

The *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* (IFI): A People's Movement for National Freedom, Independence and Prosperity

APOLONIO M. RANCHE *

My ongoing study on the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, of which this article is the latest expression, dates back to my seminary days. I had always been fascinated yet perplexed with this revolutionary church. In those days, we were bombarded with that phrase popularized by Teodoro Agoncillo. I was pretty sure that, in the early seventies, our generation of St. Andrew's graduates could quote *in toto* the first and last paragraphs of the fourteenth chapter of Teodoro Agoncillo and Milagros Guerrero's *History of the Filipino People* entitled "The Religious Schism" especially the following:

The only living and tangible result of the Revolution was the Filipino Church popularly known as the Aglipayan or Philippine Independent Church. [When at the start of the second phase of the Revolution, the Spanish archbishop enlisted Father Gregorio Aglipay's help in bringing back the Filipinos to the Spanish side, Aguinaldo persuaded Aglipay to divert his energies to the cause of the people. Mabini, riding on the crest of the popular nationalistic movement, suggested the founding of a Filipino National Church. Though unsuccessful owing to war conditions, his idea laid the groundwork of the later Philippine Independent Church.] The story of the birth of this Church is to a great extent the story

* Dr. Ranche, a member himself of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* (IFI), is an Associate Professor of Church History and Ministry Formation Director at St. Andrew's Theological Seminary, Quezon City. He holds important Denominational (IFI)/Ecumenical Positions.

of the struggle of the Filipino clergy to Filipinize the Catholic Church in the Philippines.

[The Revolution then had two results: first, the liquidation of the Spanish empire in the Orient, and second, the alienation of a segment of the population from the Catholic Church. Whatever the real motives of the Filipino clergy in joining hands with the revolutionists, the fact remains – that the religious schism which led to the establishment of the Filipino Independent Church, was the most important result of the Filipinos' struggle for national emancipation]. The Revolution started as a political upheaval; it ended as a religious triumph. The founding of the Filipino Church showed, finally, that the Filipino clergy had at long last come of age.¹

I have called this a romantic description of the IFI. It is presented as the crowning glory of the struggle of the Filipino clergy expressed in the Visitation-Secularization-Filipinization controversies. William Henry Scott, in enumerating the misconceptions regarding Aglipay has pointed out that this popular error "assumes he was the head of a schismatic church during the Revolution, though in fact the Philippine Independent Church was not founded until 1902."²

The two Jesuits who up to the present have made the most extensive study about the church (though for obvious reasons other than rigorous scholarship) have pointed out the fact that a mere fraction, about five percent of the Filipino clergy, joined the IFI.³ That the role of the clergy was magnified out of proportions can be further illustrated

¹ *A History of the Filipino People* 5th ed. (Quezon City: R. P. García, Publishing Co., Inc., 1977), pp. 265; 276. The 8th edition of this book 8th ed. (Quezon City: Garotech Publishing, 1990) posthumously published by the heirs of Teodoro Agoncillo and has removed the co-author has exactly the same paragraphs, pp. 232; 243.

² William Henry Scott, *Aglipay Before Aglipayanism* (Quezon City: Aglipayan Resource Center, 1987), p. 1. One important material which illustrates this as unfortunate as it was committed by people who are trying to come up with an authentic Filipino theology is Sammy Formilleza, ed., *Valley of the Bones: Faith in Struggle II*. Quezon City: ECD 199.

³ Pedro de Achutegui and Miguel Bernad, *Religious Revolution in the Philippines* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1960; 1966; 1971; 1972). The subtitle of the first two volumes which suggests that it follows the same line of thinking that it was primarily a clergy affair is *The Life and Church of Gregorio Aglipay 1860-1960*.

by looking who among the priests present at the Paniqui Assembly of 1899 (which some scholars have presented as the founding of the IFI) eventually joined the IFI. Of the twenty six who were at the assembly, only eight eventually joined the IFI and one of them was even reported to have been disappointed and left the church.⁴

The role of Gregorio Aglipay and the other clergy cannot be discounted but must be put into proper proportion. This can be partially gained by bringing into light the role of the masses, the majority of those who joined the IFI in its early years.

The laborers who composed the sister institution, the *Union Obrera Democratica* must be recognized. It was in the meeting of its General Council that the proposal for the founding of the IFI was proclaimed by its energetic head, Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr., popularly known as Don Belong. It must be recalled that most of those who were nominated to compose the Executive and Doctrinal Committees denied their involvement. Even Aglipay initially distanced himself as evidenced by his circular calling the Filipino clergy for a meeting with the assurance that there was no planned schism. This could have led to the *Manila American* to chuckle that the "Church seemed to have died before it was born."⁵

Don Belong was incarcerated two weeks after the proclamation. Who or what body then took charge? The second issue of the church's first official organ, the *La Iglesia Filipina Independiente Revista Catolica (LIFIRC)* explains:

Therefore, Isabelo de los Reyes, deeply offended by the rebuffs of his own friends, formed an Executive Committee from the staff of the Democratic Labor Union and began to print circulars and the first two Fundamental Epistles, which were later approved by the Supreme Council of Bishops.

The people on the other hand, aligned themselves behind Señor Reyes from the beginning, many *popular organizations* and Protestants

⁴ See Appendix for the list.

