

STATEMENT BY THE CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE CHURCHES OF THE PHILIPPINES COMMITTEE ON DOCTRINE AND POLITY (CODAP) ON THE G12 MOVEMENT

“Statement drafted by the Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches of the Philippines Committee on Doctrine and Polity (CODAP) on the G12 movement:

The CAMACOP Committee on Doctrine and Polity met for the first time on September 20, 2011 under the auspices of the Division of General and Theological Education (DGTE) and upon the express instruction of the Executive Bishop to discuss a matter that now presses itself against our churches, even as it has led to many distressing controversies and divisions in other evangelical denominations and churches in the Philippines.

We refer to the Colombian G12 Movement of Pastor Cesar Ramirez Castellanos.

Because of the urgency of the situation, members of the Committee reached a consensus to issue a statement that will deal with the broader issues occasioned by the onslaught of the G12 movement and recommend to the National Board of Trustees specific courses of action to address the challenges it raises to our biblical and denominational heritage.

Members agreed that the statement will not as of yet deal with the specific contexts in which it may have taken root in some of our very own Alliance churches but will instead address the immediate and urgent doctrinal and hermeneutical excesses of this new religious movement that has already taken hold of so much of evangelical Christianity from North to South.

First, we appreciate the good intentions of the movement: the stress on strong leadership and the development of good leaders for the movement's small groups, the design for small groups as a place for nurture, the desire to reach out to many, the emphasis on rigorous training for members of the movement, the recognition of prayer as essential to the life of believers. We do not deny that this movement – even across different countries and contexts – has seen tremendous numerical growth in churches that have adopted its methods. No doubt, these are some of the big things that attract many pastors and church leaders to the movement.

Nevertheless there are features of the G12 Movement that raise for us flags of alarm, particularly because they contradict the teaching of scripture itself as well as undermine the vitality of our denominational heritage; numerical growth by itself is not a justification to upend biblical teaching, nor is it a true measure of success and faithfulness to God's call. More often than not,

numerical growth only masks under a veneer of apparent ministerial success the terrible toll it has exacted on truth and relationships.

Our statement clusters the issues on the G12 Movement around two main themes, which we discuss below:

On the Apostleship of the 12 and the Super-Apostleship of Pastor Cesar Ramirez Castellanos

The G12 Movement draws its name from the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ; But ignoring scriptural warrants for church leadership patterns, Castellanos claims the time has come to end all other ecclesiastical modalities, whether Presbyterian, congregational, Episcopalian or Diocesan, in favor of this leadership of the 12, with him as its Super-Apostle.

This new movement of the Spirit, according to him, requires nothing less than the abolition of established structures of churches of whatever Christian heritage or denomination. This, according to Castellanos, is the “new wineskin” being revealed by the Holy Spirit to the present time.

In denominational terms, Castellanos rejects the leadership of pastors, elders, deacons and deaconesses, and would have these yield to a vertical structure of leaders or apostles, who, using multi-level marketing techniques, lord it over the people – the members of their groups of 12 people.

The movement assumes a New Age-like mantle with its absolute insistence on the number “12” as the rule of faith and life: as a leader, your group has to be of 12 members and nothing less, because that is what – according to Castellanos – the Scripture demands.

Moreover, the so-called apostles or group leaders exercise frighteningly totalitarian powers, as the structure and system of the G12 Movement requires absolute obedience to leaders from followers.

It’s very name opens the leadership structure of the G12 Movement to abuse. It exhibits cultic tendencies in this regard, as members of a group of 12 organized around a leader are expected to surrender to the dictate of the leader, who exercises his or her leadership according to tried-and-tested mind manipulation techniques. It cannot be gainsaid that this is the secret to its success – the absolute obedience demanded of members to produce results according to the “vision.”

Yet this feature of the G12 leadership approach is undeniably a mark of a cultic movement and it must be exposed for what it is.

We reject this New Age numerology of the G12 as a distortion of scriptural teaching as well as an utter rejection of our denominational heritage in the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

The deification of the number 12 in the G12 constitution is arbitrary and without scriptural warrant.

The dictatorial imposition of the leadership in the G12 Movement is contrary to the freedom we have in Christ. It is true that we are called to communal life as Christians, but it does not mean that we are to lose our individual identities in groupthink. Human dignity and the integrity of the individual eschew any view that places a person at the absolute control of the community. The gift of conscience does and will not allow that.

Coercion or any manipulative technique designed to solicit unconditional loyalty of members is contrary to Christ's teaching on the freedom of the believer." It is for freedom that Christ has set us free," said the Apostle Paul. "Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." (Gal. 5:1, NIV).

In the New Testament, we have the example of the Bereans, who, as scriptures says, "were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." (Acts 17:11).

This scriptural precept flies in the face of the G12 Movement's claim that to the leaders must be reserved an unquestioning obedience. We are told to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people (Jude 1:3), as well as to see to it that we are not swayed by any unsound teaching (1 Tim. 6:2-4; 2 Tim. 1:12-14). It is not only the responsibility of leaders – but of every believer in Christ – to keep life and doctrine together.

