

A Southern Baptist Story in the Philippines: The Life and Ministry of Henry P. Silbor, 1938-2010

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a biographical work of Henry P. Silbor (1938-2010), a fine portrait of a Filipino Southern Baptist pastor. Silbor was one of the driving forces towards the “Filipinization” of the Southern Baptist denomination—both convention and seminary level—in the Philippines during the late twentieth century. Moreover, the paper explores the historical narratives of two Baptist groups that arrived in the Philippines—the American Baptist in 1900, and the Southern Baptist in 1948, which are both significant in the study. This exploration sets the backdrop for Silbor’s ministry. Towards Filipinization, Silbor advocated for Filipino leadership in the Luzon Convention of Southern Baptist Churches (LCSBC). Unfortunately, the missionaries turned over the leadership of convention, later including the seminaries, to the Filipinos then departed the Philippines. This transfer of leadership was not the ideal Filipinization for Silbor; preferably, he thought of working alongside the missionaries and not being left behind. To this challenge, Silbor called for serious pastoral equipping, church discipleship, sending missionaries, and theological training even during his last years.

Keywords: *Philippine Baptist History; Filipino Southern Baptist; Baptist Filipinization; Southern Baptist in the Philippines*

A SOUTHERN BAPTIST STORY IN THE PHILIPPINES: THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF HENRY P. SILBOR, 1938-2010

The Baptist story in the Philippines, due to limited access of records—located at the archives of main denominational offices—in this context, mostly in the United States of America, needs comprehensive work. Beyond this dire need, there is a demand to record the life and works of certain Filipino Baptist pastors.¹ The first Baptists arrived in the Philippines in 1900, two years after Spain sold the Philippines to the Americans as a part of the Treaty of Paris in 1898.² Writing about Philippine Baptists presents a conundrum. Renowned “global Baptist historian” Albert Wardin Jr. noted, “Philippine Baptists are like a jigsaw puzzle whose pieces are difficult to fit together.”³ Wardin has a thorough Baptist history work of the Philippine Baptists written in 1995.⁴ He noted various Philippine Baptist historical surveys, information of several individuals, and statistical data of various Baptist groups.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Western authors wrote Baptist history works.⁵ Wherein, they put in writing the arrival of the Northern Baptists (now American Baptist Churches USA) in the Philippines as part of the Philippine-wide work for Christ in 1899, which later established as the Evangelical Union in the Philippines (EUP) in 1901.⁶ The Methodists, Presbyterians, American Baptists, United Brethren, Young Men’s Christian Association, the British Bible Society, and the American Bible Society organized the EUP.⁷

As much as the writer desires to put all the Philippine Baptist stories in one article, it demands a larger platform—maybe a dissertation or a lifetime project,

1 “Filipinos” are the natives to or citizens of the Philippines.

2 David P. Barrows, *A History of the Philippines* (NY: American Book Co., 1905), 296. See <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/38269/38269-h/38269-h.htm#ch13>.

3 Albert W. Wardin Jr., *Baptists Around the World* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 158.

4 Wardin, *Baptists Around the World*, 156-162.

5 Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Following the Sunrise: A Century of Baptist Missions, 1813-1913* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1913), 245-280; Elmer A. Fridell, *Baptists in Thailand and the Philippines* (Philadelphia, PA: The Judson Press, 1956). P. H. J. Lerrigo, *God’s Dynamite or Changing a World by Prayer* (Philadelphia, PA: The Judson Press, 1925), 23-43.

6 Fridell, *Baptists in Thailand and the Philippines*, 50.

7 Peter G. Gowing, *Islands Under the Cross* (Manila: National Council of Churches in the Philippines, 1967), 126-7.

in a form of book series. Understanding the limitation, this paper focuses on a portion of the Southern Baptist (SB) story in the Philippines. By portion, I mean that my goal is to introduce a certain Filipino Southern Baptist Pastor, namely Henry Palmejar Silbor (1938–2010). Hence, it is essential to present a personality to at least have a glimpse of what it means to be a Filipino SB pastor. I deem Silbor as a fine portrait of a Filipino SB pastor in the field of pastoral ministry, teaching, and leadership worth emulating. This point is presented in a historical-descriptive approach—an intellectual biographical work.

Doing a biography entails a background story for a broader and contextual clarity. To this thought, initially, I lay the synopsis of Philippine Baptist history as a foundation to achieve the purpose of the paper. The former leads to locating both the American (Northern) Baptists and the Southern Baptist Convention in their pioneering missionary works in the Philippines. I am aware of different Baptist groups but for the sake of brevity, this paper presents only the abovementioned two Baptist denominations in the Philippines. Furthermore, most of the other Baptists sprang out from these two Baptist groups. Significantly, discussing the American Baptist work is necessary, when tackling the Philippine Baptist story, which will be presented thereafter.

Indeed, “History serves as a lesson and guide [for churches],” Wardin notes.⁸ Thus, setting the background stories of American Baptist and Southern Baptist will strategically position Silbor’s account—which is the main thesis. Integrating these two anecdotes create a holographic image of the narrative and personification of Filipino SB.

Slightly, the paper tries to demonstrate a continuity—or bridge the gap—of Baptist historical narrative both of Anthony Chute, Nathan Finn, and Michael Haykin’s *The Baptist Story* (2015) and David Bebbington’s *Baptists through the Centuries* (2010) works, hence the title “A Southern Baptist Story in the Philippines.”⁹ It is a succinct account of a Southern Baptist movement in the Far East, specifically in the southeast of Asia, the Philippines.

⁸ Wardin, *Baptists Around the World*, xxviii.

⁹ Anthony L. Chute, Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2015). David W. Bebbington, *Baptists through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010). The authors of these books lack information from the Far East, specifically the Philippines, Baptist narratives. This paper tries to continue the story-telling by bridging the gap of information to be part of the global narrative.

Synopsis of the Philippine Baptists

The Philippine Baptists celebrated the 120th year of ministerial existence in the Philippines on January 16, 2020.¹⁰ On that day, more than twenty Baptist groups attended the celebration called National Baptist Day. Remarkably, the President of the Republic of the Philippines Rodrigo Duterte, also attended and addressed the Baptist audience. This event displayed the apparent presence and influence of the Baptists nationwide.

There are only a few Filipino-authored sources on Philippine Baptists. There is a recent chapter contribution, by Domingo Diel, Jr. (2002) on the arrival of the Baptists in the Philippines.¹¹ In 2017, the Academic Dean of Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary, Michael Janapin presented a Baptist perspective on the Reformation; he included an outline tracing the roots of his Baptist heritage, up to the arrival of the Southern Baptists in the Philippines.¹²

Today, like the West, Baptists in the Philippines have different groups, and even they, share similar Baptist distinctives. To note, Francis Samdao Jr, coming from a Baptist outsider's perspective, proposes a Baptist quadrilateral on Philippine Baptist distinctives based on his study, first-hand experience with the Baptist community, and as a teaching fellow in a Baptist seminary in the Philippines.¹³ Samdao asserts these four distinctives similar to most Filipino

10 Al Parreño, "On the 120th year of the Philippine Baptists," *The Philippine Star*, January 19, 2020. Cf. "President Duterte highlights Baptists' significant role in Philippine society," Presidential Communication Operation Office of the Republic of the Philippines, January 17, 2020, https://pcoo.gov.ph/news_releases/president-duterte-highlights-baptists-significant-role-in-philippine-society/

11 Domingo J. Diel, Jr., "Perspectives on Baptist Church History," in *Chapters in Philippine Church History*, ed. Anne C. Kwantes (Mandaluyong, Metro Manila: OMF Literature, 2002), 225-237.

