *nakautang iti naimbag a nakem* (an unpayable reciprocal debt) on the part of the

petitioner is noted (Hollnsteiner 1973, 69–91; Iletto 1973, 228–36). This is evidenced in the last portion of a letter a Disciple missionary received from a former student:

My dear sir: I received your letter two days ago and I understand what mean, my dear I have not time to goyng to school, because I lack money. My wife did bought rice all money. . . . My dear I aske to you about my *Daan ng Kapayapaan*. I have not receive here, will you forward to me please, well I will cut this time maile your answer as soon, your brother the our Christ never forget to you until the end of my life. (Kershner Papers 1911)

For the Ilocanos, Disciple missionaries were also seen as possible mediators between the American colonial government and themselves. This again would fit the pattern set for three centuries by the Spanish friars and the Spanish Governor General in Manila. Now, with an American bureaucracy set in Manila, it was the American missionary Ilocanos went to when in need of mediatorial assistance. Note the following request to a Disciple missionary made by a group of over thirty Chinese and Ilocano businessmen from Aparri, Cagayan:

Dear Sir—we have the kindness to write you these few lines to tell you the following; that our Bro. Chua Tiaco who lived here before in many years, that he was a good and honest merchant, and not for a longtime he went to Manila to visit his 'Escolta in Santo Cristo #211 Bimondo.' As we have heard that on the 20th of the present month (or August) that our Bro. Chua Tiaco they took him in Ermui without any faults. So at present we ask you a great favor to help us. What is good thing we do so that we might bring him back here. (Kershner Papers 1909)

Though this is a matter for the American colonial government, apparently the petitioners believed the missionary had the power to resolve this issue. All of this must have given the Disciple missionaries a sense of economic and political power that they certainly would not have had in the United States.

## Conclusion

The number of Disciple missionaries in the Philippines grew substantially until the eve of the great depression.<sup>21</sup> As a result more converts were added to the Disciple churches. By 1916 the Disciples

could boast that they had the third largest Protestant following in the Philippines (Clymer 1986, 7). Their proselytizing efforts may not have produced the amazing numbers they were hoping for yet it is clear that they could hold their own against the other Protestant denominations. Yet, most of the growth in Disciple churches took place after the first ten years of their ministry in the Philippines. By this time most of the early missionaries had left the Philippines and they were replaced by a younger generation.

The legacy left during the first decade the Disciples were in the Philippines is difficult to assess. Second-generation missionaries used some of the methods of the earlier missionaries but were more conscious of respecting the Ilocano culture and society.<sup>22</sup> This resulted in a greater number of converts and an increased respect between Filipino pastors and Disciple missionaries. The names of these second-generation Disciple missionaries are still known among the old and young in Ilocos as stories have been passed down about their work. And yet, hardly any of the first Disciple missionaries are remembered even where structures that they built remain in Ilocano towns.

These first missionaries made enormous sacrifices as they left their loved ones in America to work in the Philippines. This should not be forgotten. But along with their devotion they carried the baggage of American imperialism—a sense that they were there to uplift their “little brown brothers”—and make them, as Stanley Karnow writes, “in our image.” As such the Disciples belittled indigenous customs and sought to place the “virtues” of Americans as something Ilocanos should seek to emulate. Their devotion was commendable but their goals actually went against the injunctions of their sole authority—the Bible. It was, in fact, their model, the Apostle Paul, who as a missionary noted that it was his goal that his converts would be transformed, not to the image of any culture or system, but, to the image of Christ.<sup>23</sup>

### Notes

1. This term was given to the Filipinos by William Howard Taft, the first civilian American Governor of the Philippines.

2. Alexander Campbell often claimed that the church had been lost from the time of the Apostles until the formation of The Christian Church in 1809. He frequently noted that the Protestant Reformation did not bring the Church out of the slumber that it was in, “Human creeds may be reformed and re-reformed, and be erroneous still, like their authors; but the inspired creed needs no reformation, being, like its

author, infallible....Human systems, whether of philosophy or of religion, are proper subjects of reformation; but christianity [sic] cannot be reformed....In a word, we have had reformation enough! The very name has become as offensive, as the term 'Revolution' in France" (Campbell 1825, 128).

3. The three men and the places they served as missionaries are as follows: Dr. J.T. Barclay—Jerusalem; J.O. Beardslee—Jamaica; Alexander Cross—Liberia. For more information on this mission society see McLean (1919, 22-23).

4. For an excellent study of the Augustinians in Ilocos see Foronda (1971, 1-75).

5. A new resource where detailed information on the Philippine American War can be found on the internet at <http://web.syr.edu/~fjzwick/ail98-35.html> *Anti-Imperialism in the U.S., 1898-1935*, maintained by Jim Zwick, Syracuse University.

6. As soon as the Catholic Church began reappointing the former Spanish priests in Ilocos, McArthur was inundated with requests from Ilocanos to stop this. His response was clear, "The American authorities are not in sympathy with any efforts to reestablish the friars in any of their past authority" (United States National Archives, RG 395:4046).

The Military Governor of the Philippines also commented, "It is apparent that congregations by independent individual action, so far as any governmental interference is concerned, may reject any clergyman who is not acceptable to the majority of the communicants of the parish and prevent his ministrations therein by such means as are suitable to accomplish the purpose, provided that any action in the premises be not accompanied by application of violence" (United States National Archives, RG 395:4046).

7. Section 16 of Article 74 explicitly prohibited proselytizing in the classroom, "No teacher or other person shall teach or criticize the doctrine of any church, religious sect, or denomination, or shall attempt to influence the pupils for or against any church or religious sect in any public school established under this Act. If any teacher shall intentionally violate this section he or she shall, after due hearing, be dismissed from the public service" (Lardizabal 1956, 312).