⁵ The circular was dated August 16 and was published on August 20. A copy of the circular is included in AB, RRP, Vol. IV. The quotation is taken from Mary Doritha Clifford, "The Revolutionary Church," p. 239.

joining the Filipino Church as indicated by the testimonies which the press kept publishing. The ecclesiastical Governor of Ilocos Norte, the singularly praiseworthy Father Pedro Brillantes, today the noblest head of the diocese, as head of the clergy, accepted and solemnly joined our Holy Church, and this gave great impetus to the religious movement.⁶ (emphasis supplied)

These people, including the popular organizations, must be given proper recognition. The earliest adherents of this church were enumerated in the article in the same issue entitled "*Primeras Adhesiones*." These were: sixty Navotas residents with Saturnina Bunda first in the list; officers and members of the *Union Obrera Democratica*; some clergymen; three seminarians and several individuals. Two of the so-called millenarian groups, the *Guardias de Honor* in Pangasinan and the *Sagrada Familia* of Ilocos Sur joined the church in its first year of existence.⁷

Maragondon in Cavite and Lagonoy in Camarines Sur are two examples of how townspeople took the initiative in joining the IFI. In the former, the municipal council passed a resolution.⁸ In the latter, many of the townspeople earlier separated from the Roman Catholic Church and organized a local *Yglesia Catolica Filipina* under the leadership of Generals Emiliano and Mariano Riego de Dios, but joined the IFI on January 1, 1903.⁹

⁶ LJFIRC, Vol. I, No. 2 (October 18, 1903), p. 7.

⁷ In 1992, this writer visited Bantay Kilang in Galimuyod, Ilocos Sur. The place was settled by the *Sagrada Familia* in 1898 and oral tradition among the older residents say that there was once a long house which was used by Aguinaldo and company as a resting station prior to their eastward trek towards Tirad Pass in 1899. The long house later served as Aglipay's vacation house. A spring where a well was dug still exists and its name *Bubon ni Aglipay* (Aglipay's Well) is still used.

⁸ See AB, RRP, Vol. I, p. 341-343.

⁹ Juan Narvaez, "The Philippine Independent Church in Maragondon," Souvenir Program on the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the Philippine Independent Church, Diocese of Cavite, 1977. No paging. In 1984, I was able to interview the writer in two occasions and has graciously put into writing the answers to the questions I asked in the first interview. I still have in my possession said document. Nevertheless, he won't let me use the other documents in his care because of recent unpleasant experiences of lending documents to researchers who promised to returned but did not do so. I personally saw the *Acta de Resolucion* of the local committee dated January 1, 1999 of

That the people played primary roles in the first months of the church can also be gleaned from the earliest documents which laid down the organizational structure of the church down to the local levels. The ecclesial nature of the new church was also a reflection of the belief in the principle of equality, a landmark of a free society. Despite maintaining the threefold ministry of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, the lay members (of the church) were given importance and vital responsibilities both in decision-making and participation in the life of the organization. Aside from the parish, the lay people are to be represented in all decision-making bodies upwards to the Diocesan Council and General Assembly. A function of the local committees that can emphasize the importance of the lay people is laid down thus:

3. To convince the parish priests and other Filipino clergy of the usefulness and necessity of joining our National Church, in order to reestablish harmony and peace among all Filipino Catholics, at the same time showing them that to continue handing over two thirds of what they earn by their own labors to the friars who do nothing as they now innocently do, is beneath the dignity of priests and gentlemen; thus it is not only for the sake of patriotism but of dignity that they should join our congregation, with the assurance that all possible consideration will be extended to them, and their income shall in no way be diminished.¹⁰

These Filipinos should be included with the giant personalities as the founders of the IFI. A bishop of this church seemed to be conversant with this. In the early twenties, when there were rumors that Gregorio Aglipay was planning to return to the Roman Catholic Church, there were speculations that the IFI would disintegrate should such thing happen. Bishop Alejandrino Remollino, taking the cudgels for the seemingly beleaguered church wrote:

The *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* was founded by one and a half million Filipinos in which Bishop Gregorio Aglipay was not more

which they decided to join the IFI but he won't even let me handle the old Journal which included many other records of the local church.

¹⁰ William Henry Scott trans., *Epistle VI* in Apolonio M. Ranche (comp.), *Doctrine and Constitutional Rules; Important Documents and Various Write-ups on the Iglesia Filipina Independiente* (Quezon City: SATS, 1996, p. 47.

than one. Therefore, it is perfectly clear that the question is out of order if it is to mean that the IFI will soon banish if Monsignor Aglipay will return to the Roman Church.¹¹

A decade later, Bishop Gregorio Aglipay himself declared in two occasions the following words:

The Iglesia Filipina Independiente was founded by the people of our country. This is the product of their desire for liberty, religiously, politically and socially. I was only one of the instruments of its expression.¹²

The colonial rulers, which included the Catholic hierarchy on their side, were well aware of this. It was only expected that they wouldn't want this church to prosper. Even President Theodore Roosevelt was conversant with this as evident in his letter to Bishop Hendrick, who was very active in the pacification of the Filipinos. The relevant portion of the letter says:

Of course you know that, if the Filipinos were given independence, the Aglipay movement and all that it implies would assume irresistible impetus in the Islands and that you and all you champion would be swept out of existence. Yet many bishops and other prelates of your own church in the United States are at this moment signing petitions requesting that independence shall be promised to the Filipinos.¹³

Looking at the founding and the rapid growth in its proper historical context, one can say that the IFI was a people's movement inspired by nationalism which was one driving force behind the desire for freedom and independence. Dr. Bonifacio Salamanca puts it succinctly in this manner:

In attempting to account for the rapid growth of Aglipayanism, one must carefully consider the climate of nationalism under

¹¹ *The Independent* VIII. 371 (13 May 1922). Letter of A. Remollino replying to question in *La Defensa* of May 4, "Is Aglipay planning to return to the Catholic Church?"

¹² Letter to Monsignor Guglielmo Piani dated February 17 1932, *El Pueblo* (24 February 1932; and *Herald Week Magazine* (September 27, 1933).