12 Michael Janapin, "The Bastards Unwanted Children of Reformation: A Philippine Baptist Perspective on the Reformation" (2017 STEP-ATESEA, Brokenshire College, Davao City, October 13, 2017). See also Muling Silang, Uploaded April 15, 2020, <https://mulingsilang.wordpress.com/2020/04/15/the-bastards-unwanted-children-of-reformation/>

13 Francis Jr. S. Samdao, "A Baptist Quadrilateral: A Filipino Outsider's Perspective on Baptist Identity," *Evangelical Review of Theology: A Global Forum*, 45, No. 1 (February 2021), 41, https://theology.world.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ERT-45-1_digital.pdf. Samdao earned his bachelor and master's studies at Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary; currently a ThD student at Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary.

Baptist churches: (1) Christ as head of the church, (2) regenerate membership, (3) loyalty to Scripture, and (4) soul competency or individual soul's liberty.¹⁴

Most of the historical documents of these Baptist groups are available in their institutional buildings, theological seminaries, and their pioneering mother churches that need collecting. Having mentioned the limited access to resources, the researcher contends for the need for historical research of Philippine Baptist in general. Beyond this necessity, the massive Baptist missionaries from the West came after World War 2; thus many of the Filipino Baptist pioneers are at their ripe age that calls for urgency to get first-hand historical data.

However, this is not the focus of this paper. Instead, this case will be a stepping-stone for a critical historic work of the Philippine Baptists. To that, my aim is to present a certain personality, namely, Henry P. Silbor: his life and ministry as part of a Southern Baptist story in the Philippines.

Before progressing to the SB story, it is necessary to set the pioneering missionary effort of the American Baptist in the Philippines, beginning in the 1900s. The American Baptist was once united with the Southern Baptist in America; they were known as the Triennial Convention (established in 1814) dedicated to sending and supporting missionaries outside America (ie. The Judsons in Burma).¹⁵ In 1844, a schism from the Baptists in the North from the South happened. Amassing with many complexities and challenges, their slavery issue cemented their split.¹⁶

These two Baptist groups—American Baptist and Southern Baptist—came to the Philippines; the former in 1900, the latter in 1948. The next section explores both groups.

American (Northern) Baptists

To begin with, the land of the Filipinos had been prepared for spiritual harvest before the Americans arrived in the late nineteenth century. This claim is evident with Elmer Fridell's note that Filipinos "journeyed far and remained

14 Samdao, "A Baptist Quadrilateral," 47-53.

15 Chute, Finn, and Haykin. *The Baptist Story*, 127-131, 152-161.

16 Chute, Finn, and Haykin. *The Baptist Story*, 159. For more information on slavery issue coming from both sides read Richard Fuller and Francis Wayland, *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution*, Fifth edition (NY: Lewis Colby, 1847); Abraham Booth, *Commerce in the Human Species, and the Enslaving of Innocent Persons, Inimical to the Laws of Moses and the Gospel of Christ* (London: L. Wayland, C. Dilly, Poultry, T. Knott, Lombard Street, 1792).

two or three days in order to study the Bible, learn hymns, and receive instruction” during the initial Baptist missionary effort.¹⁷ This statement is true enough, since the Spaniards colonized the Philippines for 333 years, from 1565 to 1898, exposing Filipinos to Christianity—specifically Roman Catholicism. Moreover, Filipinos experienced religious liberation from the state religion, in the aftermath of Spain’s colonization. This brief national freedom made them thirsty for true religion.

Furthermore, Filipino Baptist historian, Kristoffer Esquejo, did his recent dissertation on the history of the Convention of the Philippine Baptist Churches in 2018. Apart from Esquejo’s significant dissertation, he wrote an article about the *Pulahanes’* embracing the Baptist beliefs shared by the missionaries in Iloilo City on June 14, 1901.¹⁸ Interpreted by the missionaries as God’s providential act, Esquejo notes that the decision of the *Pulahanes* to join the Baptist missions was crystallized due to a prophecy told by a former Filipino Roman Catholic priest known as “Padre Juan.” Padre Juan—who was assigned in Panay (Visayas region) in 1850—prophesied that there will be teachers (or missionaries) who will bring Bibles and teach against the traditional beliefs of Roman Catholicism. To these teachers, Padre Juan’s followers ought to join hands with them, and embrace their teachings. According to Esquejo’s investigation, this prophetic message was fulfilled in the arrival of American Baptists in Iloilo City.¹⁹

Indeed, it was the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society who sent the first Baptist missionary to the Philippines. Swedish Baptist missionary Eric Lund was in Spain when they called him to be their missionary to the Philippines. Lund brought with him Braulio Manikan, a Filipino native, whom he met in Spain. On their arrival on May 3, 1900, they pioneered the first ministry of the Baptists in the central part of the Philippines, in Jaro, Iloilo, Visayas Islands.²⁰ The first Baptist church in the Philippines, Jaro Evangelical Church, was established in the same year.

17 Fridell, *Baptists in Thailand and the Philippines*, 55.

18 Kristoffer R. Esquejo, “Si Padre Juan at ang Kilusang Pulahanes sa Panay,” in *Independencia 1843: Ang Rehimentong Tayabas sa Daloy ng Kasaysayan ng mga Kilusang Mapagpalaya*, eds. Raymundo Andres Palad and Estelita Valdeavella-Llanita (Tayabas, Philippines: Alternatibong Tahanan ng mga Akda at Gawang Nasaliksik, 2019), 267-288. The term “Pulahanes” is a societal movement, mostly farmers, against colonizers.

19 Esquejo, “Si Padre Juan,” 272-273.

20 Lerrigo, *God’s Dynamite*, 23-43. Cf. Montgomery, *Following the Sunrise*, 255.

The American Baptists were able to progress through the successful printing of the Bibles in the Visayan vernacular version, which was the first Bible translated in “Hiligaynon”.²¹ The Baptists secured this opportunity to preserve the true translation of “baptizo” as immersion. Manikan had a vital part in translating the Bible to their *lingua franca* since he was a local of Iloilo.²²

Another reason for the fruitful progress of the Baptists was their emphasis on the importance of education. They started training institutes and colleges, one at Jaro, now Central Philippine University in 1905, and another one was in 1904, Filamer Christian University in Roxas City, Capiz. In these academic institutions, women were also highly encouraged to be part of school education. Helen Barrett Montgomery notes that Filipino women, having the same privilege in education, are “one of the most powerful evangelizing agencies” in proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Montgomery added, “The Filipino woman is, without a doubt, the most influential and the freest woman of the Orient.”²³

Interestingly, there was a big wave of graduates from these Bible institutions who became pastors. Francis Neil Jalando-on observed several factors of interest for pastoral vocation, two of those were due to socioeconomic status and the freedom to read the Bible.²⁴ These Baptist pastors planted churches that later organized themselves as the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC) on May 23, 1935, also known as Convention Baptists. But before the formation of the CPBC—comprising both American missionaries and Filipino Baptist leaders, there was internal adversity that they encountered. There was a dissent that sprang from the American Baptists led by one of their missionaries—Raphael Thomas—who also served as one of their physicians. In 1927, Thomas organized the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism, which became the roots of many Fundamental Baptists in the Philippines.²⁵

21 Montgomery, *Following the Sunrise*, 255-58. Hiligaynon and Ilonggo, nowadays, are both being used to refer to the local language in Iloilo City. Ilonggo, actually, refers to the person who speaks the language.