The Gospel is not surrender of the intellect to machine-like obeisance; on the contrary, the Good News of Jesus Christ constantly challenges and engages Christians to exercise their minds to the fullest with both humility and diligence. Indeed, the Lordship of Jesus Christ requires no less than the full engagement of our whole being to His call to responsibility in all spheres of life.

Thus, we cannot speak of Christian responsibility in all spheres of life where a church promotes unthinking obedience among its members. It is not surprising that the G12 Movement has proven to be divisive. Churches and denominations had been rent asunder because of its monolithic structural requirement. As we write, we hear of many reports from other Christian

denominations and organizations that had been wracked by tension and conflict as a result of the introduction of G12 teachings and practices.

Castellanos does not allow his G12 Movement to be placed on top of an old foundation, which is ironic, considering that he himself admits he borrowed the essentials of his system from the Korean church started by David Yonggi Cho. Neither does he allow the use of other materials alongside the G12 movement's own materials. And the slightest modifications are considered serious deviations.

Needless to say, this cornerstone of the G12 Movement contradicts our constitution and by-laws as a denomination. If adopted among Alliance churches, it will supplant the structure of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches of the Philippines as a denomination.

But any movement which presents itself to the world as THE ONLY TRUE WAY of doing God's work while those of others had been doomed to extinction could only be ignorant of God's working in and through culture throughout history. Indeed, the genius of Christianity, as missiologists have shown, is precisely its ability to be transplanted and translated across cultures.

Such a movement could only be motivated by unbridled arrogance when it asserts that faith traditions that refuse to abide by its way of doing things are cut off from the glory of God and from the working of his Holy Spirit. The God we worship is Trinitarian. One of the deep theological insights we can glean from the very nature of the God we worship is that the Triune God – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – is our model of unity in diversity. Such is the colorful tapestry of the church – many members of diverse backgrounds and traditions, but one body – the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints (Col. 1:26).

The exclusivist claims of the G12 Movement is at worst gnostic in character and at best an arrogant posturing that should have no place in any movement that considers itself Christian. In other words, the G12 Movement is an organization that holds itself out to the world as the only access to a "new anointing" from God, without which there can be no freedom from the bondage of sin. But this is a mockery of what Christ did on the Cross for the salvation of humankind.

On the G12 movement's Stress on Experience and Encounter Other than the deification of the number 12, a foundational teaching of the G12 Movement is its obsession with the so-called generational curses, the theory being that all the misfortunes and ills of a person's life spring from some curse

or other that had been passed on to him or her from his or her ancestors. The G12 Movement holds that these generational curses are inflicted even on believers, so that as a result, people suffer poverty or remain in the grip of sin.

And the highlight of its high-intensity and highly-secretive Encounter with God Retreats (EGR) is the renunciation of these curses in often bizarre rituals that seemed to have been drawn straight from New Age practices rather than from Scripture itself. These practices include astral projection, visualization, being “slain in the Spirit” and other so-called manifestations of a power encounter with the Holy Spirit.

A Christian who has not been to an EGR for this purpose must experience one, because true conversion only takes place there. Prior to the spiritual encounter a believer meets at an EGR, all of his or her Christian experiences do not count in the equation.

At the core of this emphasis on renunciations is a doctrine of spiritual warfare which teaches that prior to a believer’s detailed listing and renunciation of all of his or her known sins, salvation is never complete for him or her and Satan can still smuggle his minions into his or her life; there is no full forgiveness of sins from God, there is no full salvation, which comes only, along with inner healing, upon repentance, the renunciation of curses, in rituals executed at an EGR.

It is also here where adherents are asked to throw away any and all vestiges of their former lives as members of churches with their own denominational traditions and practices. It is here where they are introduced to new ways of doing liturgy and worship. Most bizarre of all of these spiritual exercises is that even God himself, because He can be a source of trauma, must be forgiven!

The G12 Movement adds another layer to the finished work of Christ on the Cross and teaches that without these renunciations, coupled with the “new anointing” through its Encounter of God Retreats, they cannot enjoy new life, indeed they cannot partake of the Supernatural DNA of Jesus Christ himself. The “new anointing” is crucial to prosperity promised to every adherent of the G12 Movement – a feature common to all movements identified with the unbiblical teachings of the “Word of Faith Movement”, of which Castellanos is part.

It appears that the G12 Movement is geared towards a sophisticated organization requiring a certain level of cultural and economic capital. It is aimed at a particular lifestyle where the Movement’s inner dynamic finds its true rhythm. This inner dynamic works well with the movement’s vision of success, all too often measured in terms of the excess of material goods,

inasmuch as its “new anointing” is a necessary condition for a Christian’s material prosperity.

But these beliefs perpetuated by the movement are a serious distortion of the historic and biblical doctrine of the Redeeming work of Jesus Christ; these are also serious distortions of the doctrines of justification and sanctification, which are the doctrinal hallmarks of the Reformation as well as of the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

What the G12 Movement teaches is another gospel – a teaching that St. Paul called anathema in his letter to the Galatians. This is a false gospel that rejects the redeeming work of Christ (Gal. 1:1-9).

Thus, it is urgent that a warning be issued to all our churches in the Philippines about the teachings of the G12 movement.

Signed: November 23, 2011

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