¹³ Roosevelt to Hendrick, May 2, 1904 quoted in Frederick Zweirlein, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Catholics* (St. Louis: Suren, 1956), p. 106.

which it developed. Although the prescription independence was explained to mean independence from the Vatican, it had quite an evocative meaning to the people after six years of revolution and war against Spain and the United States.¹⁴

It should be noted that during the Spanish colonial period, the Church in the Philippines was part and parcel of the colonial structure by virtue of the *Patronato Real Español*. For people reared in more than three centuries under such arrangement, freedom from the church would mean a lot more than religious freedom. Oscar Evangelista, in looking at the religious problems from 1898-1907, has presented how the Executive branch of the American government influenced the final appointment of American clerics to succeed the Spanish friars. He saw this and other accessions given by the Vatican as means to protect its interests in the islands as a virtual extension of the Patronato.¹⁵ History has also proven that resistance movements can take the form of popular religious movements. In the Philippines, it has an expression in a more formal manner as in the case of the IFI, it was in the form of a Church. That desire for liberty was not confined to the religious realm was clearly laid down in its doctrines and principles.

Doctrines and Principles of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*

Nationalism inspired desire for liberty in all aspects of life can be seen as a prevalent theme in the early doctrinal works of the IFI. Primary of the documents containing such doctrines and principles are the Six Fundamental Epistles and the *Doctrina y Reglas Constitucionales* (hereinafter referred to as DRC).¹⁶ That the Church was not

¹⁴ Bonifacio Salamanca, *Filipino Reaction to American Rule* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984), p. 87.

¹⁵ "Oscar Evangelista, "Religious Problems In the Philippines and the American Catholic Church, 1898-1907," *Asian Studies* (December, 1968), p. 251.

¹⁶ The *Fundamental Epistles* contain instructions on doctrines and organizational rules in the form of letters issued time and again as the need arose and in response to challenges to the new Church which are not much different from the Letters of Paul in the New Testament. There were six of them: the first dated September 22, 1902 and the sixth dated August 17, 1903. These epistles served as the doctrinal and organizational rules of the IFI together with the Temporary Constitution adopted on October 1, 1902. These documents were superseded by the *Doctrina y Reglas*

only anti-Vatican but against all forms of foreign domination was laid down in the Sixth Fundamental Epistle and reiterated in the DRC in its provision entitled "Our Catholicity" which says:

Our Church is Catholic or Universal because it considers all men without distinction children of God, and it bears the designation "Philippine Independent" to identify this association of free men who within the said universality admit servility to no one.¹⁷

In this period when foreigners (particularly the Americans) were enslaving the people, the Aglipayans should not seek new masters. This was made clear in the First Epistle, which says:

In the Filipino Church, everything has to be new, except in what is of divine origin, and if we now seek Greek, Russian, Anglican or Protestant Bishop to consecrate ours, this would show that we do not really mean to emerge from our slavery, and that having shaken off the Roman yoke, we already looking for new masters who, no doubt, will be no better than the first. In so doing, we will be proving that we are not equal to the circumstances, nor fit to be champions of a far-reaching religious revolution. Like the apostles, progressives always advance and never retreat.¹⁸

Also, in a time when those who participated in the Revolution and the War were being discredited and the collaborators to the new regime were being glorified by the new colonial masters, the Second Fundamental Epistle served as encouragement to the former and at the same time a castigation for the latter. The first paragraph says:

Revolutions therefore are perfectly Providential, and despite their causing us momentary disasters, they ultimately bring us far-

Constitucionales (DRC) adopted on October 28, 1903. The DRC contained in a more systematic manner the salient points of the Fundamental Epistles. This was the doctrine and constitutional book of the IFI until its supercession by another Constitution and a Declaration of Faith and Articles of Religion in 1947. This writer has two translations in his possession: one by William Henry Scott and the other by Delfin S. Dallo of Kuyapo, Nueva Ecija which appears to be that of the 1903 edition. William Henry Scott's translation included as appendices the Six Fundamental Epistles. *DRC and Epistle VI* from William Henry Scott trans., pp. 6; 99-100.

¹⁷ *DRC and Epistle VI* from William Henry Scott trans., pp. 6; 99-100.

¹⁸ *Epistle I*, in *Ibid.*, p.57.

reaching redemption and result in benefits that will bless many generations to come.¹⁹

The members of the new church were to show the new colonizers that they were really determined to be free from foreign masters and they need no tutors to show that they are worthy of becoming a free people. A provision entitled "Important Recommendations" in the DRC says:

We recommend to our brothers much altruism and saintly behavior, especially during these times of trial through which we are passing, for it is essential that foreigners be unable to say that we separated from Rome simply to hide or to continue our debilities; let us demonstrate the benefits of having broken our secular chains, and may God be with us all.²⁰

The Sixth Epistle was very explicit in dealing with liberty. Though it was intended as an exhortation for the Filipinos, this portion can be seen as scathing remarks for the Americans:

We are born with the right to think freely and express our thoughts according to the light of reason which the Divinity has given us; we are born with the right to associate freely with those we choose for the purpose of our own perfection and needs; we are born with the right to govern our own persons, our families, *home and birthplace*; we are born in short, with the right to do freely whatever is our own pleasure so long as we do not violate the liberty and rights of others.²¹ (Emphasis supplied)

It can therefore be said that the nationalist doctrines and accounted for the rapid growth of the church more than anything else.²² The masses understood these doctrines and principles because they were also the preponderant themes in the church's Liturgy primarily in its songs and prayers.

¹⁹ *Epistle II*, in *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²⁰ *DRC* in *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²¹ *Epistle VI*, in *Ibid.*, p. 98.