22 Frank Charles Laubach, *The People of the Philippines: Their Religious Progress and Preparation for Spiritual Leadership in the Far East* (NY: George H. Doran Co., 1925), 257-8.

23 Montgomery, *Following the Sunrise*, 266.

24 Francis N. Jalando-on, “A Portrait of a Philippine Baptist Pastor 1898 – 2002,” in *Managing Faith Resources* by Nestor D. Bunda, R. Faulan, and F. N. Jalando-on (Iloilo, Philippines: Convention Baptist Ministers Association, 2003), 29, 34. Cf. Jalando-on, “A History of Philippine Baptist Pastors 1898-2002,” <http://bwa-baptist-heritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/History-of-Philippine-Baptist-Pastors-1898-2002.pdf?iframe=true>

25 Wardin, *Baptists Around the World*, 341. Cf. “Our History,” Association of Baptists for World Evangelism, Accessed November 26, 2020, <https://www.abwe.org/our-history>. ABWE also known as the Fundamental Baptist is also a major Baptist group in the Philippines which will not be discussed in this paper.

There were 260 workers, 27 missionaries, 153 churches with an estimated total of ten thousand Convention Baptist members in 1935.²⁶ Currently, more than a thousand Convention Baptist churches exist, and more than a half-million church members in the Philippines.²⁷

An important note when discussing the narrative of CPBC is the co-founding of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) in 1963. Lastly, another major tragedy that needs to be noted here, in 1943, during World War 2, Japanese soldiers captured and beheaded eleven American Baptist missionaries and one little boy. These martyrs were remembered as the “Hopevale Martyrs,” named after the place where they were killed, Hopevale, Tapaz, Capiz.²⁸ There are more stories to tell about the Convention Baptists, but for the sake of brevity, this section needs to turn the story about the Southern Baptist in the Philippines.

Southern Baptists in the Philippines

As noted above, Southern Baptist Convention in America was organized on May 8, 1845, due to a schism with the Baptist in American North, now American Baptist Churches USA. Providentially, through the efforts of the pioneering American Baptists, the Southern Baptists were able to grow evenly. C. Douglas Weaver notes, “the Southern Baptist work in the Philippines flourished.”²⁹

Adding to that, as noted by John Mark Terry, “this was the aftermath of World War, Filipinos were pro-American,” and other Baptists were already present in some places.³⁰ It is also important to note that the Evangelical Union (American Protestant Missions to the Philippines) resolved for a Comity

²⁶ Fridell, *Baptists in Thailand and the Philippines*, 56.

²⁷ “Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, Inc.,” Baptist World Alliance, Accessed November 25, 2020, <https://www.baptistworld.org/convention-of-philippine-baptist-churches-inc/>

²⁸ “Brief History,” Central Philippine University, Accessed November 26, 2020, <https://cpu.edu.ph/about-us/history/>. Cf. <https://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Hopevale-Comemmoration-Poster.pdf>

²⁹ C. Douglas Weaver, *In Search of the New Testament Church: The Baptist Story* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2008), 240.

³⁰ John Mark Terry, “An Analysis of Growth Among Southern Baptist Churches in Mindanao, Philippines 1951-1985” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, 1986), 218-9.

Agreement, assigning the American Baptist in the Visayas region (eastern half of Panay Island, Romblon, Masbate, and Negros Occidental).³¹ But many Convention Baptist members from Iloilo went to Mindanao in the 1950s. In the same timeline, this migration aided the Southern Baptist missionaries who arrived in Davao City, and other areas in Mindanao.

In 1948, the Southern Baptist American missionaries in China, retreated to Baguio City, Philippines, when the Chinese government closed its country from Christian missions.³² Miserably, the communists took over control of China, which forced the missionaries to move to the Philippines.³³ The missionaries planned to stay temporarily while waiting for the restoration of peace in China. However, they remained in Baguio city where they established the first Southern Baptist Church in the Philippines, catering to Chinese residents. After baptizing eleven converts, they formed the Baguio Chinese Baptist Church on May 29, 1950.³⁴

Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention constituted Philippine Baptist Mission (PBM) in 1950; this time, missions were extended to local Filipinos, not just for Chinese people.³⁵ SBC work reached the cities of Dagupan, Tarlac, Davao, Manila, and many more. PBM did not only focus on establishing churches but also theological seminary.

31 "Brief History of CPBC," Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, Accessed May 19, 2021, <https://www.cpbcp.org/?fbclid=IwAR3g-bWYcG2Vb4Cxdn80g4Y6vIUe6YRtURqFdeba8doyIjo2Q2EpeAfgjEw#/page/panel/the-convention>.

32 SBC missionaries chose to stay in Baguio due to the large population of Chinese and Filipino-Chinese residents in the city. The missionaries continued studying the Chinese language while in Baguio anticipating that they will be able to return to China which did not happen. Adding to this decision is the cool climate of the city. Joyce Abugan and Enrique Ortega, message to author, May 12, 2021. Abugan was a former president of Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary, while Ortega served a longtime executive director in Luzon Convention of Southern Baptist Churches.

33 Nathin Finn noted that this was due to 'Global Communism' in the early twentieth century from Russia expanding to China that leads to the founding of Mao Zedong's the People's Republic of China in 1949. Baptist missions that can be traced from Charlotte 'Lottie' Moon's pioneering work with Annie Armstrong's Women Missionary Union's support were persecuted. Chute, Fiin, Haykin, *The Baptist Story, 192-94, 254-57*.

34 Joseph T. Shao, "A Channel of Blessings in God's Hands: Chinese Protestant Church in the Philippines," in *Chapters in Philippine Church History* ed. Anne C. Kwantes (Mandaluyong, Metro Manila: OMF Literature, 2002), 415

35 "Baptist Work in the Philippines" (Souvenir Program, 50th Church Anniversary of Baguio Chinese Baptist Church, 2000). Genejob Azurin, message to author, September 29, 2020. Azurin is currently the pastor of Baguio Chinese Baptist Church in Baguio.

Consequently, Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary (PBTS) was established in 1952. PBTS has been using D. Leslie Hill's *Faithful and Free* (2013), a decent textbook of Baptist History.³⁶ Initially, PBTS catered to Chinese church leaders at Baguio Chinese Baptist Church, which later made it available to the Filipino church leaders.³⁷ The first six presidents, from 1952 to 1998, were all American missionaries. It was in 1997 when PBTS had their first Filipino president-elect, Alfredo G. Saure, as the seventh president; he assumed office in 1999. Following Saure was Joyce J. Abugan who became the eighth president and the first woman to serve as seminary president in 2006.

There are more theological institutions that Southern Baptists founded in the country. In 1956, PBM assumed the administration of United Christian College established in 1952, now Southern Baptist College in M'lang, Cotabato.³⁸ In 1973, they founded the Luzon Baptist Bible School in Dagupan. In Makati City, the Southern Baptist School of Theology was officially operational at International Baptist Church on July 19, 1982. Feliciano P. Montenegro directed both Dagupan and Makati Bible schools.