8. Hanna writes to Kershner on September 7, 1907 regarding this problem, "First, Mr. D. G. Gunnell and Mr. R.H.Damon [sic] both teachers in the provincial High School and earnest Christian men, have been compelled by the Educational Department to cease Christian work in teaching Bible classes....Both did so, but rebelled against the un-American and the unjust [sic] stand of the Dept....At the same time, Mr. O'Reilly tolerated drunkenness, gambling and whoremongering in other teachers.

The affair is interpreted as a slap at Protestantism and indicating that the govt. is under the control of the Catholic Church" (Hanna Papers 1907).

9. From the view point of a Disciple historian the Ilocos area was "free game" even though it had been assigned by the Evangelical Union to another denomination, "Messrs. Hanna and Williams left Manila for Laoag in the interest of peace and goodwill...The United Brethren had been assigned the northern part of Luzon the main island but they had done very little work in it and in fact had withdrawn to Manila. Because this field was unoccupied the new missionaries felt free to enter it and preach the gospel" (McLean 1919, 115).

10. There are numerous references about the unresponsiveness of the "higher class" Filipinos in the Disciple's correspondence. A typical statement is as follows, "Our work confines itself as yet to the common people. Some rich and well-educated think well of the truth, but they lack that love of the truth that will lead them to identify themselves with an unpopular cause" (Hanna 1905, 18:417).

11. Hanna's disappointment in Americans is demonstrated in his first year report, "I have been tempted to let the Americans go to perdition. I have wondered if I would not be justified in shaking the dust off my feet as a testimony against this multitude of careless souls. I have preached the Word as best I knew, and the brethren by words or actions have seldom found these sermons blameworthy or praiseworthy. But, by God's help, I am still at it" (Hanna 1902, 373).

12. Professor Clymer comments about these relations, "Though there were occasional instances of cooperation between Disciples and other missions, and even genuine friendship with the United Brethren mission, bitterness and deep suspicion were more characteristic of the relationship" (Clymer 1986, 55).

13. The theological divisions that led to bitterness between Disciples and other denominations is seen in the following comments by Kershner, "Regret has been expressed that the controversy over baptism has been carried into the P. I. This is a sad fact, but it is sadder still to reflect that there are men who are willing to pervert or deny the teaching of the Scriptures in regard to a command of God:...The controversy will exist wherever the truth is called in question, and here, as in other fields of wrong doing, the thief will cry 'stop thief' to the man who turns on the light" (Kershner 1907, 31:1).

14. Former Disciple missionary Edith Eberle wrote in 1944, "The Evangelical Union, an association of missionaries and other American religious leaders founded in 1901, found our missionaries in full accord, attending the annual meetings, sharing in its program of betterment, cooperating in its plans for a united approach to the people of the islands" (Eberle 1944, 23).

15. After complaining about the Filipino assistants in the clinic Pickett wrote, "As yet we have not seen our way clear to open a hospital. This is partly due to the absolutely [sic] untrustworthiness of native helpers when it comes to carrying out instructions for the care of the sick, and partly to the fact that the natives prefer to keep the sick and care for them in their own homes. I doubt if a hospital can be conducted very successfully without a trained nurse, or, at least, some good motherly American matron, who can be in constant charge of all patients, and at the same time keep a watchful eye over the culinary department....Our prayer is that someone who reads these lines may hear a 'call' in this direction and 'come over and help us'" (Pickett 1905, 18:417).

16. The Reverend Paul Kennedy, a Disciple missionary who went to the Philippines in 1921 wrote about Catholic Ilocano conversions, "Like the Hebrews of old they remember the bitter experiences of their period of bondage and their hearts are filled with gratitude toward their brethren in America who have permitted them to enter into this new promised land of religious freedom" (Kennedy 1930, 22).

17. By 1908 Williams reported that they were selling 3,200 copies of the *Dalan* weekly. See Williams (1908, 21:495).

18. One year earlier Hanna (1909, 22:538) wrote about their Filipino converts, "The Filipino disposition is as yet woefully delinquent in two of the essential elements which go to make up a deep and vigorous Christian life. These are morality, or freedom from social vice, and the spirit of sacrifice for the Lord's work. As regards the former, our converts have not all brought their conduct up to where it conforms to the teachings of God's Word. As to the latter, the lack of a spirit of sacrifice is a serious handicap in our progress toward a self-supporting church, as well as towards the erection of chapels suitable for the use of the local congregations" (Hanna 1909, 22:538).



19. Minutes from the Annual Disciples Conference, 8 December 1905, DCA.

20. Taking the concept of "imperial culture" as a starting point, cultural imperialism may be defined as the active expression abroad of a culture that has been shaped by the experience of aggressive expansionism and dominance. This definition helps to move analysis beyond conscious intentions and formal policies toward the deeper, cultural forces that shaped missionary behavior. Even more important, "imperial culture" posits a link between missions and imperialism that is not tied to any specific, functional role that missionaries played in the larger operations of the Western powers (Hutchinson 1987, 311).

21. In 1929 there were twenty one Disciple missionaries in the Philippines. See the Minutes from the annual Disciple Convention, December 1929, DCA.

22. Note the view that the Reverend Paul Kennedy had about the indigenous beliefs of the Ilocanos, "I don't laugh at the primitive believe [sic] of my pagan people. I try to get them to believe in God's eternal laws of sanitation, monogamous family life, irrigation instead of irritating God, trying to wake Him up and come down to water their dry fields. We have witch doctors that have more weird magical tricks to mystify the people than my good friends at home ever dreamed of and at times I believe that the witch Drs. are giving all they have got, they are trying all they know, to get help from the Spirit world" (Kennedy Papers 1947).

23. The Apostle Paul expressed this thought to the Corinthian Church, "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (II Cor. 4:5).

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