²² "The Challenges to the Churches in the Philippines Today," *Kilusan* Vol. III, No. I +2, p. 12.

The Liturgy of the IFI

Liturgy is taken here to mean the series of rites for public worship set forth by the ecclesiastical authorities for a given church or part of it.²³ Prevalent public worship in the IFI during its early years and even up to the present are: Sunday Eucharist; *Fiesta* Celebrations, which usually include a nine-day Novena; Harvest Festival and *Requiem* Masses.²⁴ In all these occasions, the Mass is a major element or activity. It can be safely presumed that the Liturgy for the Mass used in the IFI prior to the publication of the *Oficio Divino* (OD) was that of the Roman Missal.²⁵ The OD was translated into the various languages in the archipelago and was the main book of public worship in the IFI until 1961 when the new *Filipino Missal* and *Filipino Ritual* were promulgated.²⁶

The *Oficio Divino* has for its second part the Service for the Mass entitled *Culto Eucaristico*. One recognized liturgist made a study of the whole book and made the following criticisms:

The majority of the texts are very lengthy, the language is emotional and elaborate, exhortations abound and the theology is confused. Some of the texts must be pronounced unsuited for liturgical use – they are essays in Unitarian, Liberalist or nationalist doctrine rather than prayer.²⁷

²³ This definition was the one used by the late Professor Harry Ellsworth Chandlee on his talk entitled "On Traditional Liturgy." A copy of his talk was included in the *Papers and Proceedings of the Liturgical Consultation Workshop on Rediscovery and Renewal: Towards a Liberating Liturgy*, pp. 59-60. The occasion was held at the Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City on February 15-22, 1975.

²⁴ This writer had six years parish experience in his home province of Ilocos Norte where he held positions of Parish Priest, Diocesan Youth Coordinator, Secretary and Program Coordinator after his graduation in 1975 until he went back to college in 1983. It was during those years that he encountered and learned to appreciate these nationalistic songs and prayers which he never encountered during his six years seminary training at St. Andrew's Theological Seminary, Quezon City.

²⁵ DRC in WHS trans., p. 10. In this provision entitled "The Mass," the use of the vernacular and a master of ceremonies to guide the congregation were prescribed.

²⁶ Iglesia Filipina Independiente, *Filipino Ritual*, p. i.

²⁷ Harry Ellsworth Chandlee, "The Liturgy of the Philippine Independent Church," in Gerald Anderson, ed., *Studies in Philippine Church History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 269. Ibid.

The text seen as unsuited for liturgical use as they are of nationalist doctrines can be seen in the proper of the Mass: Opening Hymn; Gloria; Collect; Offertory; Proper Preface (*Prefacio*) and the Blessing (*Bendicion*). But it is here precisely that the nationalist aspirations of the Filipino people in that period of suppressed nationalism were expressed in the IFI –through songs and prayers. In short, these are liturgical renditions of the nationalist doctrines of the IFI as enunciated in the Fundamental Epistles and its Doctrine and Constitutional Rules.

Main concepts in these songs and prayers are God and Man. God is presented as great among the nations and in all places. His Name is worthy to be praised. God is the Creator of the whole Universe and all men in all parts of this Universe are equally children of God. These are classical orthodox beliefs but for a people enslaved and deprived of freedom and dignity for centuries, these are full of significance and meaning.

Explicit succor for independence was not present in the original *Oficio Divino*, which was written in Spanish. The earliest or oldest translation found by this writer was in Ilongo and the given date of translation is 1910. Explicit succor for independence was already present in the *Prefacio* and *Bendición*. A news account of a celebration of a Patriotic Sung Mass was published in *El Ideal* on March 12, 1911. This was the *Misang Parangal ng mga Bayani ng Himagsikan*, which was described as a grandiose as well as an emotional one. Many of the members of the congregation wept and couldn't stop shedding tears when Bishop Gregorio Aglipay chanted in a melodious voice the *Prefacio*, part of which says:

Therefore, Our Father, we, the Filipino priests, humbly beseech you and pray you to allow the rising of the joyful day of our *freedom, independence and prosperity*.²⁸

This portion of the *Prefacio* would soon become a regular if not indispensable part of all liturgical services in the IFI. In some instances, they are a prayer in itself interjected in various occasions. In the Mass,

²⁸ *El Ideal* (March 12, 1911). The Tagalog word *gin-awa* is translated poorly as prosperity. This shall be discussed later.

it would also be sung in the *Bendicion* or the last song. The most widespread lyrics in the Tagalog areas are the following:

O Bathalang Maykapal
 Ampunin mo aming bayan, sumikat nawa O Bathala
 Ang maligayang araw ng pagsasarili,
 ang maligayang araw ng pagsasarili.

At bigyan mo ng palad ang mga pinuno
 Upang mapaginhawa ang mga mamamayan.
 Ampunin mo ang Simbahang Pilipino
 at pagkalooban mo ng talino't bait
 ang aming mga apostol sa pagtataguyod
 sa aming patungo sa mga landas
 ng mga banal mong utos at aral.