In Davao City, PBM established Immanuel Baptist Church on July 15, 1951. This church is the 'oldest' mother church of many Southern Baptist churches in Mindanao. Other than planting churches, Immanuel had been a center of many Baptist institutions. The Davao Association of Southern Baptist Churches was founded in 1954 at Immanuel. In 1955, the first classes of Davao Baptist Bible School, now Southern Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary, started here. Also, in 1960, a student center ministering to college and university students around Davao city was formed, called the Baptist Student Union.³⁹ William Solesbee in his report in 1954 regarded Immanuel as the "Antioch Church" of the Mindanao.⁴⁰

36 D. Leslie Hill, *Faithful and Free: Baptist Beliefs through the Years, Illustrated and Expanded Edition* (Parañaque, Metro Manila: Church Strengthening Ministry, 2013), 328-65. First edition, 2011.

37 Hill, *Faithful and Free*, 348. See "History," PBTS site, <https://pbts.net.ph/index.php/about-us>.

38 "Brief History of SBC" (Student Handbook, Southern Baptist College, 2014 Revised Edition). Mariz Eustaquio-Benosa, Facebook message to author, November 6, 2019. Benosa is a professor at SBC, M'lang.

39 Terry, "Southern Baptist Churches in Mindanao, Philippines," 67, 75-77.

40 Philippine Baptist Mission, *Minutes of the Philippine Mission of the Southern Baptist Convention 1953-1954* (Manila, n.p., 1954), 27. Cf. Terry, "Southern Baptist Churches in Mindanao, Philippines," 171.

There are already published studies about Southern Baptists in the Philippines (SBP), which are dissertations mostly done by missionaries who went to the Philippines. Jesse Earl Posey Jr. (ThD diss, 1968), David Leslie Hill (D.Miss diss, 1979), and John Mark Terry (PhD diss, 1986) wrote the said works.⁴¹ Terry was a former Southern Baptist missionary in the Philippines in 1976 and an instructor at PBTS. Moreover, Professor of Anthropology at Wheaton College, Brian Howell, wrote the most recent work on SBP, which focuses on the social context and anthropology of the SB churches, specifically in the Northern part of the Philippines.⁴²

Hill was the last American president of the PBTS. His dissertation was on the essence of theological education as an important factor for church growth. This study led to developing Philippine Baptist Extension Seminary Training (PhilBEST), now Seminary Education by Extension (SEE).⁴³ Hill's PhilBEST program was helpful but did not flourish enough because many students considered it as "second-class" theological training during its initial years. Thus, it failed to "accomplish its goals."⁴⁴ But today, SEE continues to grow. Endowed Professor at PBTS Lizette Knight and Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Deron Biles argue in their recent book that SEE will remain viable in the coming decades despite the coming of the technological age.⁴⁵

The Southern Baptist's work continues to grow even during the nationwide Martial Law (1972-1981) in the Philippines. This growth is especially evident in Mindanao. In his report, on August 9, 1976, William Wakefield noted, "On the island of Mindanao, the most spectacular success has been evident. In one year, churches and outstations jumped from 231 to 783," an increase of over three hundred percent.⁴⁶ A year after, Wakefield encouraging the SBC Foreign Mission Board, now International Mission Board (IMB), made another report

41 Jesse Earl Posey, Jr., "A Historical Study of Baptist Missions in the Philippines 1900-1967" (ThD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968). David Leslie Hill, "Theological Education in Missions as a Factor in Baptist Church Growth with Special Emphasis on the Philippines" (D.Miss diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1979). Terry, "Southern Baptist Churches in Mindanao, Philippines."

42 Brian M. Howell, *Christianity in the Local Context: Southern Baptists in the Philippines* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

43 Hill, *Faithful and Free*, 130.

44 Terry, "Southern Baptist Churches in Mindanao, Philippines," 227.

45 Lizette F. Knight and Deron J. Biles, *Seminary Education by Extension: Process, Principles & Practices* (Parañaque, Philippines: Church Strengthening Ministry, 2015).

46 William R. Wakefield, "Report to FMB Board, Minutes," August 9, 1976, Foreign Mission Board, Richmond, Virginia.

to have sufficient faith in God for these bold missions in Southeast Asia. Wakefield noted this report after he heard a story from an SBC Filipino worker, Ben Carez, in mountain villages who conducted a funeral service. Before praying, Carez asked to open the casket and saw a dead girl lying down. In Wakefield's words, Carez "prayed with the people, and when he had finished, this little girl began to stir and she sat up and began to talk and to ask for something to eat." Wakefield continued saying,

Now, my first reaction when I heard that was, "Oh, she had not been dead." And then I was a little ashamed of that. Was I saying to myself that it was easier for God to say to Ben [Carez], "That little girl is in there alive?" Did it take more power on God's part to do that than it would if He raised her from the dead? And I thought, it really isn't important as to whether she was dead or alive. What is important is, do I limit God in my own puny faith by saying, "Yes, Lord, you can do the easy but not the difficult." As we think of Bold Missions Thrust in Southeast Asia we are not dealing with the easy. We are rather wrestling with the difficult and the impossible, and in this light, the crisis of faith continues to be one with which we must wrestle as we try to have a faith sufficient for our God and sufficient for our challenge.⁴⁷

Adding to church planting and theological education, PBM established Church Strengthening Ministry Publishing in 1989.⁴⁸ In 1995, there were 89, 031 church members, and 1, 673 Southern Baptist churches in the Philippines.⁴⁹ Today, 2, 208 Southern Baptist churches exist in the Philippines with a total of 249, 501 church members.⁵⁰

To sum up the setting of the Philippine Baptists—Convention Baptists and SBC—that both grew in quality and quantity, these two groups are the largest Baptist denominations in the Philippines. They had established several institutions and influenced the local people. It was providential, or coincidental,

⁴⁷ William R. Wakefield, "Report to FMB Board, Minutes," November 8, 1977, [January 10, 1978], Foreign Mission Board, Richmond, Virginia.

⁴⁸ Reuel Alfonso, Facebook message to author, November 26, 2020. Alfonso is the Training Officer of Church Strengthening Ministry since 2011. Leslie Hill did not include the year CSM was established, *Faithful and Free*, 350.

⁴⁹ Wardin, *Baptists Around the World*, 157. Cf. BWA, *Yearbook*, 1993-1994.

⁵⁰ "Luzon Convention of Southern Baptist Churches and Convention of Visayas and Mindanao of Southern Baptist Churches," Baptist World Alliance, Accessed November 25, 2020, <https://www.baptistworld.org/luzon-convention-of-southern-baptist-churches-inc/>; <https://www.baptistworld.org/convention-of-visayas-and-mindanao-of-southern-baptist-churches/>

that both groups arrived in the aftermath of Philippine wars, first against the Spaniards for the American Baptists—then CPBC; next against the Japanese for the Southern Baptists.

The next segment tries to capture a clearer insight about the Baptists in the Philippines, specifically the Southern Baptist. It is now appropriate to delve into a certain Filipino SB personality, namely Henry Silbor—his life and ministry.

Henry P. Silbor

Henry Silbor (1938-2010) is known as “a man of God worth emulating” pastor by his contemporaries and students. Silbor’s prominence was captivating throughout the archipelago of the Philippines: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.⁵¹ Silbor’s life is a fine depiction of a Filipino Southern Baptist pastor, hence a good source of what it was, or how it was, to be a Filipino SB minister.⁵² Silbor, a native of Visayas (central part of the Philippines), was a minister from the southern (Mindanao) part of the Philippines, but spent more than half of his life serving in various cities of Metro Manila, and in the highlands of northern Luzon.

The accounts on Silbor’s life and works are from several valid sources, and they are as follows: his sermons, essays, dissertation, and presented papers; also eyewitnesses: his wife Sonia Silbor, the Luzon Convention of Southern Baptist Churches (LCSBC) executive secretary Gerlie Baltero, Touch Christian Fellowship (TCF)—his former church—members, LCSBC souvenir programs, and some secondary sources like brief church history of TCF, University Baptist Church, and dissertations of American missionaries, etc.

