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The State of the Church in the Philippines 1850-1875

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danao," published in *Philippine Studies* 26 (1978): 16-34. Likewise, I would add to note 30, page 37, the article by Raul J. Bonoan, S.J., "Rizal's Record at the Ateneo," *Philippine Studies* 27 (1979): 53-73.

Aside from an occasional hispanicism, the book is well written. Father Villaroel deserves our congratulations. This could have been an obnoxious apologia for the Dominicans and the University of Santo Tomás, but he is too much of a historian for that!

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THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES 1850-1875. THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE BISHOPS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE NUNCIO IN MADRID. By Antolin V. Uy, S. V. D. Tagaytay Studies, 3. Tagaytay City: Divine Word Seminary, 1984. 266 pages, 3 un-numbered leaves.

This study covers a critical quarter-century in the history of Spain and the Philippines. In Spain, the period opens with the 1851 Concordat which somewhat eased relations between the Holy See and Madrid. In 1868, seventeen years later, Queen Isabella II was deposed, ushering in a period of anarchy. Finally, in 1875, when Alfonso XII was proclaimed king, peace returned and monarchy was reestablished.

The Philippines did not remain unaffected by these political upheavals in the peninsula. In quick succession, twenty-five governors-general (eleven, if we discount the *interregna* between the departure of the old and the arrival of the new appointee) were shipped in and out of the country. The longest term lasted only about three years, the shortest a year, perhaps less. And because Philippine appointments depended on the party in power in the capital, it was taken for granted that the succeeding colonial official would undo his predecessor's policies. This constant change and rapid turn-over hardly promoted continuity of policy or good government.

Nor was the Catholic Church spared. "Toleration" does not describe the entire picture, for evidence is strong that in Spain, both liberal and conservative ministries suffered the Church to exist only because it was the priest and the missionary, not the soldier or the bureaucrat, who could best keep the Philippines loyal to Spain. And in the nineteenth century, when the extensive Spanish domains over which "the sun never set," had shrunk to only Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, regalist interpretation of the *Patronato real* had hardened and the Church, more and more a convenient political tool, was at the mercy of the Crown.

Because of the patronato, there was hardly any direct contact between the Philippine Church and the Holy See. Papal directives had to receive the *pase regio* before they were promulgated, and communication from the local hierarchy was frowned upon. There was, however, some exchange of letters between the papal nuncio in Madrid, Monsignor Lorenzo Barili, and the bishops in the Philippines, which kept the higher Church authorities not entirely ignorant of the situation in the Philippines. But the latter were hardly in any position to offer solutions to the problems that plagued the Philippine Church.

Unfortunately, this point, which is the main concern of the book as the subtitle suggests, is not discussed as fully as it deserves, and several questions come to mind. Were the letters between the nuncio in Spain and the Philippine bishops of an official nature? Did the papal nuncio enjoy any jurisdiction over the local Philippine hierarchy? How much authority did he exercise in the peninsula? Given the control of the Philippine Church by the colonial government, what was the point of this epistolary interchange? These and similar others have not been faced explicitly by the author, a failure which makes it that much harder to read the book.

That there were delinquent priests—both secular and religious—in the Philippines is not denied. Church law empowered their respective superiors to discipline them, and even remove them from their posts. But in 1795, a royal *cedula* decreed that no priest could be removed without prior verification of cause through the civil court. This effectively tied the hands of the bishops and religious superiors. Time and effort were needed to initiate any “*formacion de causa*.” Bureaucratic red tape was inevitable, and one had to reckon with the unreliability of witnesses easily intimidated by the interested parties. But unless errant priests were made to toe the line, no meaningful reforms would be possible.

In March 1863, to cite an example, following the consecration of Bishop Francisco Gainza, O. P. of Nueva Caceres, the Archbishop of Manila invited all the bishops and the superiors of the religious orders in the Philippines to a meeting. They agreed to submit an “*exposicion*” to the royal government asking for the repeal of the royal *cedula* of 1795. Four months later, even before the *exposicion* had been elevated to the governor general in Manila, there was a change of minds and strong pressure was applied to set the entire plan aside. Domingo Treserra, Prior Provincial of the Dominicans, was especially active against it, claiming it was causing more harm than good. He explained that in the preliminary deliberation by the Administrative Council, it was supported by its Filipino members because removal of the religious would allow the Filipino secular priests to “step in and take over.” Initially intended as a reform measure, therefore, the *exposicion* occasioned an anti-Spanish, pro-Filipino movement. And, the Provincial added, had it not been for the earthquake of June 1863 which killed Pedro Pelaez and the other

canons with him, "we would have been the victims of the revolution on the day of Corpus Christi — friars and Spaniards in the procession — leading one to suspect that Pelaez and [Ignacio] Ponce [Filipino members of the cathedral chapter] were the ringleaders" (p. 144).