Ampunin mo aming bayan, sumikat nawa O Bathala
 ang maligayang araw ng pagsasarili,
 ang maligayang araw ng pagsasarili.
 Siya nawa. Siya nawa.²⁹

An Offertory song was also composed following the same lines as the *Bendicion*. There was however the understandable addition of petitions that the Almighty Father bless the fields and other natural resources which were bequeathed to them through their ancestors and from which they now harvest or gather their offerings.³⁰ This became an all-purpose song/hymn used even in Novenas and Requiem Masses. There are many other songs or hymns used in the IFI. To come out as hits in the various regions would be the *Filipinas*, *Nadayag a Filipinas*

²⁹ This writer has in his possession some notated liturgical materials, one of which is the *Misa Balintawak* by Bonifacio Abdon. The *Panghuling Awit* is still widely used in the Tagalog areas especially during Fiestas. The *sumikat* (rising) however is now changed with *manatili* (maintaining) Bishop Alberto Ramento of the IFI Diocese of Cavite has given the assurance that there are still members who may have in their possession a copy of the *Misa Rizalina*. When he sang the *Panghuling Awit* of said version, this writer found it more akin to the National Anthem. These two "MISAS" are included as Items 105 and 106 in *Imnaryong Pilipino*, (Cavite: IFI Diocese of Cavite, 1990).

³⁰ This writer first encountered this song in a Harvest Festival Sung Mass which he presided in the rice fields at a barrio of Marcos, Ilocos Norte where he was assigned from July 1977-July 1979. For years he tried to get a copy but was only able to get one in April 14, 1985. The version is included as one of the hymns entitled *Alavado* in the

in the Ilocos; *Dayawon* in the Ilongo speaking places; and the *Señor Sto. Niño* in the Cebuano communities.³¹

Another commonality in all areas would be the singing or playing of the national anthem during the elevation of the host. It was mentioned earlier that one of the laws suppressing nationalism was the Flag Law which prohibited the singing/playing of the national anthem and the display of the Filipino flag from 1907 to 1919. This is coupled with the use of vestments which has for its decoration in the back a prominent display of the Filipino flag.³²

It is not very hard to see the nationalism of the IFI in the framework popularized by the *ilustrados* and which continue to be dominant in Philippine history including that of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*. Nationalism which has flourished in the Philippines was greatly the result of influence from Europe especially the ideas of the French Revolution. Even the *Katipunan* was influenced by these ideas primarily

"*Novena ken Apo Sta. Teresa de Jesus*" in Fr. Eduardo Pacis, comp. *Rituals of Various Sacraments* (Minanga, Claveria, Cagayan: Aglipayan Church, n. d.). He is indebted to Rev. Fr. Ralph Agustin who was then the Parish Priest of the Aglipay Memorial Church in Batac, Ilocos Norte who loaned said book. The copy was the property of the said parish.

³¹ This writer had been trying to get copies of these songs. In his provincial trips, he has experienced celebrating masses where said songs were sung. Always, he found himself enthralled by those songs especially when they were sung by the old choir of churches. One memorable experience was when he joined a Concelebrated Pontifical Mass in Cebuano at the IFI Cathedral in Cagayan de Oro City on January 9, 1989. The Gloria was also sung in Cebuano. Bishop Millamena of the IFI Diocese of Antique has given this writer a copy of a song entitled, "*Kami ang mga Pilipinhon*" (We are the Filipinos), another IFI nationalistic song but it was composed in 1956. A collection of songs and prayers in Ilocano was loaned to him on March 9, 1989. This is used by the *Iglesia Filipina Sagrada*, one of the splinter groups of the IFI. It is the belief of this writer that many of the songs and prayers in this collection are originally of the IFI. The only variation now is the name of the church, which is understandably *Iglesia Filipina Sagrada*. Msgr. Laureano Sumbad, Secretary General of said church who loaned the book explained that the original name is *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*. Another collection of songs and prayers is the "Paltiing" which is being used by the Aglipayans in Claveria, Cagayan.

³² Alfredo Navarro Salanga, "Aglipayan Aggiornamento," *Panorama* (April 29, 1984), p. 39. This is also part of what may already be called Oral Tradition on IFI Nationalism. Most Aglipayans can cite this practice as one expression of nationalism of their church. Most however are not very familiar with the Flag Law.

through Bonifacio who though cannot be considered an *ilustrado* was well read. His correspondence with the reformers strengthened or confirmed what he has privately read. A deeper look into the *Katipunan* and the IFI can lead to some discoveries and realizations.

The KATIPUNAN and the IFI

The doctrines and principles as well as the popular liturgical materials of the IFI can be found the element of continuity with the *Katipunan*. An important element of this continuity is found on the authorship of such materials. William Henry Scott, in his Introduction to his translation of the *Doctrine and Constitutional Rules* and the *Fundamental Epistles* says that these were all written by Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr.³³ There is however sufficient internal evidence that Gregorio Aglipay had a hand in many of the epistles and sections. Most of the songs and prayers emanated from the *Oficio Divino* and the *Misang Parangal sa mga Bayani ng Himagsikan* which in terms of authorship were attributed to Don Belong and Aglipay respectively. Familiarity with the *Katipunan* is not wanting on these two leaders.

Don Belong was incarcerated with many suspected and real *Katipunan* members in the *Old Bilibid* prison in 1897. He interviewed a thousand and one *Katipuneros* and afterwards wrote *La Religion del Katipunan*.³⁴ Iletto cites Don Belong as one who hinted that the 'poor

³³ Translator's Introduction to the *Doctrine and Constitutional Rules of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente* 1904 trans. William Henry Scott (Sagada, 1982) in Apolonio M. Rancho. comp. *Doctrine and Constitutional Rules, Important Documents and Write-ups on the Iglesia Filipina Independiente*. (SATS, Quezon City: 1996), Part I, p. i. As one primarily in charge in the publication of Scotty's *Aglipay Before Aglipayanism* (Quezon City: Aglipayan Resource Center, 1987), I strongly felt that the translation of those important documents should be the next offering. I presented this to the leadership of the National Priest Organization which heartily agreed to such proposition and gave me the go signal to contact the late Scotty for his permission. Scotty was ecstatic about it and quickly wrote an Introduction and the necessary corrections. Publication was canceled because of some reasons, most important of which is the lack of knowledge on the part of the leadership on the importance of such documents.