A Biographical Sketch

Henry Palmejar Silbor was born on May 16, 1938, in La Paz, Iloilo. His parents were Juan Silbor and Julieta Palmejar. Silbor was only six years old when his mother died. On his mother’s death, he described that his “world was

⁵¹ The archipelago of the Philippines is made up of more than 7600 islands. There are three main group of islands: Luzon (northern islands), Visayas (central), and Mindanao (southern islands). The National Capital Region is in Luzon, also known as Metro Manila.

⁵² Silblor exemplifies both pastor-teacher/theologian when it comes to church ministry and seminary education. According to former President of PBTS Joyce Abugan that “Silbor’s wealth of leadership experience in both academic and pastoral ministry...[plus] both competent and servant leader” makes him a significant personality in the SBC circle. Abugan, message to author, May 11, 2021.

shaken” and haunted by the reality of death.⁵³ Years later, after finishing his basic and high school education in the Visayas region, Silbor moved to Mindanao for his college degree.⁵⁴ But it was there where God imparted a desire into his heart to a “lifetime vocation or calling from God with something we hold in [the] highest esteem, God’s calling to become His minister,” in Silbor’s words.⁵⁵

It was in a youth camp in Mindanao where Silbor met his future spouse, Sonia. Sonia Fernandez was then serving secretarial works to different Southern Baptist American missionaries in Mindanao. Silbor and Sonia attended the same church in Davao, Immanuel Baptist Church, where they also got married in 1964.⁵⁶ They had two children; their eldest was Harry, and youngest, Sherry. In 1966, Silbor, with his family, moved to Luzon.

In his daughter’s account, Sherry narrated how his father exemplified a balanced life as a pastor-teacher in the ministry and a family man.⁵⁷ She remembered how Silbor taught her to play tennis and spent time watching movies with their family. There was one time when Silbor squeezed his way into the crowd and carried her on his shoulder for her to see a show. Also, Sherry noted that his father was a “fashionista”—a fine dresser, and loves to buy clothes from thrift shops, called “ukay-ukay” in Baguio.⁵⁸

One time, Silbor climbed to their water tank, with his daughter, just to watch fireworks during New Year’s Eve. He let his children have a sense of freedom in doing decisions in life yet still guided and supported them. There were usual theological discussions that Sherry would hear every time someone visited their home. It was also a bonding time whenever her father asked her to help him check the papers of his students. She remembers a simple, yet intimate, moment

⁵³ Henry P. Silbor, “Beyond Death” (Sermon, Touch Christian Fellowship, Baguio, October 30, 2005). This sermon is untitled. The researcher entitled the sermon based on its theme.

⁵⁴ There are many uncertain information about Silbor’s earlier education and his reason to study in Mindanao during his college years. Also, it is unsure if he encountered any Convention Baptists in Iloilo. One thing is for sure that his conversion and call to ministry happened during his involvement in student center in Davao. Sonia Silbor, Henry’s wife, noted that Silbor studied in Iloilo Provincial High School. Sonia Silbor, message to author, November 28, 2020.

⁵⁵ Henry P. Silbor, “The Call to the Ministry: A Re-examination,” (n.p., undated), 2. Gerlie Baltero, email to the author, October 23, 2020.

⁵⁶ Sonia Silbor, message to author, October 2020. This message contains a succinct account of his husband’s life and ministry. Sonia was Silbor’s wife; hereafter will be cited as Mrs. Sonia’s Account.

⁵⁷ Sherry Silbor-Santos, e-mail message to author, October 8, 2020; hereafter cited as Mrs. Santos’ Account.

⁵⁸ Mrs. Santos’ Account.

when she was still a little girl with his father; “I recall when I was still small when cassette tapes were popular and you can buy a blank tape to record your voice using a [tape and recorder],” in Sherry’s words. “Papa called me beside him and started doing an interview with me about all my favorite things and that was fun for both of us.”⁵⁹

Silbor wore many hats during his lifetime. After several pastoral and teaching ministries in Luzon for almost fifty years, Silbor—with his wife—returned to Davao City. But he was sickly already, having two times of dialysis a week, since 2006. However, Silbor continued to serve Christ’s church on several occasions. He preached at Immanuel Baptist Church, another in an associational gathering, and even at the thanksgiving celebration of the life of his first pastor-mentor Rolando Raganas.

Silbor died on April 13, 2010, and was buried at Davao Memorial Park. There was a flood of comments on social media on Silbor’s death.⁶⁰ One of his students Joe Bildan said, Silbor was “a man worth emulating, a man of inspiration.” Former LCSBC Executive Director Enrique Ortega commented, “He left an indelible imprint on the countless man of God in our denomination. A man of God himself, Sir Henry.” Former Academic Dean of PBTS Anthony Dela Fuente posted, “Here’s to Dr. Henry Silbor—for a fight well fought, for a race finished well, for tenaciously holding on in faith—for being an offering poured out in extravagance, we thank you. Rest in the arms of the Master.” Former President of LCSBC Dante M. Velasco,

Pastor Henry is now with God. He must have peered into the Book of Life, and he must be happy to see many of his friends in that Book, still alive and well on planet Earth. We all hope we are in that Book. We wept when we heard the passing of Pastor Henry. And yet joy comes in, reassuring us of reunions. Pastor Henry, in the tradition of Paul, no longer ‘looks through a glass darkly.’ The sweetest, joyous, rich, and glorious truth and experience are now his to embrace and savor. His other satisfaction: everything he preached and taught is all true! We thank God for his faithfulness

⁵⁹ Mrs. Santos’ Account.

⁶⁰ Anthony Dela Fuente, 2010, “Here’s to Dr. Henry Silbor,” Facebook, April 13, 2010, <https://www.facebook.com/anthonydelafuente/posts/116854548331377>. Dante Velasco, “Pastor Henry is now with God. He must have peered into the Book of Life,” Facebook, April 13, 2010, commented on Dela Fuentes’ post. Joe Bildan, “A man worth emulating...a man of inspiration...my tatang,” Facebook, April 17, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=385728024303&set=a.385725859303>, Bildan commented on Patrick San’s Facebook post, “Dr. Henry Palmejar Silbor, Funeral Services at Immanuel Baptist Church.”

to the very end of this earthly sojourn. He just began life everlasting!

Education. Silbor did his elementary education in their local town, and his high school studies in Jaro, Iloilo. He moved to Mindanao and finished his Bachelor of Commercial Science at the University of Mindanao in 1964. After serving various ministries at Immanuel Baptist Church, he then decided to study at Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary, Baguio City. Silbor said, “I needed to prepare for that ministerial calling. Slowly and deliberately God made it clear that I should go to Baguio to get solid theological training.”⁶¹ In 1966, Silbor graduated with his Master of Divinity.

Both Silbor’s Master of Theology, in 1975, and Doctor of Sacred Theology, in 1982, later converted to Doctor of Theology, were from Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary. ABGTS is a consortium of different Baptist seminaries in Asia, established in 1960.