There is much history implied in these lines, but again one regrets the author's failure to explicate the details. How valid was the perception that the Philippine-born clergy and their supporters welcomed the possibility of removing the friars from the parishes in order to supplant them with native priests? How true was the rumor of a separatist movement headed by Pelaez set to massacre the Spaniards and friars during a religious procession? Who concocted the story? Or, if it was true, who discovered the plot? These and similar other questions are not answered, and the book, as it is written, seems to accuse the religious superiors of acting on mere hearsay to block an important reform measure that would have gone a long way to improve the situation of the Philippine Church. That the charge against Pelaez was false is proven by the defense of his name by Father Burgos, subsequently silenced through execution for still unclear reasons.

This study could have cleared, once and for all, the complicated issue of the Filipinization of the parishes, a problem that had begun as an internal Church matter but expanded into a full-blown fight for Filipino equality and political independence. The author does not seem to have been aware of these ramifications, or else chose to overlook them.

This is a basic shortcoming in the book. It offers plenty of material for a new analysis of the Philippine situation preceding the revolution of 1896, but it is loosely tied together. One finds little more than a mere chronicle of events. This explains the repetition of certain ideas in two or three of the five chapters, the seeming inconclusiveness of certain episodes that are discussed up to a point and then left unresolved, e. g., the case of Alcala Zamora named by the government for the vacancy in Cebu, but blocked by the Church authorities. The reader gets only the end of the story, because the author relies exclusively on the correspondence between the nuncio in Spain and the Philippine hierarchy. Letters are an important historical source, but one must know how to interpret them.

A few other corrigenda typical in the book: mixed English verb tenses (confusing the sequence of a narrative); neologisms (e.g., p. 129: "disrelished" for *disliked*); mistranslations (e.g., p. 54: "putting it off to the Greek calends," a transliteration of the idiomatic expression *calendas griegas* which means "putting it off indefinitely"); misprints (e.g., p. 26: the Dominicans arrived in 1587, not 1578). These can be corrected in a subsequent edition.

Briefly summed up, the book discusses the need to reform the Philippine Church, and the fact that, for one reason or another, no adequate solution was applied. Monsignor Barili, the papal nuncio in Madrid, gave his full encouragement and support. But given his role, one wonders if he could have

done more than he actually did. One wishes the author had given a more adequate treatment of this man's personality and background. From the few lines dedicated to him, one can see that he was a man of prudence, careful lest he enflame certain volatile issues that could have resulted in even further constraints on the Philippine Church. He was also a man of vision, convinced that an "exemplary clergy means [a] stable society" (p. 228).

There is much in this book that is important for an understanding of Philippine history. But it will be useful only to those familiar with the history *implied* in its pages and left undiscussed by the author. Beginners, or those only superficially acquainted with Philippine history will find this confusing if not unintelligible reading.

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THE AMERICAN HALF-CENTURY (1898-1946). By Lewis E. Gleeck, Jr. Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1984. xxxvii, 479 pages. Pictorials, Appendices.

Twelve chapters of unequal length cover as many time segments into which Gleeck divides his subject. The longest is chapter VIII, "Political Reconstruction . . .", which runs for 74 pages, and the shortest is the final chapter, "Liberation, the Roxas Victory . . ." which only has fourteen pages. Each chapter opens with a brief summary of its contents, followed by a yearly chronicle of almost exclusively political developments (the limitation and weakness of this book) and closes with a "Person to Person" section to try to relieve with some human interest story what otherwise tends to be heavy reading.

Aside from unimportant details, there is really no new information offered to those already familiar with the history of the Philippines under American rule. Gleeck himself, without explicitating it, acknowledges his dependence on the recent studies of the period — e.g., Friend, Salamanca. This brings up a basic question regarding the work as a whole. If the purpose is to provide a "general history of the Philippines" (p. ix), of which this is the first volume of Part V, even for this sub-section, these 479 pages will not suffice. The study must include other aspects not touched in the present work, like culture, the arts, economy, etc. It is not merely a question of piling up more facts to lengthen the story. Such a procedure would risk the danger of missing the forest for the trees. Rather, the research should focus on what resulted from the American efforts to govern the Philippines for half a century.

A number of points to which I would have taken exception are discussed in the "Report and Acknowledgment" (pp. ix-xxix) by the president of the Historical Conservation Society, and there is no need to repeat them here.