³⁴ William Henry Scott in his *Ilocano Response to American Aggression* naughtily said that other than two items – a description of a wedding ceremony and the initiation rite, the contents of the book has nothing to do with the *Katipunan*. The book was rather an attempt to reconstruct pre-hispanic Philippine religion. Though it

and ignorant' masses who swelled the ranks of the *Katipunan* had certain ideas about the world and their places in it quite different from those of the 'better classes of society' based on these interviews."³⁵

Aglipay on the other hand was a *Katipunero* who rose from the ranks to president of the *Liwanag* Branch in Victoria, Tarlac, which he organized while he was the parish priest in that town.³⁶ Iletto has seen Aglipay's affinity with both *ilustrados* (of which he can be considered a member) and the masses. In discussing the *Virgen ng Balintawak*, he observes:

One of the reasons why, as we shall see, religious-political groups and the Philippine Independent Church swelled with peasant members during the days of the republic and the succeeding years was because "nationalist" and "religious" idioms merged in them. Bishop Gregorio Aglipay, for example, continued to instill among his adherents the teachings of Mabini, Rizal and Bonifacio. But at the same time, without hesitation, he could proclaim: "Ang Virgen ng Balintawak ay ang Inang Bayan (The Virgin of Balintawak is the Mother Country)."³⁷

Aglipay and de los Reyes were able to produce liturgical materials appropriate and acceptable as they were understood by the masses. These are reminiscent of *Pasyon* and *Katipunan* literature. Most important for this study is the *Ang Dapat Mabatid ng Mga Tagalog* by Andres Bonifacio. Many scholars agree that the swelling of membership after the only issue of the *Katipunan* newspaper, *Kalayaan* came

appears to be such, the book used the popular religious ideas of the period of which he was familiar with and has been enriched by his interviews with the *Katipunan* members in prison.

³⁵ Rafael C. Iletto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910*, (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1978), p. 89.

³⁶ William Henry Scott, *Aglipay Before Aglipayanism* (Quezon City: Aglipayan Resource Center, 1987), p.18. Scotty cited as his source an unpublished 1940 history of the town by former Mayor Jose Villarte called "*Reseña histórica del Pueblo de Victoria*. "A recent article which used the material without acknowledgment of the source is that of Mario Rosete Garcia, "Kasaysayan ng Bayan ng Victoria, Lalawigan ng Tarlac, Mons. Gregorio Aglipay, Ang Katipunan at IFI," *Ang Tagapunta* (August- September, 1998), pp. 5 and 15.

³⁷ Iletto, *Pasyon and Revolution*, p. 131.

out was the influence of this article. Rafael Ileto explains the importance of said item as having stem from the fact that it places the struggle for independence in a framework of meaning which is traditional and he used the form that traditionally conveyed such matters – the *pasyon* form.³⁸

Despite the fact that Christianity was a religion brought by the colonizers the Filipinos have appropriated it as theirs and understood it in their own terms – through the *Pasyon*. The *Pasyon* is the popular *Account of the Sacred Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ*. It is actually a popular rendition of the Bible as Salvation History as it starts with creation and concludes with a glimpse of the Last Judgement based on the Apocalypse of St. John. A scholarly study of the *Pasyon* has revealed that the characters especially those who were intimately related to Jesus Christ were portrayed by the author as if they were his countrymen.³⁹

The goal of the Revolution was understood by the masses in religious terms – the establishment of a New Eden, the establishment of the Kingship of God. The attainment of this longing and aspiration was articulated by the IFI in its songs and prayers especially in its most widely used prayer, its own version of the Lord's Prayer. The Ilocano version is very revealing:

Amani a pannakalangitmo ti di maungpot a kalawa toy lubong. Dumteng koma ti panagarim a bin-ig nga ayat, linteg, kappia ken ginawa. Aramidennakam kad nga managtungpal iti pagayatam saan laeng nga iti sasao no di pay ket aramid. Itdem Apo ti taraanmi nga inaldaw. Pakawanennakami kadagiti basbasolmi as kas met iti inkam panangpakawan kadagiti makabasol kadakami. Dinakam kad Apo baybayan nga umannugot iti sulisog no di ket isalakannakami iti dakes. Amen.

(Our Father whose throne is the boundless universe. May your kingship come, which is all *love, righteousness (or justice) peace and gin-awa*. Make us obedient to your will not only in words but more so in deeds. Give us our daily sustenance. For-

³⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

³⁹ Bienvenido Lumbera, "Assimilation and Synthesis (1700-1800): Tagalog Poetry in the Eighteenth Century." *Philippine Studies* 16 (1968), p. 639.

give us our sins (faults) as we forgive those who have sinned against us. And don't allow us to succumb to temptations but deliver us from evil. Amen.)⁴⁰

Though the prayer follows the general pattern found in either Matthew or Luke, there are some key concepts which are reminiscent of Katipunan literature. In dealing with these concepts, Ileto explains:

To begin with, Bonifacio uses the words *kasaganaan* (root word, *sagana*) and *kaginhawahan* to describe the pre-Spanish situation. These are common attributes of paradise. The word *ginhawa* connotes besides prosperity "a general ease of life, relief from pain, sickness or difficulties. Furthermore, the Tagalogs, he writes, could read and write, and thus had knowledge, just as Adam and Eve could name all the plants and animals in paradise. The mention of good relations and trade with the neighbors of *Katagalugan* further defines the condition of wholeness in the Spanish past.⁴¹

The perceived society that was the goal of separation from Mother Spain was characterized by the return of the pre-Spanish society, full of *kasaganaan* and *kaginhawahan*. This longing for this condition was nurtured and developed by the revived *Katipunan*, which was very instrumental in the continued resistance against the Americans in Northern Luzon in 1900-1901.⁴² A *Katipunan* document, with religious and nationalist idioms merged, can be quoted in full:

It cannot be denied that the *Katipunan* society was the light which guided us safely to the Port of Liberty after how many centuries of sailing the Seas of Slavery. It was also the light which illumined the path prepared by Divine Providence across which our beloved land led her sons to glory and the sweet taste of that liberty we all crave.