Pastoral Ministry and Teaching. Silbor was called to the ministry when he was still in college. In 1966, a church near the PBTS, Calvary Baptist Church called him to be an assistant pastor. Grover Francis Tyner Jr. (d. 2020) was then pastor of the church. Tyner served as the longest American seminary president from 1966 to 1987. PBTS employed Silbor in 1969 while doing his doctoral studies under Tyner’s tutelage. PBTS asked Silbor to teach basic Old Testament classes while earning his ThM, then ThD. Silbor was one of the pioneer Filipino professors at PBTS. He left the seminary in 1987 but returned to teach again in 1999.⁶²

Silbor, called and ordained, to become the pastor, of City University Baptist Church, now University Baptist Church-Baguio, in 1973. IMB Missionary Jesse Earl Posey with his wife Mamie Lou Posey started this ministry as a student center in the late 1960s. Soon after, from a student center, it became an official church in 1971.⁶³ Sadly, Silbor had to give up his pastoral office at UBC in 1975. This event was due to the decision of the Board of Trustees of PBTS that all

61 Silbor, “The Call to the Ministry,” 1.

62 Silbor, “The Call to Ministry,” 1. D. Leslie Hill, e-mail message to author, September 23, 2020. Hill, when he was the PBTS President, invited Silbor to teach seminary classes. Sherry Silbor-Santos, e-mail message to author, October 10, 2020. The attached file has the employment record of Silbor at PBTS, “Started date: April 1, 1969 to May 31, 1987; January 1999 – *blank space.”

63 Howell, *Christianity in the Local Context*, 57-58.

full-time faculty members concentrate on teaching ministry, thus seminary prohibited them to hold pastoral offices.⁶⁴

Despite the prohibition of the seminary, this policy did not hinder him to serve the body of Christ through helping various churches that needed preachers, counsel, and administration. He became an interim pastor, for less than a year, of a newly established church, West Baguio Baptist Church, founded in 1984.⁶⁵ After his resignation, in 1987, both in this church and PBTS, Silbor's family moved to Metro Manila.

In Metro Manila, he became the pulpit pastor of the United Christian Church, Parañaque City, from 1987 to 1989.⁶⁶ It was just a weekend pastoral ministry for him because the Southern Baptist School of Theology, in Makati, invited him to become its first president in 1987. The main reason Silbor resigned from the Baguio seminary. SBST's enrollment flourished in numbers, the library was also growing through his helpful networks, and the student life was vibrant than ever. On the other hand, this presented a predicament—they were outgrowing the space loaned by the host church, International Baptist Church in Makati.

Before the end of 1989, another church, Village Baptist Church needed a full-time pastor. VBC called Silbor to be its pastor. He accepted the call as a part-time pastor due to his responsibility as the president of SBST. With the same results at SBST, Silbor's ministry at VBC became fruitful. The church later upheld his pastoral call to them. They asked Silbor to do a full-time pastoral ministry at their church. It was a difficult decision to make for Silbor between staying as president of SBST or accepting the offer of a full-time pastorate. Sonia, Silbor's wife, accounted that "he agonized over his decision in much prayers."⁶⁷

In 1992, he chose to stay with the church, and with a heavy heart, gave up his duty at SBST. Indeed, God's grace confirmed his decision to stay by blessing the church's ministry. VBC grew in numbers to the point of extending the front part for an added few meter space of the worship. The Sunday schools doubled; the church built a mezzanine for a function hall which is convertible to Sunday

64 Mrs. Sonia's Account.

65 Stacy Shane Aliguyon, Facebook message to author, November 28, 2020. Aliguyon assisted the researcher to verify this account through the help of two deacons of West Baguio Baptist Church.

66 "History: A Humble Beginning," United Christian Church, Accessed November 28, 2020, <https://www.uccsbc.org/about/history/>

67 Mrs. Sonia's Account.

school rooms. Both morning Tagalog and English services were also thriving in attendance.

At the time of Silbor's resignation in 1998, he received an invitation from PBTS Academic Dean Joyce Abugan—who became the first woman president in 2006—to teach. Clinging their future to God, Silbor, with his wife, moved back to Baguio in January 1999 to teach a course. Abugan then renewed Silbor's teaching contract every term.

During his stay in Baguio, Silbor was called to become a part-time pastor at Touch Christian Fellowship, later invited for a full-time ministry in 2000. Under Silbor's pastoral leadership, TCF grew from mostly youth until adults started to join and help in the leadership of the church. TCF also sent overseas Filipino missionaries to Korea establishing churches.⁶⁸

Luzon Convention of Southern Baptist Churches President

One of the major hats Silbor wore during his lifetime, was the presidency of the convention of Southern Baptist churches in Luzon. The association was initiated by both missionaries and Filipino pastors in 1959; there were thirteen initial SB church members. It was in 1963 when they reorganized to become what is now the Luzon Convention of Southern Baptist Churches (LCSBC); more than thirty churches were composed of the association.⁶⁹ Silbor became the president of the LCSBC from 1975 to 1979, then again from 1994 to 1996.

In 1976, Silbor urged the convention to embrace the theme of this year's annual assembly, 'Missions and Church Growth.' He said, "Let us spread abroad. This means we should be looking at the world outside us. Narrow nationalism and self-centeredness are condemned in the Bible;" the Great Commission is also "a marching order given to the Filipinos."⁷⁰ Indeed, this was true to Silbor's ministry. Most of his churches, where he pastored, were all active in sending and supporting missionaries to several countries in Southeast Asia, notably South Korea.

68 Maria Josefa dela Paz, message to author, October 17, 2020. The message contains brief information of the Touch Christian Fellowship church history. Dela Paz is an active member of TCF since 1999.

69 "History of LCSBC," Luzon Convention of Southern Baptist Churches, Gerlie Baltero, email to the author, October 23, 2020.

70 Henry Silbor, "18th LCSBC Annual Assembly President's Message" (Luzon Convention of Southern Baptist Churches, 1976). Gerlie Baltero, email to the author, October 23, 2020.

On the other hand, when things are going to a radical position, Silbor was gifted in moderating conflicts or theological confusion. Silbor argued, in his essay and reports, that church development is an essential part of pastoral and missionary work. In his report as the convention VP in 1993, he noted that church development and missionary are inseparable and must be balanced. Silbor said, “A missionary or a pastor who shuns church development as non-missionary work forgets that he and his colleagues would not be able to be missionaries if their churches had not developed a strong base economically, morally, and theologically.”⁷¹

After a year, during his second term as the convention president, Silbor noted that complacency and indifference are enemies of the churches. He noted in his message, as the president of the convention, that LCSBC churches should not be irresponsible in the essence of being one and together as a convention of churches. He said, “Building a Convention of Southern Baptist Churches is not easy.” The harder work begins, when the Convention is faced with people who have become indifferent. They feel they do not have anything at stake. They could not care less...[and] these churches should be shaken out of their complacency.”⁷²

Furthermore, there was a heated controversy on a discipleship system in the mid-1990s. Silbor acted as a mediator. He noted that the success of missions and evangelism, church growth and ministry, and pastoral work are not grounded on new techniques and methods. “Let us not be quick in accepting new theologies just because they seem new and attractive,” he noted.⁷³ Churches do not need to try new things for the “sake of having new and different.” It does not mean that it works in the other places and conventions then churches ought to follow. Silbor argued that it is essential to ground in the Bible and “guided [by] our past. . . and not just ‘gaya-gayas’” for the sake of numerical growth. There was a firm conviction of Silbor when he said, “If [God] was able to add thousands daily to the early church, he can still do the same as we trust and obey him.”⁷⁴

71 Henry Silbor, “Stewardship Account from the Convention Vice President” (36th LCSBC Souvenir Program, Luzon Convention of Southern Baptist Churches, 1994), 8.

