"CONVERSATIONS" WITH A UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT


Father Araneta enjoys the distinction of being the first student of the Ateneo de Manila to become the Rector of that century-old institution. He is also the first Filipino to preside as Rector both of the Ateneo de Manila and of that other Jesuit university in the Philippines—the Ateneo de Cagayan—the name of which (to the joy of some and the distress of others) he has changed to Xavier University. But these are not his only distinctions: he also has the gift of being one of the most engaging speakers in the country. He does not orate, nor does he lecture: he talks to his audience in a relaxed and informal manner which makes them listen to him as if he and they were engaged in an informal conversation. He speaks about the most common things—the duties of government, the duties of family life, the objectives of education—but he does not speak in platitudes. Everything has been re-thought, worked out anew, so that what he says is old indeed but also carries a flavor of freshness.

For instance, he once told the students of Far Eastern University that what everyone needs is a sense of vocation: “The janitor cleaning the office of President Evangelista may not serve the community with as much distinction as the president, but he serves nonetheless.”

Father Araneta is not the abstract thinker commonly associated with the “ivory tower”. He thinks in terms of current problems and situations. “Why do our daughters elope?” he asked an audience composed of distinguished persons, some of whose daughters had in fact eloped although only in freshman or sophomore year of college. The address, entitled “Our Eloping Daughters”, contains a shrewd
analysis of certain social situations in Manila, including what he calls the problem of parties and the problem of trust.

Nor is Father Araneta afraid to call a spade a spade. Speaking on the well-trodden subject of "Government for the People", he analyzed the system of government controls then in force (including the control of foreign exchange) and came to the conclusion that what we had was not government for the people but government for the sake of government. The passage may be of interest to the economically minded:

Let us take our system of exchange controls. You know some of the side effects: graft, an increase in smuggling, uncertainty in business, dollar peddling, a situation described by a Central Bank official (no less) as one whereby a P300 a month clerk in the Central Bank can stop the operations of a P3,000,000 firm. You regret all these evil effects. You have also heard all the arguments pro and con.... However, there is an argument in favor of controls that seems to be taken as the ultimate unanswerable argument in their favor. If we had no controls we would have inflation, so the argument goes. At first blush that would seem to be a good argument. However, when I look up the reports of the Central Bank, I find that the Consumers’ Price Index for imported goods has gone up from 77.4 points in 1949 to 121.7 in 1958. In other words, prices have gone up 59% in the last nine years. That, to me, is inflation.

From this, Father Araneta drew the following conclusion: "If controls cannot achieve that which they are claimed to achieve, then clearly this is evidence of a desire to control merely for the sake of controlling. This is government for the sake of government."

Father Araneta’s view of life is sane and balanced and imbued with an awareness of the essential meaning of the Christian vocation. To parents he says: "The first point is that children should be loved. A child is a gift of God to the parents and a gift of the parents to God.” On the other hand, "a child is not the only gift that a couple can give to God. Self-restraint in marriage is equally a gift, and may be even a greater gift.”

Speaking of the recurrent attempts in Congress and elsewhere to "Filipinize" the schools and the entire teaching profession, he remarks: "I cannot think of anything more humiliating for a Filipino Rector than to be appointed to so burdensome a position for no other reason than that the law of the land requires it. No Filipino with a trace of self-respect would want to belong to a closed shop of Filipino superiors created by legislative decree.”

As university president, Father Araneta was naturally interested in the transmission of culture, and he deplored the lack of a sense of tradition and of history so widespread in this country. “A people may have a glorious history, yet know little and understand less of it. That indeed would be an impoverished group, a disinherited nation.” A people that tries to gloss over its unpleasant past is like a schizophrenic individual who is afraid of the truth: “A people may have a dubious past, and, unable to face the truth in calm self-appraisal, may gloss over it and substitute soul-stirring fiction
for the hard discipline that is history. This has been done only too often—with dire results; for the soul of a nation, like the soul of a man, can only live by truth and will never grow by self-deceit.”

Such are the speeches collected in this volume. It is a pity that Father Araneta did not write one continuous and homogeneous book, instead of merely a collection of speeches. Hardly anybody reads speeches. Now that he is no longer Rector, he may at last find the time to write. He is eminently qualified to do so. Senator Raul Manglapus, who provides the introduction to this volume, pays him this compliment: “When Father Araneta was a student at the Ateneo de Manila, where I was privileged to be his classmate for eleven years, he was one of the more perfect exponents of sapientia atque eloquentia, the avowed ends of that system of education which it is now his life’s work to implement…”

MIGUEL A. BERNAD

BRAZIL IN THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY


Literature on Brazil is rare in the Philippines. This is not surprising. Unlike the Spanish empire in South America, the biggest of Portugal’s former colonies was merely tangential to the history of the Philippines. Except for the brief span from 1580 to 1640, when the two crowns of Spain and Portugal were united in the person of the Spanish king, hostility rather than amity marked the relations between the Hispanic and the Lusitanian empires from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Partly through government support, partly because Spain was involved in the reconquista, Portugal was a sail ahead of Spain in her voyages of discovery. One need not go so far as to say that the resulting Eastern trade in spices was a Portuguese monopoly, but the initial advantage enjoyed by Portugal was a factor in the history of modern colonial expansion.

Portugal concentrated her men and her resources in the fabulous East, and it is still mooted whether the discovery of Brazil (its first name: Terra de Vera Cruz) by Cabral in 1500 was accidental or not. Three decades of Portuguese unconcern followed, ended only when French traders showed interest in the dyewood (brasil) found there in abundance and which gave the land its present name. The original plan of colonization was based on land grants (capitanías) authorized