⁴⁰ One reason why the Ilocano is used is familiarity as it was one he learned by rote in his childhood days *Gin-awa* is hard to translate. Prosperity or abundance cannot capture the essence whether in Tagalog and more definitely in Ilocano.

⁴¹ Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution*, p. 103.

⁴² Cf William Henry Scott, *Ilocano Responses to American Aggression 1900-1901*. (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1986). Chapter Six (p. 113-132 discusses the *Katipunan*. The late Scotty gave me some copies of the document when I helped him translate some as part of my initiation into History. At that time I was working on my applications to UP Diliman where I completed my BA History from 1981-1983.

We all have one and the same desire, one that cannot be denied because we all love our families and desire their well-being. For them we would make any sacrifice, shedding even the last drop of our blood, if need be, that their lives should be secure in the future – a duty God imposes on all men. Yet the common goal of our desires appears with many different faces, and it was only this society, which, by virtue of its unceasing efforts, was able to unite them all in the love of country; for the country is nothing more than the union of our families. Therefore, we owe a great debt to this society under whose shade is nothing to be found which is worldly or profane.

There only can we see that true unity from which the deathless strength arose which cast off Spanish slavery.

There only can we find that admirable equality that fortifies unity, because no hateful distinctions between rich and poor exist within it, much less between our different dialects.

There only can we dream of that indissoluble brotherhood (*fraternidad*) which beats down all selfishness, because it recognizes no standard but “one for all and all for one,” and incorporates all actions without any member feeling individual need. It was the welding of these separate elements into one society that obtained our liberty, the one symbol we should bear with pride, for behind that symbol we behold a man sacrificed for the *freedom of his land, the love of his family, and for his God*. And when much blood had been poured out to good effect, this society finally achieved its aims. But then the Americans invaded our land because of their insatiable greed, never pausing to consider its weakness but trampling its rights underfoot and, worse, by means of deceit that would be despised by any truly enlightened nation, and declared unjust war because they thought the newly founded Philippines would retreat before their brutality.

But never, no, never dare we close our ears to the cries arising from that blood poured out, calling for revenge! For that would be despicable. Nor need we leave it shed in vain so long as there exists that *Katipunan*, that society whose love of motherhood will search her out again to find that mandrake which emboldens men in battle and nation’s clutch that liberty which is the only possession fit to endow our families.

This society, always planning in advance, did not fail to adopt a standard based on true justice and the sacred words, Unity, Equality and Brotherhood (*Unión, Igualdad y Fraternidad*), and by

that standard the society will little by little destroy all obstacles in its path and so achieve the brilliant prosperity the Philippines deserves, land that we love. It is the only standard capable of solidifying our ideals and actions so that we may stand upright and without shame before any man, and when we have achieved the independence of our homeland, they will see in us nothing but men clothed with dignity, honor and constancy, men able to fulfill their duty faithfully.

So, my brother reader, if these sacred ideals strike sparks in your heart and you wish to be counted among those men of dignity, you may follow the regulations written below.⁴³

These ideas were still strong in the second decade of the twentieth century. As such, it is perfectly understandable when the congregation wept and couldn't stop shedding tears when Bishop Aglipay chanted in a melodious voice the part of the *Prefacio* which says: *Kaya nga kaming mga paring Filipino ay nananambitan na iyong idulot na sumikat nawa ang maligayang araw ng aming kalayaan, pagsasarili at kaginhawaan.*⁴⁴

The phrase which brought weeping and shedding of tears summed up the perceived society. As discussed above, these became the oft-repeated refrain in many of the popular hymns and prayers of the IFI. The *Katapusang Awit* or the *Bendición* contained this succor in different words but the gist is the same, that the joyful day of freedom, independence and abundant life (*kaginhawahan*) arise. In the Ilocos, said elements are also found in a hymn entitled *Alavado* which is always sung in the various "novenas" including Harvest Festivals and wake for the dead. In these songs and prayers which are reminiscent of *Pasyon* and *Katipunan* literature, the masses found in the IFI a continuity of the Revolution and the earlier struggles against Spanish colonization and other oppressive elements. In the IFI, they found continued articulation of the God inspired desire or yearning for *kalayaan, pagsasarili at kalayaan*.

⁴³ "The *Katipunan* (or Society) of the Sons of the Land," (PNL PRP SD-514.8). The late Scotty gave me a copy of the Ilocano and the English translations. I have found out later that the English translation is quoted.

⁴⁴ *El Ideal* (March 12, 1911).

Conclusion

The birth of a Filipino nation after the Revolution against Spain brought about and heightened the different longings and aspirations of the *ilustrados* who longed for *independencia* and of the masses who aspired for *kalayaan*. The ideal for the latter was more comprehensive as it envisioned a return to the pre-Spanish conditions when there was wholeness among members of society.