72 Henry P. Silbor, “37th LCSBC Annual Assembly President’s Message” (37th LCSBC Souvenir Program, Luzon Convention of Southern Baptist Churches, 1995), 2.

73 Henry P. Silbor, “38th LCSBC Annual Assembly President’s Message” (38th LCSBC Souvenir Program, Luzon Convention of Southern Baptist Churches, 1996), 2.

74 Silbor, “38th LCSBC Annual,” 2. “Gaya-gayas” can be translated to “copycat” or imitating a work or a person.

Silbor was truly grateful for the American missionaries. He noted in the 50th Celebration of SBC work in the Philippines that LCSBC had to recognize the American missionaries and several Filipino workers who pioneered the SBC ministry. These people are part of the “‘heroes of faith’ who gave their lives in service to God in response to God’s calling.” Silbor said, “We are grateful for their pioneering spirit and sturdy faith as we remember them during this time of celebration.”⁷⁵

Meanwhile, adding to these messages, during his second term in 1994, Silbor pushed for the Filipinization of the Southern Baptist in the Philippines. It was understandable that during the pioneering years that SBC pastors needed training and theological guidance. “But, enough time had passed and much training had already been done to bring us to full maturity,” Silbor insisted. “I tried my best to talk with some missionaries about my convictions. I wrote position papers on the matter and submitted [it] to the PBM,” Silbor explained.⁷⁶ Silbor initiated discussions but nothing much happened—all talks but no actions. “Even after I finished my term as Convention president, I pursued my campaign for Filipinization.” Sadly, “In most cases, I was perceived as the villain. I had ‘rocked the boat’ so to speak.” Silbor knew that it was the right path to take, not for himself, “but for the good of the convention and its future leaders.” After several years, the PBM started turning over institutions, facilities, and authority to local control.⁷⁷

“Filipinization slowly took place among other SB institutions.” Sadly, this transition was not the kind of Filipinization Silbor envisioned. “Sadly, when these institutions were turned over to the [local] convention, the missionaries also began to leave the country,” Silbor noted.⁷⁸ He desired that the missionaries worked together with the Filipino leaders, instead of Filipinos working under American leadership. Nevertheless, Filipinization has happened. Throughout his lifetime, Silbor was able to witness many associations, churches, individuals, and conventions thrive for the glory of God. However, others struggled “but this is expected of any ministry in early stages,” Silbor said.

⁷⁵ Henry P. Silbor, “Message for the National Convention” (Souvenir Program, Celebration of the 50th Southern Baptist Work in the Philippines, 1998), 19.

⁷⁶ Henry Silbor, “Growth of the Convention as Recalled by the Leaders” (Souvenir Program, LCSBC’s 50th Anniversary and Annual Assembly, Luzon Convention of Southern Baptist Churches, 2008), 49-50.

⁷⁷ Silbor, “Growth of the Convention.”

⁷⁸ Silbor, “Growth of the Convention,” 50.

What did Silbor mean then about Filipinization? He called for Filipino leadership in the convention and seminary while working side-by-side with the American missionaries. This ideal Filipinization did not become a reality—not even during Silbor’s presidency. Instead, after a couple of years in his presidency, IMB (SBC missions arm) turned over the properties, finances, and leadership in general to Filipino leaders. Providentially, Abugan noted that this transition was also influenced due to the major changes to missionary work of the IMB in the late 1990s.⁷⁹ In the early 2000s, PBTS courses taught by American professors were gradually passed to Filipino professors until 2006.

Wrap Up

On the whole, Silbor pastored—some as interim—to almost ten Baptist churches in the Philippines. He served as the president in a theological institution and a convention of SBC churches. He also taught in seminaries and Bible schools. Lastly, he served as an adviser of different Baptist associations, e.g. South Metro Manila Baptist Churches Association. At the end of the day, if asked where God has called him, Silbor would embrace shepherding ministry. Equally, Silbor was accessible for equipping young pastors, while having time to attend his daughter's college graduation.⁸⁰

Another vital piece of information needed to be verified is Silbor’s two sabbatical leaves. Sonia noted that they did their sabbaticals at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, twice. Furthermore, having explored the life and ministries of Silbor, it is now fruitful to look into his sermons.

Selected Sermons of Henry Silbor

Silbor, like many Filipino Baptist pastors, is inclined to be practical, and generally topical on his sermons. This section presents Silbor’s sermons in brevity. The abridgment of each sermon was faithfully done and kept in its original context.

Beyond Death⁸¹

79 Joyce Abugan, message to author, May 20, 2021.

80 Mrs. Santos’ Account.

81 Silbor, “Beyond Death.”

The reality of death is commonly encountered by a person when he/she experiences losing a loved one. Is there an afterlife? What is next after death? For a child who lost his mother, “Will I ever see my mother again?”⁸² Indeed, as human beings, we grieve. But “men of faith” believe that this is not the end “to our existence. Man is not so earthbound that he cannot hope for God’s promise of a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells permanently.”⁸³

The state of being in the interim between death and resurrection is called a disembodied conscious state of spiritual experience.⁸⁴ This is a fixed state but an incomplete state. “The body will be raised and transformed at the resurrection when Christ returns to earth... At the resurrection, we will experience our final state.”

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus,⁸⁵ after death, the rich man “immediately entered into a state of misery. There is no purgatory mentioned.” This signifies that “At death, the body of the unbelievers return to the earth, but the spirit enters into the state of conscious punishment.” While Lazarus “immediately entered into the state of blessedness, Abraham’s bosom.” The body remains in the earth and decays, while the soul enters immediately to either the state of blessedness, or state of misery and punishment.

Believer’s souls after death will directly be with the presence of God. “Paul speaks of departing is to be with Christ...to depart is to be with Christ.”⁸⁶ A disembodied righteous person will go directly to paradise with Christ, like the “penitent thief on the cross.” Jesus said, “Today you will be with me in paradise.”⁸⁷ “No greater joy could be contemplated by a person than to be clasped, and to be embraced to the bosom of Abraham, the father [of the chosen] race.” This paradise is both a state of blessedness or a blessed experience, and a place where God dwells.

82 Silbor said that his world was shaken when he lost his mother.

83 2 Peter 3:13.

84 Silbor prefers “disembodied” state than intermediate state to avoid the idea of material which is associated with place.

85 Luke 16:19-31.

86 Philippians 1:23. Silbor noted that this is a confirmation of the OT passage in Ecclesiastes 12:7.

87 Luke 23:43.

The completion of the final state is at the resurrection when Christ returns. Man possesses both body (material) and soul (immaterial), as a believer, will have a new—glorified—body “at the time of the resurrection.”

Made for God’s Mission⁸⁸

“God is at work, not only inside the church, [but also] in the world.”⁸⁹ As Christians, our mission is to proclaim Christ. “Your ministry is your service to the believers and your mission is your service to the world of the unbelievers.” Christians are representatives of Jesus Christ “sent into the world.”⁹⁰

Jesus knew his mission, “I must be about my father’s business,” Christ said.⁹¹ “God wants to redeem human beings from sin, shame, Satan, [and] self.” But God uses Christians “to reach others. He saves us then sends us out.”⁹² Worship and service to God is the mission of a Christian which is “essential for God’s glory.” There are six things why being made for God’s mission is important.

First, the Christian “mission is important because it is a continuation of Jesus’ mission.”⁹³ The Great Commission “was given to every follower of Jesus, not only [for] the pastors and missionaries. It is not optional. These words of Jesus NOT the great suggestions.”⁹⁴

Second, this mission is an honor. Christians are called ambassadors, “the earthly representatives of Christ.”⁹⁵ Also, Christians are witnesses, because “Jesus needs more witnesses to tell of the good things He has done here on earth.” This is a great honor and a “privilege to be ambassadors and witnesses of Jesus Christ.”

Third, “it is the greatest thing you can do to people.” To share the good news of how a person can be saved and “have eternal life is the greatest thing you can do for them.” Christians “possess the greatest news in the world and sharing it is the greatest act of kindness you can show to anyone.”

88 Henry P. Silbor, “Made for God’s Mission” (Sermon, Touch Christian Fellowship, Baguio, August 1, 2004).

89 “Not only inside the church,” Silbor penned this phrase as an additional note in the original manuscript.

90 John 20:20-21.

91 Luke 2:49 KJV.

92 “Enter to worship, depart to serve” another comment penned by Silbor.

93 Silbor referenced Matt 28:19-20, Mark 16:14-16, Luke 24:45-59, John 20:19-23, Acts 1:6-8.

94 Emphasis original

95 2 Cor. 5:18-21

Fourth, this mission “has eternal significance.” These are eternal matters, “consequences of [this] mission will last forever.” There will be an eternal celebration for those who have been brought to Jesus. “This does not mean that you should quit your job to become a full-time evangelist. God wants you to share this good news wherever you are.”

Fifth, God’s mission “gives your life meaning.” Use this life for “something that outlasts it; it is “only the kingdom of God [that] is going to last.” Everything will vanish, but “the results of these activities will last forever.”

Sixth, the Christian mission will be completed on the return of Christ. But while waiting for Christ’s return, Christians need “to concentrate on their mission in the world.”⁹⁶ No one knows when will Christ return, but “we do know for sure [that] Jesus will not return until everyone is given the opportunity to either accept or reject his message.”

“I pray that we will be on the lookout to reach one [soul] for Jesus so that when we stand before Jesus we could say, ‘Mission Accomplished.’”

Spiritual Disciplines for Seminarians⁹⁷

Habakkuk, from the valley of doubt—wrestling with God’s will—to the summit of faith, “after hearing God’s word and seeing God’s glory he became like a deer bounding confidently on the mountain heights.”⁹⁸ Three spiritual disciplines that Habakkuk experienced that can take a person there: prayer, vision, and faith.

First, prayer. Like how Habakkuk shifted from questioning God, “here in the seminary we place importance to prayer as a means of spiritual transformation.” Others say that one “will lose your faith if you went to the seminary. Here you will be encouraged and be amazed that you can be a loving faithful and be a scholar as well.” Prayer is motivated by God’s word. “Habakkuk prayed because he had heard the Lord spoke.”⁹⁹ Also, he prayed because he wants to see God’s

⁹⁶ Acts 1:6-8. Silbor warned his listeners about the false prophetic preachers.

⁹⁷ Henry Silbor, “Spiritual Disciplines for Seminarians” (Chapel Sermon, Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary, Baguio, July 4, 2000). This sermon is originally untitled.

⁹⁸ Hab 3:19.

⁹⁹ Hab 3:1-2.

work succeed. “God was telling Him that in order for God’s work to succeed He is to live by faith.” So, in prayer, one’s faith grows as well.

Second, vision or reverence. After prayer, “God continues to reveal His glory and His greatness to [His children].” Habakkuk saw God as holy, the Creator, greatness, the Father of all, and “the One who leads His people to triumph.”¹⁰⁰ It is alright to know God intellectually, but one ought to reverently “experience Him in a deeper way while her in the seminary.” A vision of God’s greatness leads His children to revere Him. “There is no substitute for good theology,” which is being challenged by the “shallowness of contemporary sermons, books, songs.” These things are “contributing factors for the weakness of our worship service and the increase of ‘religious entertainment’ when we ought to be worshipping and praising God.”

Third and last, live by faith. “Habakkuk experienced affirmation of the will of God through faith.”¹⁰¹ Trust God no matter what happens. “Remember that faith is always ready to guide when you grope; always able to strengthen when you search, to forgive when you doubt, and pick you up when you fall.”

“When you know that God is working in your life, you can afford to wait quietly and let God have His way.” By faith, one can rejoice amid any circumstances. Finally, faith is relying on the Lord. “Theological training is just one step on one’s spiritual pilgrimage. There will be trials along the way. But the Lord permits us to go through trials for they can draw us nearer to Him and lift us above the circumstances so we can walk on the heights with Him. God does not always change our circumstances but He can change us to meet the circumstances.”

For the sake of brevity, these are just three out of twenty-two sermons that are with the researcher.¹⁰² This also limits the main objective of this paper; which is to present Silbor’s life and ministry as a glimpse of the Southern Baptist story in the Philippines.

These sermons were preached in his last church pastorate, Touch Christian Fellowship, and some, during the chapel service at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary. Silbor’s thesis and dissertations are available at the library of PBTS, titles are *Demonology in the Old Testament* (1969), *The Old*

100 Hab 3:3-15.

101 Hab 3:16-19.

102 These selected sermons were sent via airfreight by Sonia to the researcher.

Testament Wise Man as a Teacher and the Relevance of His Methods to Religious Instructions in the Philippines (1974), and *Developing a Program of Stewardship Using Selected Philippine Baptist Churches* (1982).

Conclusion

It is lacking to say that Philippine Baptist history is an overlooked subject. There might be several sources, but these works pose a challenge to their access and availability. Moreover, as observed by the researcher in the SB circle, there is a subtle indifference to learning the history of SBC in the Philippines that can lead to historical forgetting. Indeed, agreeing with several Filipino Baptist historians and professors, historical consciousness must be promoted.¹⁰³

In the first part, the paper explores the arrival of both American Baptists in 1900 and the Southern Baptists in 1948. Through this narrative, it has traced the Baptist heritage that can serve as a guide to almost a million Baptists in the Philippines.¹⁰⁴ It also grants a framework before presenting Henry Silbor's biography.

Indeed, the next section depicts a portrait of a Filipino Southern Baptist pastor, from studying the life and ministry of Silbor, who was critical in the study. It presented that a minister could balance a pastor-theologian life, while being a good steward of his own family. Evidently, Silbor's essays, topical sermons, and letters were missional, biblically grounded, and Christocentric. A mixture of being gentle for the smoothing one's soul, and a sturdy conviction that will rebuke one's sin is present in his words. Indeed, Silbor was a remarkable individual who took a major part in pursuing Filipinization at the convention level.

Integrating the two loci allows the reader to see a dynamic SB story in the Philippines. Furthermore, despite the brevity of this study, it presents—or implies—the necessity for a comprehensive Philippine Baptist history, more likely coming from Filipino Baptist authors of each particular Baptist group (e.g. Convention Baptist, Fundamental Baptist, Conservative Baptist, Baptist Conference—now Converge, etc), so that the integration of contextual

¹⁰³ I would like to recognize Kristoffer Esquejo for improving my former conclusion.

¹⁰⁴ "Members," Baptist World Alliance, Accessed November 29, 2020, <https://www.baptistworld.org/member-unions/>. Non-members Philippine Baptist groups are not included in the numbers.

historical narrative, can be genuinely compared with descriptive literary sources.

Overall, this paper deserves to end with what Henry Silbor and Albert Wardin thought. This study ought to not just serve as a guide or intellectual information, but it must lead the readers, and the researcher as well, in reverence to the God of history, the Lord of the Baptists, the King of the Bible, Jesus Christ. Soli Deo Gloria!

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