The modern concepts of Equality, Fraternity and Brotherhood were seen in their own terms and it was the *Pasyon*, which was the pervasive Christian doctrinal book that provided the framework. These concepts were incorporated in their envisioned goal of the Revolution thereby the merging of religious and nationalist idiom. The perceived society, which was to be the outcome of struggles, is a nation where everyone enjoys the blessings of *kalayaan pagsasarili at kaginhawahan*. The *Katipunan* in 1896 and its Filipino-American War phases was able to gather popular support primarily for its envisioned goal which corresponded to that of the masses.

In the eventual American colonization, there were many movements that continued to articulate and expressed these yearnings and aspirations. One of these movements which enjoyed widespread adherence in the first two decades of this century was the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*. In this church was found merging of 'religious' and 'nationalist' idioms common to religio-political groups that waged intense resistance against the new colonizers. Equally important was the integration of the *independencia* aspirations of the *ilustrados* and that of the *Kalayaan* for the masses to mean that; abundant life may be enjoyed by the rich and poor alike, lowland as well as highlanders.

Its adherence was not only widespread geographically but also in sectoral membership especially for the masses. Its doctrines and principles that clearly show European influence incorporated popular religious thought especially from those who participated in the Revolution. These were understood by the masses through songs and prayers that continued to proclaim the desire for *kalayaan, pagsasarili at kaginhawahan*.

Appendix

CLERGY PARTICIPATION IN EVENTS LEADING TO AND FOUNDING OF IFI⁴⁵

Paniqui Assembly:⁴⁶

Gregorio Aglipay; Emigdio Albano; Manuel Bonifacio; Andres Cadiz; Justo Claudio; Mariano Dakanay; Eusebio David; Gregorio Dizon; Leoncio Evangelista; Anselmo Fermo; Tranquilino Fernandez; Mariano Gaerlan; Adriano Garces; Silvestre Lopez; Miguel Mamuyao; Ponciano Manuel; Lucilo Meris; Isidoro Montoya; Juan Pacquing; Antonio M. Padilla; Isidoro Perez; Pio Romero, who was the secretary; Domingo Salinda; Santiago Serafica; Segundo Urbi; Cipriano Valenzuela; Domingo de Vera

Kullabeng Assembly:⁴⁷

Gregorio Aglipay; Lucas Albano; Perdo Brillantes; Servando Castro; Evaristo Clemente; Mariano Clemente; Jose Evangelista; Quirino Evangelista; Ramon Farolan; Pio Romero.

(There were some priests whose name were not known by Ruperto Valbuena who wrote about the event. It could be accepted that the other clergy from I.N. who joined the IFI in its early months were also present).

⁴⁵ This listing was initiated by the desire to know who among those present at the Paniqui Assembly [which some scholars have presented as the founding of the IFI (Rivera, Wise, etc.)] eventually joined the IFI. Their names are underscored. There were eight of them including Gregorio Aglipay and Pio Romero who were present in all four listing.

⁴⁶ The list is based on the translation of the *Provisional Ordinances* by William Henry Scott. The document is included in Apolonio M. Ranche, comp. *Doctrine and Constitutional Rules, Important Documents and Write-ups on the Iglesia Filipina Independiente*. SATS, Quezon City: 1996. The whole document is found in Part II, pages 1-5 and there are two lists, one on page 4 and another on page 5. The latter one is used.

⁴⁷ This list is based from Ruperto Valbuena, "Pakasaritaan ti Pinili Manipud Pannakabangonna." Pinili: 1951. MS. The account of the meeting was translated by Apolonio M. Ranche and included in his compilation mentioned above, Part II, pp. 6-7.

Nomination:⁴⁸

Gregorio Aglipay, P.B.P; Pedro Brillantes, I. Norte; Magdaleno Castillo, Batangas; Evaristo Clemente, V. Viz; Fortunato Clemena, Cavite; Santiago Dexcalzo, Iloilo; Gregorio Dizon, Pampanga; Jose Evangelista, Manila; Ramon Farolan, Abra; Mariano Gaerlan, L. U.; Candido Gironella, I. Sur; Narciso Hijalda, Antique; Ponciano Manuel, Pang.; Isidoro Perez, Cagayan; Vicente Ramirez, Zambales; Pio Romero, Isabela; Cipriano Valenzuela, N. Ecija.

IFI Adherence:⁴⁹

Gregorio Aglipay, P.B.P; Lucas Albano; Sinforoso Bonoan; Pedro Brillantes, I. Norte; Magdaleno Castillo, Batangas; Jose Castro; Juan Castro; Servando Castro; Evaristo Clemente, V. Viz; Fortunato Clemena, Cavite; Santiago Dezcalzo, Iloilo; Gregorio Dizon, Pampanga; Clemente Edralin; Mariano Espiritu; Jose Evangelista, Manila; Quirino Evangelista; Ramon Farolan, Abra; Doroteo Foronda; Mariano Gaerlan, L.U.; Adriano Garces; Salvador Gallano; Candido Gironella, I. Sur; Narciso Hijalda, Antique; Juan Jammias; Ponciano Manuel, Pang.; Ignacio Noriega; Pedro Noriega; Santiago Paloma, Jaro; Santiago Paloma, Jaro; Esteban Paz, I.N.; Isidoro Perez, Cagayan; Vicente Ramirez, Cam. Sur; Vital Reyes, Zambales; Pio Romero, Isabela; Cipriano Valanzuela, N. Ecija; Platon de Villanueva, I.N.

⁴⁸ This listing is based on the Proclamation speech of Don Belong published in *La Iglesia Filipina Independiente Revista Catolica*. Ano I, Num. 2 (October 18, 1903), pp. 6-7. An English translation by William Henry Scott is included in Apolonio M. Ranche, comp. Cited above, pp. 8-13. The list is found on pages 10-11.

⁴⁹ This list is primarily based on *AB-RRP*, Vol I, pp. 228-232.